

Travel

Discovering the Highway 1 Discovery Route



Sunset at Cayucos beach

Photos Fran Miller

By Fran Miller

For the past five years I've driven back and forth to Santa Barbara countless times. I might stop in Paso Robles for lunch on the square, or perhaps in San Luis Obispo for a High Street Deli sub. But never have I passed over the mountains that divide Highway 101 with Highway 1. Big, big mistake. The stretch of coast between Big Sur and Santa Barbara, known as Highway 1 Discovery Route SLO CAL, is remarkable for its beauty and the variety of its charming towns. Jump on at any point within its 101 miles and find expansive beaches, quaint hotels and restaurants, bike paths, room to breathe – and little traffic. This is a side of California long thought lost and gone forever. But it's real, and it's spectacular. Explore with your partner, with your family, or go solo (as did I) for a personal retreat that will leave you feeling revitalized and refreshed. Here's a suggested itinerary:

Day 1: An overnight stay in Paso Robles places you in a prime starting point. Allegretto Vineyard Resort is an Italianate wonder filled with artifacts and objects d'art and is surrounded by vineyards, the product of which can be sampled in the on-site tasting room. A pool, bocce court, and

fleet of bikes provide afternoon activity and plush beds allow for a restful sleep prior to your Highway 1 exploration.

Day 2: Head over State Route 46 and its rolling green hills to Highway 1 and take note of the Paso wineries along the way. (You might want to hit a few on the way back.) First stop, a trail ride at Covells California Clydesdale Ranch where gentle giants lead guests to views of the Pacific Ocean. Afterward, bee-line to Cambria's Main Street for the legendary Olallieberry pie at Linn's Restaurant, a Cambria institution. Then, head just a few miles north to San Simeon for an afternoon tour of Hearst Castle where the display of William Randolph Hearst's immense wealth continues to stupefy. Head south again for afternoon wine tasting at Stolo Vineyards, Cambria's only estate winery. Bring a snack and enjoy your sips within Stolo's bucolic garden. Then, it's off to the captivating town of Cayucos and check-in at Cass House. (Reserve room 4 for its large terrace overlooking the Pacific.) This charming five-room inn was the former home of the small seaside community's founder, and has been lovingly restored by owner Traci Hozie. She and her sister, Christa, also own Brown Butter Cookie Com-

pany, one of Cayucos' main attractions located just a few steps down the street. (Stop in for samples.) Enjoy dinner at The Grill and in the morning dine on sticky buns, muffins and scones at The Bakery.

Day 3: Continue south on Hwy 1 through Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo to Avila Beach. This idyllic seaside enclave features not only surf and sand, but also verdant greenery, a golf course, and an epic bike path, best meandered via electric bike rented at Pedego on First Street. The power boost allows for exhilarating exploration; charge any hill with ease for ultimate vantage points. Later, treat yourself to a soak at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort where 23 private hot tubs dot the oak tree-canopied hillside, each bubbling with naturally heated mineral spring water. Check in at oceanfront Avila Lighthouse Suites where every beach-themed, spacious suite features a patio or balcony with ocean views, and where fresh cookies await at check-in. From here, you're within walking distance of the quaint surf shops and restaurants along Front Street. For dinner, try Blue Moon Over Avila and behold the spectacular sunset that is served with your citrus ceviche and sauvignon blanc.



Sebastian's in San Simeon



Linn's in Cambria and Linn's Olallieberry Pie



Boardwalk in Cambria



Sea bird in Los Osos

The history behind the cork oaks on SMC campus



Photo John T. Miller

SMC Grounds Manager Kevin Friesen with Brother Mel Anderson, FSC, in the shade of a cork oak.

By John T. Miller

Enquiring minds have wondered: How did there come to be 20 mature cork oak trees lining the entryway into Saint Mary's College, providing shade on the large expanse of lawn in front of the Chapel?

For the answer, this reporter turned to Brother Mel Anderson, who came to

Saint Mary's in 1969 and served as president of the college until 1997. Brother Mel, as he is called, said he could not verify the story, but it went something like this:

"When the World's Fair on Treasure Island ended around 1940," he begins, "the organizers gave away all the plants that were used but could not be put into the

ground on the island. Saint Mary's was the recipient of many of these plants, including the cork oaks that were planted leading to the west side of the Chapel."

By the time Brother Mel got to the college, the trees had grown to maturity. He felt that the entrance looked unbalanced, so, sometime in the mid-'70s, he authorized the purchase of 10 more

cork oaks to plant along the eastern side of the grassy area.

Now, the Chapel Loop is in agreeable symmetry, with the elegant cork oaks (*Quercus suber*) all grown to maturity and flanked by ornamental pear trees that decorate the early spring with their white blossoms.

Kevin Friesen, in his second year as grounds manager at the campus, says, "The cork oak is a fairly easy tree to grow. Since it comes from the Mediterranean atmosphere, it is perfectly suited for our climate. It's as drought tolerant and as adaptable as any of our native species and does not require much care once it's mature."

Friesen notes that the trees do not appear to be susceptible to Sudden Oak Death, although the disease has claimed other varieties of oaks on campus. Two of the cork oaks are not in the best of health. "We will try to revitalize them this year," he says, "but if that doesn't work they'll have to be replaced."

Although the cork from the trees is a renewable resource, there have never been any plans to harvest the ones at SMC.

According to Friesen, it would take five people to harvest the cork. The process is still done by hand

using axes to strip away large sections of its outer bark. The tree must be 25 years old before it can be harvested, and then can be harvested about every 10 years.

The most popular use of cork, naturally, is for wine stoppers. Cork remains impermeable to gases and liquids and has been a popular liquid stopper since Ancient Greece. One source claims that Biblical figures probably wore the bark in the soles of their sandals.

In addition to stoppers, cork is used to make a wide range of products, including insulation panels, floor and wall tiles, sound-proofing in automobiles, and other handicrafts and artistic uses, including paper used in printing, book covering, and clothing manufacture. Cork is also used in making cricket balls, badminton shuttlecocks, handles of fishing rods and special devices for the space industry.

Cork oaks can grow to about 70-75 feet, and there are some in Portugal that are over 250 years old.

Let's hope for a deeply-rooted future for the donated trees from Treasure Island on one side of Chapel Loop, and Brother Mel's matching copse on the other.