

# CENTRAL COAST SAMPLER: BODEGA TO BIG SUR

Story and Photos by Pamela Biery

State Route 1 (SR 1), commonly referred to as Highway 1, streams alongside some of the most beautiful coastline in the world, in California. But following it through the cliffs, valleys and coastal towns finds SR 1 running concurrent with U.S. Route 101 (US 101), scrambling through farmland as a two-lane blacktop and duly routed through cities and towns.

Watch for name changes as this famous road weaves its way from Orange County to U.S. Route 101 in Leggett. SR 1 is variously designated as Pacific Coast Highway

Leave time to wiggle your toes in sand, walk a beach or listen to the waves crash.

(PCH, Southern Cal), the Cabrillo Highway (Central Coast), and the Shoreline Highway (Marin County).

But whatever name SR 1 goes by, it's worth slowing down for California's Coast. Leave time to wiggle your toes in sand, walk a beach or listen to the waves crash. Consider covering less ground and exploring a bit more.

For a Central Coast sampler, travel north from San Francisco to Bodega Bay or head south along SR1 to Big Sur. The rewards are ready and waiting. Take the stress off, enjoy the views here and then head back to Highway 5 or Interstate 80 to cover easy, big distance miles or visit urban centers like San Francisco and San Jose.

BODEGA BAY, POINT REYES & BOLINAS

On the north side of the Golden Gate Bridge is the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The vision and persistence of a few preservationists kept huge swatches of California's coast open to the public, and as a result Marin County is dotted with parks, preserves and beaches.

Bypass some of the traffic, twisties and crowds by heading out 101 North after the Golden Gate Bridge. By taking the Lucas Valley Road exit, much of the traffic and cutbacks required for heading directly to the coast by Muir Woods are avoided. Plus, there are wonderful rolling hills and a very nice campground at Olema Ranch Campground



ABOVE: Big Sur, California, roadside SR 1. Sunset at Santa Cruz Harbor, Twin Lakes Beach. Follow these Airstreamers and reserve a view site at the end of South Whales, Costanoa Resort, Pescadero, California.

ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

- 1 San Gregorio General Store  
This little store from 1889 has it all, including live music  
SR-84 @ Stage Rd.  
San Gregorio, CA; (650) 726-0565
- 2 Tesla Road Wineries  
Compare wines from neighboring vineyards  
Tesla Rd. between S. Livermore Ave. and Cross Rd.  
Livermore, CA; (925) 956-2500
- 3 Winchester Mystery House  
160-room mansion with staircases leading to ceilings  
525 S. Winchester Blvd.  
San Jose, CA; (408) 247-2101
- 4 Tech Museum of Innovation  
Unleash your inner mad scientist at interactive exhibits  
201 S. Market St.  
San Jose, CA; (408) 294-TECH
- 5 Hacienda Cemetery  
Visit the grave of Bert Barrett's arm  
21480 Bertram Rd.  
San Jose, CA; (408) 323-1107
- 6 New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum  
Mercury's rising at California's first mine  
21350 Almaden Rd.  
New Almaden, CA; (408) 323-1107
- 7 Bonny Doon Vineyard  
Bring a picnic and try new releases and old favorites  
10 Pine Flat Rd.  
Santa Cruz, CA; (831) 425-4518
- 8 Roaring Camp Railroads  
Ride a steam train through the redwoods  
5355 Graham Hill Rd.  
Felton, CA; (831) 335-4484
- 9 Mystery Spot  
Laws of physics are defied as balls roll uphill  
465 Mystery Spot Rd.  
Santa Cruz, CA; (831) 423-8897
- 10 Santa Cruz Surfing Museum  
Learn about the history of wave riding  
701 W. Cliff Dr.  
Santa Cruz, CA; (831) 420-6289
- 11 Santa Cruz Boardwalk  
A 1924 rollercoaster and arcades galore  
400 Beach St.  
Santa Cruz, CA; (831) 426-7433
- 12 Gizdich Ranch  
Pick your own fruit or try their berry pies  
55 Peckham Rd.  
Watsonville, CA; (831) 722-1056
- 13 World's Largest Artichoke  
See this 20-ft. tall sculpture in "The Artichoke Center"  
11261 Merritt St.  
Castroville, CA; (831) 633-3501
- 14 Old San Juan Bautista Mission  
A famous scene from Vertigo was filmed here  
406 Second St.  
San Juan Bautista, CA; (831) 623-4528
- 15 Monterey Bay Aquarium  
See over 600 different species of marine life  
886 Cannery Row  
Monterey, CA; (831) 648-4888
- 16 National Steinbeck Center  
Learn about the author who made Salinas famous  
1 Main St.  
Salinas, CA; (831) 796-3833





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Italian” at Stellina, where everything comes from Marin County. A bit off the beaten path, this small town has plenty of character and charm with a good deal more elbow-room than Marin’s more urbane cities.

From Point Reyes, it’s an easy drive to Bolinas, Stinson, Drakes Bay and Limantour beaches. Leave the Airstream at Olema and head out unhitched for some first class bird watching, hiking or beachcombing. Or head north to Bodega Bay, Jenner and beyond.

## HALF MOON BAY, PESCADERO & SANTA CRUZ

SR 1 from Pacifica to Big Sur contains so much variety in 150 miles, that if you are traveling only part of the coast, you should drive this section. Unlike the northern “Lost Coast,” or south of Monterey, Highway 1 from Half Moon Bay to Monterey is straighter and tamer. While winds can be gusty, exposure is less than in either the far northern or southern reaches of SR 1.

Pacifica and Half Moon Bay have their share of fog, so soak in the sea breeze with the realization that other parts of the coast may be sunny and warm. The famous Mavericks Surf Contest is held just north of Half Moon Bay proper, near the Ritz Carlton Hotel. This area gets big waves throughout the winter.

(see sidebar). This is an hour or so from Golden Gate Bridge.

From the Olema Campground, it is a few miles into Point Reyes Station. Point Reyes and West Marin are home to one of the earliest agricultural land trusts and are near Strauss Family Dairy, Nimen Ranch, and Drakes Bay Oysters, just to name a few. Tour Cowgirl Creamery and try “Point Reyes

## The Slow Coast



Dana and Julia Nichols, with Slow Coast’s emblematic Safari, at Swanton Berry Farm, off of Highway 1, south of Costanoa.

There is a very special stretch of Highway 1—wrapped between sunshine,

salt-spray and lush farms, with kite-boarders flying high over sandy beaches. Take extra time just north of Santa Cruz from about Wilder Ranch to Half Moon Bay. Just about mid-way is the small town of Davenport.

Living off Highway 1 in Davenport, California suits the Nichols family perfectly. Dr. Wallace J. Nichols is an internationally recognized marine biologist, especially well regarded for his sea turtle research. Dana Nichols has extensive training in organic food production and preparation, and with two growing daughters, has a keen interest in sustainable practices.

Together, the Nichols have coined the term ‘Slowcoast’ to describe the slower, more organic regional lifestyle, and engender a sense of wonder and appreciation for this micro-region of the Central Coast. Playing off the Sustainable-Local-Organic movement (SLO), they are working with

local growers and businesses to define a Slowcoast identity.

In the middle of the project sits a 1954 Airstream, the current and future home of Slowcoast’s assorted products and seasonal produce. In the summer it is found at the Swanton Berry Farm off of Highway 1, run by the Nichols’ neighbors, where its classic, welcoming shape invites visitors to sample and buy products made by local farmers and artisans.

Along this fertile coast you’ll happen across world-class wine, beer and goat cheese makers; wheat, berry and flower farmers; coffee roasters, woodworkers, surf board shapers and glassblowers. If you travel here, be sure to check out Swanton Berry Farm, the Pie Ranch and watch for more news of the Slowcoast at [slowcoast.org](http://slowcoast.org).

## GREAT OUTDOORS

- San Gregorio State Beach**  
*A great spot for surf fishing and birdwatching*  
SR-1 (just south of SR-84)  
San Gregorio, CA; (650) 879-2170
- Big Basin Redwoods State Park**  
*A tall order: 18,000 acres of redwoods*  
21600 Big Basin Way  
Boulder Creek, CA; (831) 338-8860
- Bonny Doon Beach**  
*The naked truth: a clothing-optional beach*  
SR-1 @ Bonny Doon Rd.  
Davenport, CA; (800) 833-3494
- Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park**  
*See a 285-ft. tall, 16-ft. wide redwood*  
101 N. Big Trees Park Rd.  
Felton, CA; (831) 438-2396
- Elkhorn Slough Nat’l. Estuarine Research Reserve**  
*This is a veritable birdwatcher’s paradise*  
1700 Elkhorn Rd.  
Watsonville, CA; (831) 728-2822
- Carmel Beach**  
*The cliffs are steep and the sand is deep*  
End of Ocean Ave.  
Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA; (831) 620-2070

Pescadero is about 18 miles down the Cabrillo Highway from Half Moon Bay, with many beaches along the way. Cumulus clouds whisk by, or a squall may quickly move through. Welcome to the California’s Central Coast, where the weather constantly changes.

Tucked behind the rolling hills along a road lined with Eucalyptus is Costanoa Resort. This resort offers a KOA Campground



Find your way to Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park for a day of beach combing and a picnic.

with incredible views, tasteful facilities and an easy 1/4 mile stroll to the beach. Services include a grocery store, restaurant and spa. Besides the RV area, there are tent campgrounds, cabins and tent cabins. From here, explore inland and by traveling east, see Silicon Valley below Skyline Ridge. (See map.)

Pescadero, San Gregorio, Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park (in Pescadero) and Davenport each offer stunning beaches, friendly, small rural towns and lots of laid-back attitude. Watch for coastal access signs and partially concealed parking lots along the way. One especially roomy lot is after Waddell Creek and just

north of Davenport, marked only with a coastal access sign; locals know this beach as Greyhound Rock. There is plenty to explore off the highway, so check out some parallel side trips and destinations listed in the regional map.

Entering Santa Cruz, to visit the Redwoods, turn right on Highway 9 toward Felton. There are two RV parks on this curvy, two-lane, six-mile route before nearing Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park.

Santa Cruz is chock full of great shops, food and entertainment. Streets are narrow and parking is limited. Some areas have one-way streets without clear alternate routes. A reasonable option would be to visit the Redwoods and unhitch in nearby Felton for an easy visit to the Surf Museum, Boardwalk stroll or shopping on Pacific Avenue.

## MOSS LANDING, MONTEREY & BIG SUR

It is 56 miles of flat and easy highway miles from Santa Cruz to Monterey. The road becomes a two-lane highway for a number of miles near Moss Landing. Cut out of the heart of Steinbeck Country, the fertile farms along SR 1 are worked year round.

There is a quiet laden turf, just before Monterey in the town of Marina. The Marina Dunes RV Park is just 1/4 mile walk to the beach. It is about 10 minutes drive to historic Monterey, Cannery Row and the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Leaving Monterey takes one back to the ocean, whether via Carmel, 17 mile Drive or another route, SR 1 from here becomes more scenic, exposed and dramatic. During

the winter, expect temporary closures and power outages around Big Sur. The Riverside Campground has RV sites right by the river, but during the winter only reserves 10 days in advance.

Whether called SR 1, PCH or the Cabrillo Highway, these views and places suggest simply: Drive less. Live more.

For a list of websites of businesses and attractions listed in this article, visit [www.airstreamlife.com/extra/fall2010](http://www.airstreamlife.com/extra/fall2010) ●●●

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