

Insider's Guide

WILDLIFE VIEWING ALONG HIGHWAY 1

Take the trip of a lifetime while discovering awe-inspiring wildlife along the 100 miles of California's Central Coast. Throughout the wide open Highway 1 Discovery Route you can catch the splash of a breaching whale, see thousands of fluttering butterflies, watch massive elephant seals fight for dominance on the beach, and witness mother otters teaching their fluffy pups to dive, hunt, and stay safe. Immerse yourself in our natural world and see what happens...

SCAN ME!

Download a digital version of the map by scanning the QR code.



MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

SAN SIMEON

CAMBRIA HARMONY

CAYUCOS

MORRO BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY AND NATURE PRESERVE

MORRO BAY

BAYWOOD PARK

LOS OSOS

AVILA BEACH

SAN LUIS OBISPO

EDNA VALLEY

ARROYO GRANDE

PISMO BEACH

101

OCEANO

NIPOMO

OSO FLACO NATURAL RESERVE



TRAVEL FOR GOOD

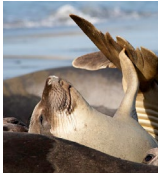
Travel for Good and use these tips to witness remarkable wildlife along Highway 1 while also helping to protect it. Thank you for being a traveler that cares. #TravelForGood



EXPLORE 101 MILES OF COASTLINE ALONG HIGHWAY 1.

www.Highway1RoadTrip.com

BEST PLACES FOR VIEWING COASTAL WILDLIFE ALONG HIGHWAY 1



GET UP CLOSE TO MAJESTIC ELEPHANT SEALS 🐻

Captivating and unreal, these huge marine mammals arrive at their rookery in San Simeon throughout the year to mate, pup, and molt. Up to 24,000 elephant seals can be seen each year.

Optimal viewing: December–February, May. [Rookery and 5 viewpoints north up to the Piedres Blancas Light Station.](#)



SPOT PLAYFUL SEA OTTERS 🦦

No one can resist the fuzzy, furry face of a California sea otter. Witness these plucky, industrious animals in their habitat, where they hunt, feed their young, float and play. Sea otters avoid inclement weather, so look for them toward shore, near coves, kelp forests and estuaries.

Optimal viewing: Year-round. [San Simeon Bay, Moonstone Beach, Cayucos, Morro Bay, Montaña de Oro, Baywood and Avila Bay.](#)



ENJOY AN ABUNDANCE OF BIRD WATCHING 🦅

Ideal climate, terrain, and proximity to the migratory Pacific Flyway make Highway 1 ideal for bird watching. Over 450 bird species have been recorded, including endangered California condors who are making a home in San Simeon. Look on and offshore for peregrine falcons, red-tailed hawks, snowy plovers, sandpipers, herons, Cooper's hawks, cormorants, brant geese and bald eagles. Over 42% of all bird species in the U.S. have been seen in SLO County.

Optimal viewing: Year-round. [North Coast, Morro Bay Estuary and Oso Flaco.](#)



TINY TIDE POOL WORLDS FOR GENTLE VIEWING ⭐

At low tide, take a peek into the clear rock pools to watch sea stars, urchins, hermit crabs, anemones, and many more delicate and fascinating creatures. Tide pools are fragile habitats that can become unstable under too much human impact so walk and sit carefully without touching to enjoy, learn, and relax.

Optimal viewing: Year-round. [Coastal Discovery Center, Leffingwell Landing, north of Cayucos Pier, Montaña de Oro.](#)



GET ALL AFLUTTER WITH MONARCH BUTTERFLIES 🦋

See thousands of bright orange and black Monarchs as they cluster on trees and in groves throughout the Highway 1 Discovery Route. Researchers have counted 230,000 Monarch butterflies in a single season at the Pismo State Beach Monarch Butterfly Nature Preserve.

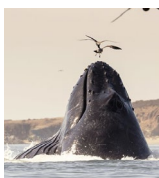
Optimal viewing: November–March. [San Simeon Point, Fiscalini Ranch, Morro Bay, Sweet Springs/Los Osos, Pismo Beach, Oceano Dunes Campground, Monarch Dunes/Nipomo.](#)



UNBELIEVABLE ZEBRAS! 🦓

Native to Africa, the zebras were brought to California by William Randolph Hearst in 1923. Today a herd of approximately 100 zebras can still be seen from Highway 1, grazing on Hearst Castle's land. The animals are wild and reside (mostly) on Hearst Ranch.

Optimal viewing: Year-round. [Hearst Ranch.](#)



FOLLOW THE SPOUTS ALONG THE WHALE TRAIL 🐳

The Whale Trail organization has identified the 100 best whale watching spots on the West Coast; San Luis Obispo County contains ten which is the most in one county along the California coast. Look for interpretive signs with helpful information about the commonly observed sea life.

Optimal viewing: March–May, August–September. [San Simeon Bay, Moonstone Beach, Cayucos Pier, Montaña de Oro Bluff Trail, Avila Beach and Oceano Dunes.](#)

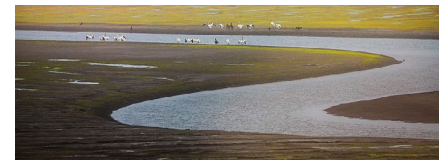
Photo Credit: Vincent Shay Photography

PRESERVES, SANCTUARIES, ESTUARIES AND NATURAL AREAS



Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Nicknamed the “Serengeti of the Sea”, this protected area is home to 36 marine mammals, including otters, elephant seals, dolphins and whales, along with 180 bird species, 525 fish species, 4 types of turtles and more than 450 kinds of algae. The sanctuary is also home to “The Octopus Garden,” where thousands of female octopuses brood; wedged into the nooks and crannies of a volcanic outcrop, these octopuses guard their eggs and incubate them in the hydrothermal waters.



Morro Bay National Estuary & Nature Preserve

The estuary is a great destination to spot otters, bat rays, dolphins and whales, or a plethora of birds such as white and brown pelicans, loons, terns, gulls, cormorants, great blue and black capped night herons, snowy and common egrets, grebes, kingfishers, sandpipers, avocets, and so many more! Nearby heron and cormorant rookeries are observed best from on the water.



Oso Flaco Natural Reserve

Oso Flaco offers visitors a serene place to watch birds such as terns, swallows, ducks, double-crested cormorants, pelicans, herons, and the western snowy plover. Other wildlife includes frogs, snakes, lizards, and both the desert cottontail and black-tailed jackrabbit.

Travel for Good... Human garbage, especially plastic and fishing line/nets are the greatest threats to wildlife. Pick up a free Stewardship Travel for Good Clean-Up Kit, available in Avila Beach and Cambria. Thank you for making a difference when you visit!

Check out these great resources:

[Travel for Good](#)

[Season of Coastal Discovery](#)

[Coastal Discovery Trail](#)

[Western Monarch Trail](#)

[Learn more about local wildlife](#)