



BIKING: San Francisco to Santa Monica (LA) – 9 Day Itinerary *(505 Total Miles / Daily Average = 56 miles / Daily Range = 34-81 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 Cambria – 71 miles (elevation +5832 / -6039 ft)

The rest of the epic Big Sur coast dominates the first 50 miles of the ride today. Right off the bat you'll tackle the biggest hill of the tour as you climb above the Big Sur River past colorful cafes before descending back toward the ocean. Short hikes to redwood canyons and waterfalls as well as panoramic views from scenic vistas line this stretch of the route. After the hills leading up to Ragged Point the terrain levels out as we ride through idyllic ranchland past an elephant seal colony and Hearst Castle before getting a well earned night's rest in the seaside village of Cambria.

Day Six – Cambria to Pismo Beach – 52 miles (elevation +1812 / -1798 ft)

In the morning our route sticks close to the coast and 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 Seven – Pismo Beach to Solvang – 68 miles (elevation +2989 / -2520 ft)

The first part of the route today veers inland through rich farmland. The terrain starts out with some rolling hills, but levels out as you pass through the sleepy town of Guadalupe before a short spin to Santa Maria. From Santa Maria, you'll quickly find yourself in the idyllic vineyards of the Santa Ynez winery region. 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 quick ride 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 Eight – Solvang to Ventura – 81 miles (elevation +3792 / -4245 ft)

A pleasing spin and climb through isolated country behind Solvang 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. From Santa Barbara to Ventura the route hugs the coast and features some more freeway riding and views of several classic surf spots.

Day Nine – Ventura to Santa Monica – 58 miles (elevation +1529 / -1571 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 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.

Cambria

The oceanside village of Cambria has quite a few diverse offerings for a layover day. The town itself is filled with art galleries, other shopping options and excellent small restaurants. Scenic hiking trails surround the town and can also be found just north of town in [San Simeon State Park](#). Many visitors to Cambria enjoy a tour at the iconic [Hearst Castle](#), about 6 miles north of town. Just opposite the entrance to Hearst Castle in San Simeon Cove, a popular place to kayak with [Sea For Yourself Kayaks](#) or to just sit on the beach.

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.