



BIKING: San Francisco to Santa Monica (LA) – 12 Day Itinerary - CAMPING

(517 Total Miles / Daily Average = 43 miles / Daily Range = 32-68 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.

Suggested Campground: Half Moon Bay State Beach (Hike/Bike sites - Yes)

Day Two – Half Moon Bay to New Brighton State Beach – 57 miles (elevation +3427 / -3447 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. Toward the end of the day you'll cycle through the surfer town of Santa Cruz, with its famous pier and boardwalk. New Brighton State beach is a few miles past Santa Cruz.

Suggested Campground: New Brighton State Beach (Hike/Bike sites - Yes)

Day Three – New Brighton State Beach to Monterey – 42 miles (elevation +2020 / -1726 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. Monterey Veterans Park sits on a hill above downtown Monterey.

Suggested Campground: Monterey Veterans Park (Hike/Bike sites - Yes)

Day Four – Monterey to Big Sur – 46 miles (elevation +2751 / -2849 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 at Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park.

Suggested Campground: Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park (Hike/Bike sites – Yes)

Day Five – Big Sur to Plaskett Creek – 33 miles (elevation +3215 / -3299 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. Plaskett Creek Campground is located in a forest and is just a short walk across Highway One from Sand Dollar Beach.

Suggested Campground: Plaskett Creek Campground (Hike/Bike sites – Yes)

Day Six – Plaskett Creek to San Simeon State Park – 35 miles (elevation +2759 / -2854 ft)

From Plaskett Creek to Ragged Point another set of challenging hills with amazing views of the Big Sur coastline greets us. After descending from Ragged Point the coastal route in northern SLO County 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. San Simeon State Park, located on the coast just north of seaside village of Cambria, has beach access and several miles of hiking trails.

Suggested Campground: Hearst San Simeon State Park (Hike/Bike sites – Yes)

Day Seven – San Simeon to Pismo Beach – 57 miles (elevation +1873 / -1907 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.

Suggested Campground: Pismo Beach State Beach – North Campground (Hike/Bike sites – No), or Oceano Campground (Hike/Bike sites – No)

Day Eight – Pismo Beach to Buellton – 68 miles (elevation +3009 / -2687 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 Buellton in the heart of the Santa Ynez wine country.

Suggested Campground: Flying Flags RV Park (Hike/Bike sites - No)

Day Nine – Buellton to El Capitan/Refugio – 32 miles (elevation +1776 / -2081 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 route on this stretch on US 101 is actually quite pleasant for cycling on a freeway and features expansive ocean views. Home for the night is either El Capitan State Beach (with a private campground option just inland as well) or Refugio State Beach.

Suggested Campground(s): EL Capitan State Beach (Hike/Bike sites – Yes), or El Capitan Canyon (Hike/Bike sites – No), or Refugio State Beach (Hike/Bike sites – Yes)

Day Ten – El Capitan/Refugio to Carpinteria – 37 miles (elevation +1280 / -1296 ft)

In the morning a short spin back on US 101 (again with expansive coastal views) gets you to Goleta, where you exit the freeway for good. As you near Santa Barbara, you'll take the traditional Coast Bike Route through Hope Ranch and bike along the Santa Barbara waterfront to Carpinteria.

Suggested Campground: Carpinteria State Beach (Hike/Bike sites - Yes)

Day Eleven – Carpinteria to Pt Mugu (Sycamore Canyon) – 44 miles (elevation +699 / -711 ft)

Southern California ambience dominates the route today. In the morning, you'll pass by classic surf spots and ride through urban areas and farmland before reaching the scenic northern Malibu coast later in the day.

Suggested Campground: Pt Mugu State Park Sycamore Canyon (Hike/Bike sites – Yes)

Day Twelve – Pt Mugu (Sycamore Canyon) to Santa Monica – 32 miles (elevation +1289 / -1297 ft)

The last day of the tour features the 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 accommodations chosen 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.

San Simeon/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.

Buellton

Buellton, 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, Solvang 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.

El Capitan/Refugio

If your idea of a layover day is sitting on a beautiful beach away from the hustle and bustle of the city, El Capitan State Beach or Refugio State Beach are perfect.

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