

13 Incredible Stops on a Pacific Coast Highway Road Trip

From San Francisco to San Diego and everywhere in between

The Pacific Coast Highway is well known as one of the most scenic drives in the world. Starting from California's northern border with Oregon and stretching all the way down to San Diego the route takes round ten hours to complete at a leisurely pace with no stops. Over 1000km you'll see stunning coastal views, seaside villages, untouched forest and make your way through some sunny wine making districts too.



1. San Francisco



The Golden Gate Park is a great place to start this epic trip. Take a drive over the Golden Gate Bridge and you'll feel like you've well and truly arrived in San Francisco. While you're there spend some time in Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz Island and just relaxing with a coffee in Union Square. Get around via the famous San Francisco tram and make sure to walk down crazy Lombard Street too. There's loads to do in San Francisco, just get lost and enjoy yourself ready for the drive of your life.

A few more cheap and dirty things to do in San Francisco for you...

2. San Jose



Full of galleries, museums and San Jose is well worth a stop on your Pacific Coast Highway trip. The famous and well advertised Winchester Mystery House is full of curiosities including dead end hallways, staircases that run up to the ceiling and 165 rooms. The late Sarah Winchester built the place at a cost of over \$20m, as instructed by her Medium.

Back to the modern day and San Jose is part of the almighty Silicon Valley – the relatively small area housing the next great start up that will take over the world. Facebook and Google HQs are here, and the famous Hewlett Packard Garage from where it all began.

You can also see the zoo, the largest open air market in the USA and make sure to check out Downtown San Jose by night.

3. Santa Cruz



If you're coming straight from San Francisco along the Pacific Coast Highway you'll pass the stunning Half Moon Bay – make sure to get out and take a moody pic from the cliff edge before you press on. You'll soon find yourself at the Ano Nuevo State Park where you can go and visit the Elephant Seals in the marine park, and take a look at a San Francisco Garter Snake too.

Ninety minutes later (with no stops) you'll find yourself in Santa Cruz. The 60s live on here, especially along the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk with its old-school Americana vibe. Get out the car and check out the lighthouse on the beach, the Big Dipper along the boardwalk and the beautiful beach. The Mystery Spot – a collection of strange phenomena from the last 70 years – also makes for an entertaining few hours.

Head to Pacific Avenue for all kinds of vintage goodies, Palomar for night time salsa dancing, Wilder Ranch State Park for hiking and the Rio Theatre for local music. The Wharf is a great place to start for restaurants and shops and if you have the time you can go on a whale watching boat or fishing expedition.

4. Monterey



Leave Santa Cruz and an hour later along the curve of the coast you could be in Monterey Bay. Here you can enjoy the Monterey Bay Aquarium, check out the stunning Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, chill at the Old Fisherman’s Wharf or go shopping at Cannery Row. Or, drive along the scenic ‘17 Mile Drive’ and have a mooch around Carmel-by-the-Sea a cute seaside village with shops, cafes and restaurants. Whale watching, sailing, kayaking, golfing and biking are also popular in Monterey.

A gentle uphill drive from here takes you out to the Big Sur, where the fun really begins.

5. Big Sur