

To Big Sur ... With Love

With cooler temperatures and less traffic, there's no better time than autumn to go coastal

BY JOY A. KENNELLY

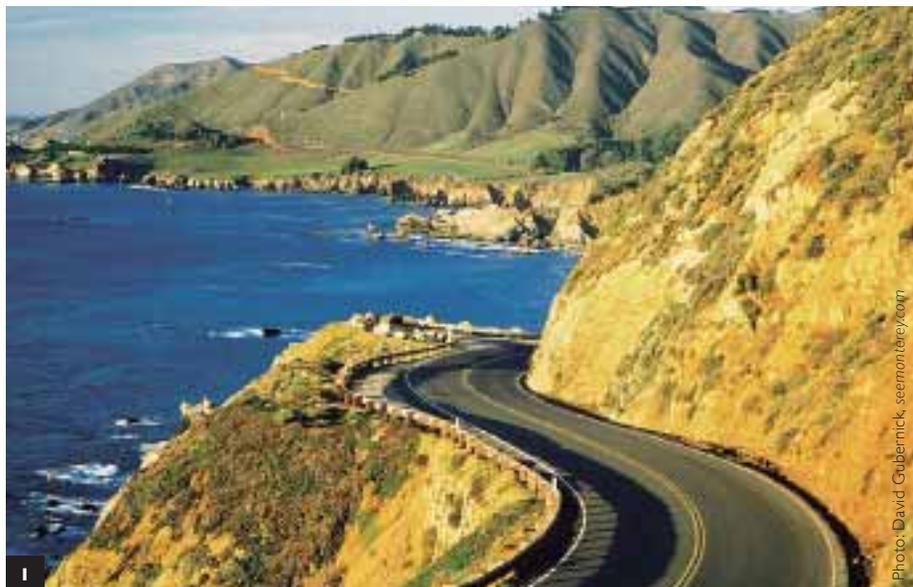


Photo: David Cubernick, seemonterey.com

If you want to get out of Dodge – waaaaay out of Dodge – and the road is your closest option, consider taking that significant someone on a journey through the languid stretch of coastal asphalt that winds, almost uninterrupted, from Santa Barbara to Monterey: Highway 1. Only Route 66 has more cachet when it comes to historic highways that occupy California. Fall and early winter are the best times to travel to avoid the marine layer of fog and experience the full splendor of this roadway. There's plenty to discover at stopping points along the way; if you're not beholden to a schedule, six or seven hours (drive time) could easily become six or seven days. Here's how.

The award-winning **Bacara Resort and Spa** (bacararesort.com) in Santa Barbara features world-class golf, beautifully appointed rooms, and the award-winning Miro Restaurant, with its 12,000-bottle wine cellar and tasting room. **The Santa Barbara Museum of Art** features classical antiquities rivaled only by the Getty Museum in the West.

San Luis Obispo, home to Cal Poly University, SLO, is a cute and classy college town with a fun Farmer's Market every Thursday evening with live music and fantastic fresh produce. This section of the coast is also great for spotting sea otters and other protected sea mammals congregating in the ocean.

Oenophiles will want to visit Paso Robles, known for excellent wineries and wine trail. **Denner Winery** comes highly recommended, while others with good reviews include Terry Hoage, L'Aventure, Booker, and Windward, all within minutes of each other. Cambria's art galleries feature painting, sculpture, and photography; the town boasts numerous antique shops and more wineries. One caveat: These shops are local-centric; operating hours are *laissez-faire*.

Native Californian or not, you've heard tales of **Hearst Castle's** sprawling opulence. Upon making the turn onto the driveway leading to San Simeon's largest and most palatial estate, the approaching grandiosity will astound you. Traipse through Publishing Magnate William Randolph Hearst's dream estate, equipped with 56 bedrooms, 61 bathrooms, and an array of rooms with views and hear tales of the famous folk from California's early days who recreated at the Castle. Tours fill up quickly, so check ahead. hearstcastle.org

After you've driven the 30 miles of winding road between Cambria and Big Sur enjoying the numerous scenic vista points and parks, you'll be in the vicinity of **Post Ranch Inn**; drive the two-lane road up to this exclusive resort built on the cliffs, which offers yet more amazing views. postranchinn.com

Almost right across the street another exquisite destination awaits: **La Ventana**. More for families and those who want to socialize, La Ventana also has a great spa; people feel comfortable roaming the

grounds in their robes. ventanainn.com

Finally, as you near Monterey, you'll happen upon the homey Carmel-by-the-Sea. A throwback town where no house numbers exist (beckoning the locals to mix and mingle at the local post office on a regular basis), you will find **La Playa Carmel**, a recently renovated Victorian-style hotel.

A bit of trivia: In January 1983, Steve Jobs brought his development team to a retreat at the hotel, where he unveiled the first Macintosh computer prototype. The weekend's celebratory revelry, complete with beach bonfire, loud music, and skinny-dipping in the La Playa pool until the wee hours, resulted in a lifetime ban (since relaxed).

Monterey County has an ample pocket of choice vineyards; among them is **Galante Vineyards**, whose winemaker is none other than Jack Galante, great grandson of Carmel's founder, J.F. Devendorf. The town has a quaint section of wine tasting and galleries next to the ocean.

Where you go from here is up to you. Perhaps some golf . . . ?

1 / Discover your own winding stretch of Highway 1

2 / La Playa Carmel

