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## HIGHWAY 1'S BEST BEACHES—UNCROWDED AND WIDE OPEN GET OUR MAP AND HEAD OUT!

Anyone who believes “a beach is a beach is a beach” hasn’t visited the Highway 1 Discovery Route’s Best Beaches on the central California coastline. Granted, every beach provides a sand-filled expanse that greets the Pacific surf and produces idyllic sunsets, but you won’t find beachfront wine tasting within ten minutes of elephant seal pups anywhere else in the world. And true, though packing buckets and shovels is a universal family ritual, 203 additional activities await you here. And should all these adventures build up your appetite, 28 independent beachside restaurants are waiting to nourish you. Altogether, visitors can discover 21 beaches, including 9 hidden shoresides that promise a more secluded experience.

There’s so much beach bounty here that you can schedule a week’s worth of activities without overlapping once. Given these options, deciding where to go and what to do can feel a tad daunting. Fear not, the new Highway 1’s Best Beaches Map makes plotting your trip as easy as sticking your toes in the sand.

Such an abundance of options requires some orientation, so let’s start at Ragged Point, located at the gateway to Big Sur, and beach hop south along Highway 1. Ragged Point offers one of the premiere vistas on the entire west coast. When you descend the one half-mile trail, you’ll also discover another unique Central Coast feature, a black sand beach. Nearby San Simeon Beach doesn’t require the same 400-foot climb, but instead features easily accessed calm water and soft sand. Adults will gravitate to Hearst Ranch Winery’s tasting room, located on the edge of San Simeon Bay.



Moonstone Beach

Just a bit south, Moonstone Beach will greet you with strong surf due to its unprotected coastline. These same conditions produce the “moonstone smooth” sea glass for which the beach is famous. Moonstone Beach’s one-mile wooden boardwalk is synonymous with romantic strolls.



Avila Beach

Then onto Estero Bluffs Beach where you can hike among the grass and wildflowers, then descend into the secluded sandy cove to scout for whales, watch shorebirds dash



Ragged Point's Black Sand Beach

away from the waves, and explore more tidepools—you’ll even see an old shipwreck.

If you crave a little bygone California coastal vibe, then Cayucos State Beach is where you want to be. Anchored by the historic Cayucos Pier, a license-free fishing favorite, locals spend their days playing in the waves, surfing, taking the kids to the playground and the pooch to the water. Families and furry friends can easily spend the entire day moving from sandcastle construction to tidepools to old-time downtown storefronts to beachside cafes.



Cayucos Pier

Folks looking to get a little workout during their visit often flock to the six-mile-long Morro Strand. The white sand stretches as far as the eye can see, and the winds keep windsurfers and kite flyers very content, and the sand packs hard enough for joggers.

Montaña de Oro State Park takes all the diversity of the Central Coast and packs it into one amazing area. A hiker’s paradise, the extensive trails top rugged cliffs, course along streams and into canyons, and reveal numerous secluded beaches that take a bit of a stroll to find. Though this vast park has options in every direction, don’t miss Spooner’s Cove Beach, a hidden gem that offers amazing views.

We all know that a child’s first impressions of sand and waves can last a lifetime. Avila Beach, a local’s favorite, is as kid-friendly a

beach as you’ll find anywhere. It’s a wide beach that receives gentle waves, perfect for splashing about without concern for tumultuous surf or sneaker waves. Kids love the playground located in adjacent Pirate Park, too. Those gentle waves are perfect for launching kayaks and standup paddleboards as well.

Oceano Dunes adds yet another unique option to your beach adventure, driving on the sand. This historic beach is also known for horseback riding and Pismo clams. Head south towards Oso Flaco and discover a dunes preserve where you can walk for miles without seeing another soul.



Horseback riding at Oceano Beach

Ask a dozen friends to describe their perfect beach and you’ll likely hear a dozen different answers, but there’s only one place you can watch the waves from a winery, then view Elephant Seals, ride a horse – or dune buggy – on the beach, and settle in for an amazing sunset, all in one day. Whatever excites you about a vacation at the beach, these 21 beaches along Highway 1 in San Luis Obispo County have you covered. Download the map here to start plotting. ■



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