



BIKING: Santa Cruz to Santa Monica (LA) – 6 Day Itinerary *(421 Total Miles / Daily Average = 70 miles / Daily Range = 58-81 miles)*

Day One – Santa Cruz to Carmel – 65 miles (elevation +2438 / -2212 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. From Monterey you'll take with a side trip out to scenic 17 Mile Drive to experience the storied golf courses of Pebble Beach before finishing in Carmel, with its white sandy beach and numerous restaurants and art galleries.

Day Two – Carmel to Ragged Point – 75 miles (elevation +7088 / -6796 ft)

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. You'll cross deep canyons on historic bridges. Short hikes to redwood canyons and waterfalls as well as panoramic views from scenic vistas line this stretch of the route. Cafes and restaurants perched in dramatic locations are tempting to stop at as well. Home for the night is the isolated Ragged Point Inn, located at the southern end of the Big Sur coast on a bluff hundreds of feet above the ocean below.

Day Three – Ragged Point to Pismo Beach – 74 miles (elevation +2618 / -2917 ft)

South of Ragged Point the terrain levels out as we ride by an elephant seal colony and Hearst Castle before passing through the seaside village of Cambria. South of Cambria 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 Four – 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 Five – 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 Six – 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

Carmel

Carmel, located on the southern Monterey Peninsula, offers a host of layover day options. The downtown area is filled with shopping options and an historic mission is located on the edge of town. Beaches and coves are waiting to be explored. Hiking in [Point Lobos State Reserve](#) just south of Carmel is very popular, as are the [golf courses of Pebble Beach](#), located just north of Carmel.

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.

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