


travel  
itinerary  
family

# AN EPIC FAMILY ROAD TRIP ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY

A 10-day Central Coast family adventure,  
from **Ventura** to **Santa Cruz** with stops  
in **Santa Barbara**, **San Luis Obispo** and  
**Monterey Counties**

visit  
**California**

- 
- Day 1: **LAX to Ventura**
  - Day 2: **Channel Islands National Park & Ventura**
  - Day 3: **Ventura to Santa Barbara**
  - Day 4: **Santa Barbara**
  - Day 5: **Santa Barbara to Solvang**
  - Day 6: **Solvang to Pismo Beach & San Luis Obispo**
  - Day 7: **SLO to Los Osos, Morro Bay & Cayucos**
  - Day 8: **Cayucos to Monterey**
  - Day 9: **Monterey & Big Sur**
  - Day 10: **Monterey to Santa Cruz**

# PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY

## Itinerary overview

California's Central Coast abounds with fun that promises to surprise and delight the whole family. Start the trip in the beachy surf town of Ventura, your launchpad to the wild, wonderful Channel Islands National Park. Follow the California mission trail as you head north into the charming, pedestrian-friendly towns of Santa Barbara,

Solvang and San Luis Obispo. Along the way, get into high flying adventures, enjoy animal encounters and learn Golden State historic highlights. Relish in the authentic California vibes of Cayucos and Santa Cruz. And make memories to last a lifetime in Monterey and Big Sur.

\*Travel Alert: Check road conditions before traveling along HWY 1



## ● Day 1: LAX to Ventura

- Drive Highway 101 to **Ventura** (70 mi/112 km).
- Feast on tacos at local favorites such as **Spencer Makenzie's** or **Corrales Mexican Food**.
- Sink your toes in the sand at **San Buena Ventura State Beach**.
- Stroll along **Main Street**, tour the historic **Mission Basilica San Buenaventura** and walk through the **Ventura Botanical Gardens** perched above the city.
- Outfit the whole family in fresh outdoor gear at the only authorized Patagonia outlet in the world, **Real Cheap Sports**.
- Overnight in **Ventura**.

## ● Day 2: Channel Islands National Park & Ventura

- Take the **Island Packers Cruises** ferry to Santa Cruz Island at **Channel Islands National Park** and join a guided sea cave kayaking excursion with **Channel Islands Adventure Co.** (Must book ferry and kayak tour well in advance to ensure availability.)
- Upon return to mainland, enjoy dinner at one of the many eateries in **Ventura Harbor Village** and leave room for dessert at **Coastal Cone**.
- Overnight in **Ventura**.



### ● Day 3: Ventura to Santa Barbara

- Drive to **Santa Barbara** (27 mi/43 km) via Highway 101.
- Stroll and browse **Downtown State Street** and take in the sweeping American Riviera views from the top of the **Santa Barbara County Courthouse** clock tower.
- Tour **Mission Santa Barbara**, the 10th of California's 21 missions.
- Spend a few hours at **Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History**.
- Rent a surrey and bike along the **Cabrillo Bike Path**.
- Overnight in **Santa Barbara**.

### ● Day 4: Santa Barbara

- Have breakfast at **Jeannine's at the Shore** or **Chad's Café**.
- Spend the morning at **Santa Barbara Zoo**; book the **Masai Giraffe Encounter** for a special up-close experience with the majestic creatures.
- Walk around **Stearns Wharf**, visit the **Sea Center** and take the **Lil Toot** water taxi to the **Santa Barbara Harbor**; **On the Alley** is a perfect fast casual lunch spot to take in the ambience of the working harbor.
- Take a beach break at **Leadbetter Beach**, known for its calm waves.
- Get hands-on at **MOXI: The Wolf Museum of Innovation + Exploration**.
- Overnight in **Santa Barbara**.



## ● Day 5: Santa Barbara to Solvang

- Hit the road for the **Santa Ynez Valley** via US-101 N (44 mi/70 km).
- Feed ostriches and emus at **OstrichLand USA** in **Buellton**.
- Soar above the valley ziplining with **Highline Adventures**—home to California’s biggest and fastest ziplines—or try the **Adventure Course**.  
(Note: Minimum weight requirement for zipline is 75 lbs/34 kilos and height requirement for ropes course is 48 in/1.2 m)
- Spend the rest of the day enjoying **Solvang**, the Danish Capital of North America.
- Overnight in **Solvang**.

## ● Day 6: Solvang to Pismo Beach & San Luis Obispo

- Have breakfast at one of Solvang’s traditional Danish spots such as **Paula’s Pancake House** or **Solvang Restaurant**.
- Head north on US-101 to **Pismo Beach** (54 mi/87 km).
- Check out the vast **Oceano Dunes** (ATV rentals available), stroll along the **Pismo Pier** and walk the **Shell Beach Streetscape**.
- Continue on to **Downtown San Luis Obispo** (13 mi/21 km).
- Get your photo ops in **Bubblegum Alley**, visit **Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa** and browse crowd-pleasing shops such as **Tom’s Toys, Bricks & Mini Figs** and **Rocket Fizz**.
- Have dinner at **The Rock at SLO Brew**, where the kids can play lawn games and parents can enjoy live music and local brews.
- Overnight in **San Luis Obispo**.



## ● Day 7: SLO to Los Osos, Morro Bay & Cayucos

- Depart for **Montana de Oro State Park** in Baywood-Los Osos (16 mi/26 km) to wander along the trails and explore the tidepools.
- Fuel up on sandwiches at **High Street Deli** in Baywood Park.
- Continue up the coast to **Morro Bay** (10 mi/16 km) and rent kayaks from **Morro Bay Paddle Sports** for a paddle around Morro Bay's working harbor and estuary.
- End the day in **Cayucos**, a charming beach town less than a 10 minute drive up the PCH (6 mi/10 km).
- Walk the pier, hang out at the beach and sample cookies at **Brown Butter Cookie Co.**
- Savor dinner with a sea view at **Schooners**.
- Stay at the newly updated **The Pacific** or another **hotel in Cayucos**.

## ● Day 8: Cayucos to Monterey

- Fuel up on breakfast at **Hidden Kitchen**.
- Hit the road for **Monterey** via US-101 N (140 mi/225 km).
- Spend the afternoon exploring **Monterey Bay Aquarium** and walking around **Cannery Row** and the historic old town district.
- Have dinner at a tried-and-true Monterey institution such as **The Sardine Factory** or **Rosine's Restaurant**.
- Overnight in **Monterey**.



## Day 9: Monterey & Big Sur

- Take a day trip to **Big Sur**, driving south on the PCH (35 mi/56 km).
- Walk through the woods to the beach at **Andrew Molera State Park** or hike one of the trails in **Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park**.
- Break for lunch with a magical view at Big Sur's iconic **Nepenthe**.
- Back in Monterey, little ones can enjoy a play session at **Dennis the Menace Park**.
- Have dinner at **Fisherman's Wharf**.
- Overnight in **Monterey**.

## Day 10: Monterey to Santa Cruz

- Continue up the coast to your final destination, **Santa Cruz** (45 mi/72 km).
- On your way into town, stop at charming **Capitola State Beach** to visit its colorful shops, restaurants and pier.
- Visit the **Santa Cruz Surfing Museum** to learn about the region's outsized role in the sport's history and stop by the **O'Neill Surf Shop** downtown (pioneer of the wetsuit, the late Jack O'Neill was a longtime Santa Cruz local).
- Spend the evening at the legendary **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** for fun and games followed by dinner on the **Santa Cruz Wharf**.
- Overnight in **Santa Cruz**.  
(SJC is 33 mi/53 km away and SFO is 60 mi/97 km away)