

Nancy's express tour of the Central Coast

If you plan on going as far north as Big Sur, let me know and I will give you the low down.

Day Trip:

Heading north on Hiway 1 (not Hiway 101) you will see our protected coastline and be sure to stop and see the Elephant Seals about 5 miles north of San Simeon.

47 miles North of San Luis Obispo is Hearst Castle near San Simeon, the former home of William Randolph Hearst. It's worth seeing but requires reservations in advance. (People can reserve 60 days ahead) Hearst ranch is home to many exotic animals and you will likely see some free roaming zebras.

If you have time afterwards, Cambria (CAM bree uh is how the locals pronounce it) is about 10 miles south of San Simeon (30 miles north of San Luis) a nice village full of interesting shops and art galleries and Old Comozzi's Saloon. Take Moonstone Drive to see the rugged coastline.

Another day trip:

20 miles North of San Luis is Cayucos (kie YOO cuss) a tiny funky beach town with a great saloon, antiques shops and a nice beach and pier.

Just south of Cayucos (15 miles north of San Luis) is Morro Bay (MORE oh) a much larger funky beach town. Visit the rock to catch the surfers and enjoy the beach. This is the town where you want to get your seafood meal or fresh catch. Near the rock is Great American Fish Company. At the other end of town is Bayside Café where you sit by the marina. Don't skip the Embarcadero for strolling and shopping and the fish market. You must visit Garden Gallery. Morro Bay is where you will rent a kayak for a guided excursion etc. Farmers Market is on Monday 2:30 – 5:30 PM

You can take the back road out of Morro Bay to Los Osos (Loss OH sows) The town is a little one street burg on its own little bay. Farmers Market is

on Monday from 2-4:30. Montana de Oro is spectacular coastline/cliffs. You will need to get out of the car and spend some time there.

Come back to San Luis on Los Osos Valley Road to see protected rolling hills and farm land. If you go straight up this road, you will find several grocery stores, Costco, Home Depot, Olive Garden, and Target and much more. If you want to go to Madonna Inn from here, make a left on Madonna Road at the Shell Station instead of going straight.

You may want to save Madonna Inn for another day but it is delightful and has a nice history. Visit the coffee shop/bakery. It takes me four days to eat just one piece of the cake. From here, you are a spit and a lick from the house.

San Luis has a large Farmers Market on Saturday morning (out Madonna Road) but when someone says “Are you going to Farmers?” they are talking about Thursday night Farmers Market. It’s a 6 PM start time and is more like a street fair with lots to see. Walk from the house and have dinner sitting on the curb and watch people for a few hours.

Day trip:

If you want to visit Santa Barbara, let me know and I’ll give you the heads up on exits and parking. It’s a 90 minute drive (If you take the back roads) and it’s a great town. They have a Mission in the center of town like we do but they also have a great beach and an amazing harbor. They have a fun farmers market on Tuesday at 3-6:30 PM.

Day trip:

60 miles south of San Luis on 101 is Solvang (SOLVE ang) an authentic Dutch town with lots to see and many outstanding bakeries. They also have live outdoor theatre. Let me know if you need info on that. Bo Derrick, Steven Sagal, Jimmy Connors and many other famous people have ranches here and sometimes you will see them in town. Reagan Ranch is here too. Farmers Market is Wed 2:30 to 6PM

On the way to (or from) Solvang, there is a town called Los Olivos. It’s another one street town that is known for antique shops and also Paul

McCarty and Michael Jackson recorded their Ebony and Ivory video here. You can download a street map from their website.

Day trip:

15 miles south of San Luis is Arroyo Grande which has a walkable village with shops and cafes. Ask me about the back roads if you need help. I take Johnson Avenue to Orcutt Road to Lopez Lake Drive and then take a hard right at Lopez Drive to end up in the Village. (You'll return a different route)

After Arroyo Grande, drive straight down Grand Avenue to Grover Beach from here. It is one of only two beaches in the U.S. where you can drive on the sand! Don't do it though. The tow truck drivers are wealthy! Just observe.

If you take old Hiway 1 from here to north Pismo Beach (just PIZZ moe) you will see where the Monarch Butterflies cluster before heading to Mexico for the winter. They will likely be gone by the time you visit but you can walk through that park and read about their journey.

I love Pismo but it's getting a little crowded. It still has its funky feel and the new pier is worth a walk. Watch the surfers and hang out on the beach (It's illegal to feed the Seagulls) and then get some Clam Chowder in a bread bowl. Check out "Hot Lix" if you want a sucker with a scorpion inside!

After leaving Pismo, take old Hiway 1 north instead of the freeway. Shell Beach is just north of Pismo. There is a great little park and you can drive along the cliffs and see some spectacular waves.

North of this area is Avila Beach just say (AVE (like have) uh luh) The town is cute and they have one or two good restaurants. You can also drive to their south beach which is easy to park and do beach things. Down in this area, you can find Fat Cat's Café for a burger and I think you can rent a wave runner but check out Avila Beach website as this changes from time to time.

Avila does not have a farmers market until April.

When you leave Avila (or on your way into Avila) you *must* stop at Avila Barn. Feed the goats, have some roasted corn, and buy a pie to take home.

If you want an adventurous drive home, take See Canyon Road all the way back. It can be rough in a few spots but you will thank me. You will need GPS to navigate. Driver-keep your eyes on the road.

Day trip:

Going north on 101 freeway,

Paso Robles is about 30 miles (PASS oh ROW bulls - NOT Row blase- but really, just say "Paso")

This is a wonderful old town with huge farms, ranches, and wineries. Many movie and TV stars have ranches here and sometimes you will see them out and about. If you want to visit wineries, this is the place. I don't know much about wine tasting, though, so let me know and I can find out. Everywhere you go on the Central Coast, you will see tasting rooms so you won't miss out if you skip the vineyards of Paso.

Farmers Market is Tuesday at 3-6 PM

Heading back south on 101, you will come to Templeton. (Blink and you'll miss it) This is a cute one horse town. I don't think there is even a stoplight. Olea farm is an Olive Farm with olive oil tasting and farm animals. Check their website since they might only be open on weekends. Jack Creek Farm is a really fun place to visit. They are out on Hiway 46 which is a very scenic drive. Check their website for hours. So far, it looks like Thursdays through Sundays.

South of Templeton is Atascadero. It's a large cowboy town with virtual nothing happening except a small zoo and an occasional car show.

On your way back to San Luis, you might want to stop at Apple Farm Restaurant for gift shop browsing and/or dinner. It's a bit touristy but it's cute and the bakery is very good. You are now about 5 minutes from home.

Day trip:

Back up 101 to Santa Margarita. This is another one horse town with a saloon or two. There is a lake but I'm not real sure what goes on there. They also have zip lining! Now take 58 out to Pozo. This is quite a drive but it is lovely. You never know if Pozo Saloon is open but I assume weekends would be the best likely choice. Even if it's closed, it's a good photo op. A few famous people have ranches out this way. This is also where L. Ron Hubbard used to live. Eyes on the road and watch out for deer!

There are numerous hiking spots all over the county. In town, Madonna Mountain (Cerro San Luis) is easy and popular. My favorite is Bowden Ranch just two miles from the house. It's a bit aggressive but so worth it when you get to the top.

If you go to the movies, go to the Downtown Cinemas, pick your seats on line before you go, and make sure to choose a recliner seat, then just flash your "ticket" at the door. They serve beer and wine.

The Palm Theatre is great for indy movies but you need to get there 20 minutes early.

You can't get a bad meal in this town and there are many great coffee houses and beer pubs. Let me know if you need suggestions.

I found this website that claims to show you the "heritage trail" which is kind of a made up thing but it's interesting.

<https://highway1discoveryroute.com/history-heritage-trail/>