



## **BIKING: San Francisco to Santa Monica (LA) – 12 Day Itinerary** *(505 Total Miles / Daily Average = 42 miles / Daily Range = 30-52 miles)*

### **Day One – San Francisco to Half Moon Bay – 34 miles (elevation +2289 / -2261 ft)**

From San Francisco, our biking odyssey begins along a bike path past the Golden Gate Bridge and then rides through the Presidio before greeting the Pacific by the iconic Cliff House and Ocean Beach. Continuing south through the hills of Daly City, the route passes through Pacifica and over Devils Slide before a pleasing coastal stretch to Half Moon Bay.

### **Day Two – Half Moon Bay to Santa Cruz – 50 miles (elevation +3082 / -3138 ft)**

South of Half Moon Bay, Highway One is less hilly and our route down the coast feels like it's a million miles away from the city. Numerous state parks and beaches line the route, as well as an historic lighthouse. The tiny villages of San Gregorio and Pescadero, both just inland, are tempting to explore. We end the day in the surfer town of Santa Cruz, with its famous pier and boardwalk, where the laid back California lifestyle was practically invented.

### **Day Three – Santa Cruz to Monterey – 46 miles (elevation +1923 / -1934 ft)**

From Santa Cruz to the Monterey Peninsula the coastal route weaves through farmland (watch for artichokes!) and along scenic dune areas with long stretches on bike paths. Along the way you may see sea lions and seals as you cross Elkhorn Slough at Moss Landing. The historic town of Monterey features Monterey Bay Aquarium and Cannery Row, made famous by writer John Steinbeck.

### **Day Four – Monterey to Big Sur – 45 miles (elevation +2748 / -2530 ft)**

Today's ride begins with a side trip out to scenic 17 Mile Drive to experience the storied golf courses of Pebble Beach. We'll continue through Carmel, enjoying its white sandy beach and beautiful mission. South of Carmel, we enter the fabled Big Sur coastline, home to some of the most spectacular coastal scenery anywhere in the world. Here Highway One is often carved out of cliffs and ridges high above the Pacific Ocean with waves crashing below on rocky sea stacks. After crossing photogenic Bixby Bridge and climbing to Hurricane Point, the ride finishes a short distance inland among the redwoods in the town of Big Sur.

### **Day Five – Big Sur to Ragged Point – 49 miles (elevation +5043 / -4941 ft)**

Get ready for a full day of the epic Big Sur coast! Right off the bat you'll tackle the biggest hill of the tour as you climb above the Big Sur River past colorful cafes and more redwoods before descending back toward the ocean. Rugged and remote coastline dominates the rest of the day, with numerous state parks offering short hikes to waterfalls and panoramic views of the Pacific. After cycling a final set of hills, you'll enjoy a well earned rest at the Ragged Point Inn, perched on a bluff high above ocean.

### **Day Six – Ragged Point to Cayucos – 37 miles (elevation +1401 / -1721 ft)**

After descending from Ragged Point the coastal route features more forgiving terrain, but still encompasses expansive ocean views as you pass by historic Hearst Ranch and Hearst Castle. Just south of Piedras Blancas lighthouse, the largest elephant seal colony in North America is a must-see stop. Later in the day you'll pass through the charming seaside village of Cambria, featuring numerous art galleries and restaurants, on the way to the beach and surfing town of Cayucos. A stroll along the wide beach stretching south from the pier in Cayucos offers a delightful way to end the day.

### **Day Seven – Cayucos to Pismo Beach – 37 miles (elevation +1280 / -1273 ft)**

In the morning our route sticks close to the coast as it winds through the picturesque towns of Cayucos and Morro Bay before skirting scenic Morro Bay National Estuary, home to an incredible diversity of bird life. Cycling inland from Morro Bay, you'll pass through idyllic ranchland and the historic mission town of San Luis Obispo (voted happiest town in North America!) before heading back to the coast. A short detour along a creekside bike path to the small resort town of Avila Beach beckons before the final leg of the route to Pismo Beach, another classic beach town.

### **Day Eight – Pismo Beach to Santa Maria – 30 miles (elevation +1111 / -670 ft)**

Most of the route today veers inland through rich farmland. The mild climate and deep soils here mean a wide variety of crops will thrive. Watch for artichokes and strawberries! The terrain starts out with some rolling hills, but levels out as you pass through the sleepy town of Guadalupe before the short spin to Santa Maria.

### **Day Nine – Santa Maria to Solvang – 38 miles (elevation +1931 / -1622 ft)**

From Santa Maria, you'll quickly find yourself in the idyllic vineyards of the Santa Ynez winery region. This is where the movie "Sideways" was filmed, often with actual staff from the winery tasting rooms. Tackling the hills at the south end of Foxen Canyon Road brings you to the tiny hamlet of Los Olivos and its numerous tasting rooms. From Los Olivos it's a short spin along Alamo Pintado Road (or a rollicking climb and descent on Ballard Canyon Road) to the Danish-themed town of Solvang in the heart of the Santa Ynez wine country.

### **Day Ten – Solvang to Santa Barbara – 52 miles (elevation +2472 / -2965 ft)**

A pleasing spin and climb through isolated country behind Solvang past Nojoqui Falls Park starts the day before you gain US 101 and climb over Gaviota Pass to get back to the coast. The coastal approach to Santa Barbara on US 101 is actually quite pleasant for cycling on a freeway and features expansive ocean views. As you near Santa Barbara, you'll take the traditional Coast Bike Route through Hope Ranch and bike along the waterfront before ending the day among the palm trees and sandy beaches of Santa Barbara.

### **Day Eleven – Santa Barbara to Oxnard – 38 miles (elevation +904 / -909 ft)**

From Santa Barbara to Ventura the route hugs the coast and features some more freeway riding and views of several classic surf spots. South of Ventura the route cuts inland for a while through agricultural areas before coming to Oxnard and the Channel Islands Harbor area.

## **Day Twelve – Oxnard to Santa Monica – 49 miles (elevation +1457 / -1452 ft)**

Southern California ambience dominates the route today. In the morning, you'll ride through urban areas and farmland before reaching the scenic northern Malibu coast. As you get close to the actual town of Malibu, you'll see classic California beach homes built right over the ocean. The last few miles of riding are on a bike path winding across the golden sands of the Santa Monica Beach to Santa Monica pier.

***\*\*Please note that all mileages and elevation gain/loss data (in feet) are approximate only and will vary according to hotel location and actual routes ridden.\*\****

## **Potential Layover Day Locations**

### **Monterey**

The Monterey Peninsula offers a host of activities for a layover day. The world class [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) and Cannery Row are very popular to explore. Monterey was the capital of California in the late 1700s and early 1800s and has an interesting downtown historic district. Golf enthusiasts might enjoy the famous [golf courses of Pebble Beach](#), just south of Monterey. In winter, [Pacific Grove](#) (also just south of Monterey) is the home for thousands of migrating monarch butterflies. Kayaking on Monterey Bay with [Monterey Bay Kayaks](#) is yet another option.

### **Big Sur**

Big Sur is an amazing destination for just relaxing under a canopy of towering redwood trees or for enjoying some incredible hiking. [Andrew Molera State Park](#) has a variety of hikes featuring ocean views and river valleys. [Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park](#) has several hikes into the redwoods, along lush canyon bottoms and up to great viewpoints.

### **Pismo Beach**

Pismo Beach is a great base from which to explore beaches as well as the nearby [Edna Valley wine country](#). Pismo Pier is a popular surfing spot and local shops rent wetsuits and boards. Located just 5 miles inland along Price Canyon, the award winning wines of the Edna Valley also beckon. This compact wine growing region is perfect for exploration by bicycle.

### **Solvang**

Solvang, located in the heart of the [Santa Ynez Valley](#), is the perfect base from which to explore this wine growing region. Santa Rosa Road, Happy Canyon, Figueroa Mountain Road, the Foxen Canyon Loop and Ballard Canyon all offer great views, fun cycling and numerous winery tasting rooms. The small towns of Los Olivos, Ballard and Santa Ynez (each with shops, tasting rooms and restaurants) are also fun to explore. It is possible to do two days of cycling in the Santa Ynez Valley based in one spot with very little repeat riding.

Last update 1/28/15