



Central Coast

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Why Go?

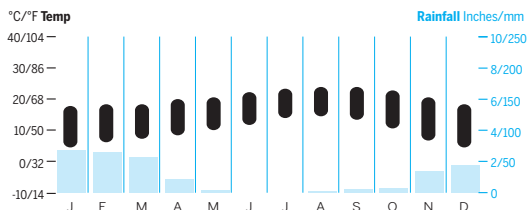
Too often forgotten or dismissed as ‘flyover’ country between San Francisco and LA, this fairytale stretch of California coast is packed with wild Pacific beaches, misty redwood forests where hot springs hide, and rolling golden hills of fertile vineyards and farm fields.

Here Hwy 1 pulls out all the stops, scenery-wise. Flower-power Santa Cruz and the historic port town of Monterey are gateways to the rugged wild lands of the bohemian Big Sur coast. It's an epic journey snaking down to vainglorious Hearst Castle, past lighthouses and cliffs over which condors soar.

Or get acquainted with California's agricultural heartland along inland Hwy 101, called El Camino Real (the King's Highway) by Spanish conquistadors and Franciscan friars. Then soothe your nature-loving soul between laid-back San Luis Obispo and idyllic seaside Santa Barbara, just a short hop from the Channel Islands.

When to Go

Santa Barbara



Apr Balmy temperatures and fewer tourists than summer. Wildflowers bloom.

Jul Summer vacation and beach season kick off; SoCal ocean waters warm up.

Oct Sunny blue skies, yet smaller crowds. Wine country harvests celebrated.



Central Coast Highlights

red-tiled **Santa Barbara**
(p327) before making your
wine-country escape

the neighbors: ginormous
elephant seals

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