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Travel

Discovering the Highway 1 Discovery Route

By Fran Miller



Sunset at Cayucos beach Photos 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:

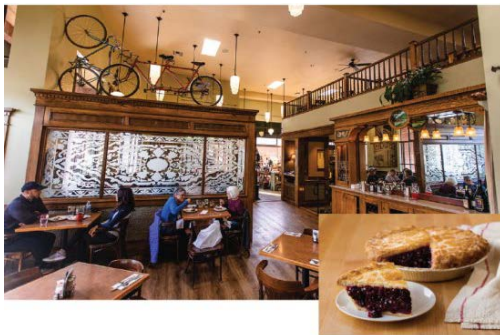
Day 1: An overnight stay in Paso Robles places you in a prime starting point. Allegretto Vineyard Resort is an Italianate wonder filled with artifacts and objects d'art and is surrounded by vineyards, the product of which can be sampled in the on-site tasting room. A pool, bocce court, and fleet of bikes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



Boardwalk in Cambria



Sea bird in Los Osos

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