

# INSIDER'S GUIDE

## Wildlife Viewing Along Highway 1

The wide open spaces along the Highway 1 Road Trip give you plenty of room to roam, just like the majestic wildlife that call this stretch of California home. Step out of the car to take in the sights of playful sea otters, whales spouting spires of water into the blue skies, zebras meandering upon local ranches, and even colorful monarch butterflies fluttering about.



RAGGED POINT

SAN SIMEON

CAMBRIA

HARMONY

CAYUCOS

MORRO BAY

LOS OSOS & BAYWOOD PARK

SAN LUIS OBISPO

EDNA VALLEY

PISMO BEACH

ARROYO GRANDE

OCEANO

NIPOMO



Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Morro Bay National Estuary and Nature Preserve



From	To	
Ragged Point	San Simeon	20 minutes
San Simeon	Cambria	15 minutes
Cambria	Cayucos	20 minutes
Cayucos	Los Osos	17 minutes
Los Osos	Avila Beach	25 minutes
Avila Beach	Edna/AG	15 minutes
Edna/AG	Oceano/Nipomo	15 minutes

### 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 Road Trip  
Share your discoveries using #JustCoast  
[www.Highway1RoadTrip.com](http://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, 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 Road Trip. 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: 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

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](#)

[Coastal Discovery Trail](#)

[Western Monarch Trail](#)

[Learn more about local wildlife](#)

