

Free Summertime Fun for Travelers in Santa Cruz County

Budget-minded travelers have a plethora of options this summer season

Santa Cruz County delivers added value this summer, helping make family travel plans more affordable. This season, there are plenty of free activities and events to enjoy that won't cost a penny. Santa Cruz County may be known as a Nuclear-Free and Hate-Free Zone, but that's not all that's free! Listed below are the top 12 free things to do and see in Santa Cruz County this spring and summer:



1 Visit the "World's Best Seaside Amusement Park"! The Century-old **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** is always admission-free. Enjoy a self-guided free walking tour of this historic seaside gem. The Boardwalk also hosts **Free Friday night summertime concerts** and other free and fun events!

2 Concerts and Movies in California's Oldest Seaside Resort Town: On Wednesday evenings, you can unwind at **Capitola's Esplanade Park** at a **free twilight concert**. And movie buffs can gather on the sand Fridays on August 27th, during the **Capitola Begonia Festival Weekend**, September 3rd and 4th and September 10th



for **free movies**. Capitola also offers a **free weekend and holiday shuttle**, which takes visitors from Crossroads Center parking lot on Bay Avenue to Capitola Village.

3 Year-Round Events: Are you too impatient to stand during an hours-long parade? Check us out on-line

and find out more about **The World's Shortest Parade** that takes place each Independence Day in Aptos. The Santa Cruz County Conference & Visitors Council is helping visitors find free, fantastic, and always fun events and festivals to enjoy, all with the click of a mouse. In fact, there are over 120 free year-round events in Santa Cruz County hosted annually on www.santacruzcounty.travel!

4 Tour the Historic and Eclectic: A variety of free walking tours bring to life the history of **Capitola**, the logging days of **Boulder Creek**, the Victorian homes of **Watsonville**, the outdoor art and historical architecture of **Santa Cruz** and more. Tour brochures are available at the Santa Cruz County Visitors Council's year-round visitor center.

5 Wildlife Watching: Free weekly guided nature walks of the **Wetlands of Watsonville** are an up-close way to experience the area's bird population. The Santa Cruz County Visitors Council's free official **Birding and Wildlife Kit** is a great way to get your bearing on where to go and what to look

for. Or, stroll to the end of the **Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf** and watch a free sea lion show, as these lumbering creatures suddenly acquire a ballerina's grace the moment they hit the water.

6 Discover Museums: Learn about Santa Cruz surfing legends, the farming methods of a bygone era, and more at admission-free museums such as the **Santa Cruz Surfing Museum**, **Agricultural History Project**, **San Lorenzo Valley Historical Museum**, **Capitola Museum**, and the **Aptos History Museum**. The **Museum of Art & History at the McPherson Center** is admission-free the first Friday of every month and the **Museum of Natural History** is free the first Thursday of



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every month. Seaside, the *Seymour Marine Discovery Center* opens their doors for free on June 1st and September 7th.

7 Savor Fine Art: Peruse galleries exhibiting the work of local watercolor artists, metal sculptors, and more. The *Pajaro Valley Arts Council*, *Mary Porter Sesnon Gallery at U. C. Santa Cruz*, *Santa Cruz Art League*, and *Santa Cruz Mountain Arts Center* are some of the free galleries you'll find around town. *Capitola's Art at the Beach* June 6 and 27, July 11 and 18, and August 8 and 22 is another free way to satisfy your cultural craving.

8 Take in a Summer Concert: Summertime means at least two opportunities for *free seaside concerts!* Friday nights on Main Beach, original artists and bands from the '60s, '70s and '80s, sponsored by the *Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk*, will have you singing along and dancing in the sand to your favorite hits. And in *Capitola Village* every Wednesday evening, you can unwind at Esplanade Park at a *free twilight concert* while enjoying a picnic supper on the sand. Visit www.santacruzcounty.travel for dates and times!



9 Hike Amid Towering Redwoods: A number of Santa Cruz County parks with great hiking trails are admission-free, including *Delaveaga Park*, *Quail Hollow Ranch* and others. State parks like *Big Basin Redwoods State Park* or *Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park* charge a small fee for parking; other parking fees vary. And for more things to do outdoors, *Pinto Lake County Park* in Watsonville boasts a new Championship Disc Golf Course. And best of all, it's free to play!

10 Enjoy the Beach: With 29 miles of coastline, finding an *admission-free beach*

for playing in the surf or lazing away on the sand is easy. Favorites include *Main Beach*, *Capitola Beach*, *Rio del Mar Beach*, *Twin Lakes Beach* and *Seabright Beach*.

11 People Watch, Window Shop and Enjoy Art: Stroll Downtown Santa Cruz, where pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets boast unique shops and sidewalk performers. On Saturday, July 17, partake in a *free downtown tree walk* with an arborist, to view some of Santa Cruz's most unique and grandest trees. Or pick up a *SculpTour walking tour map* from the Visitors Council and discover the new sculptures installed in *Downtown Santa Cruz* as part of a rotating public art exhibit.

12 Explore Magical Gardens: Wander through bamboo gardens, smell the scents of rare roses, and see exotic plants from around the world. *Bamboo Giant Nursery*, *Roses of Yesterday and Today*, *Sierra Azul Nursery* and many other gardens are free to explore. The *Arboreteum at U.C. Santa Cruz* offers free admission the first Tuesday of every month.

In addition, visitors who choose to travel mid-week can save money on lower hotel rates. And, the Santa Cruz County Conference & Visitors Council is making it easier than ever to plan a vacation on-line with packages and specials on www.santacruzcounty.travel. Special summertime activities like surfing, kayaking, and visiting the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk or Roaring Camp Railroads can all be arranged on-line.

If you're on foot, head over to the year-round visitor center at 303 Water Street in Santa Cruz, where you can find free information on a variety of topics, as well as Santa Cruz County Traveler's Guides, Bicycle Adventure Kits, and Birding and Wildlife Viewing Kits. If you're coast-side Memorial Day through Labor Day, the Beach Area Visitor Center adjacent to the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf can provide you with all the information you need to make this year's vacation a memorable experience.



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