



» HERE & NOW CALIFORNIA



TAKING IT SLOW ON THE “SLOW COAST”

By Jill K. Robinson

» The sound of waves reaching the shore accompanies my pedaling as I ride my bike along the wide shoulder of gently rolling Highway 1, near Half Moon Bay. I stop temporarily so I can take my eyes off the road. I'm rewarded with a view of long strands of beaches and a California gray whale on its migration route.

When I turn off the highway to take a back road away from the coast, the folded hillsides appear as if a rumpled green-and-beige blanket has been draped across them. A red-tailed hawk soars above, and a covey of California quail sounds an alarm and scatters into the brush. There's nobody else here.

Travelers often pass straight through the roughly 50-mile stretch of coastal land between Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz without realizing what they're missing: U-pick farms, pasturelands, breweries, wine-tasting rooms, produce stands, redwood forests, pocket beaches and local stores with live music.

» The coast between Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz features (this page) scenic beaches and roadside offerings, and (opposite page) giant redwoods, goats and goat-cheese plates from Harley Farms, gray whales, and the Slow Coast Airstream trailer shop.

THIS PAGE: CLOUTIER PHOTO; OPPOSITE PAGE: CHASE BREWER PHOTO; MIDDLE: GETTY IMAGES; STAGS AND STRIPS: ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; HARLEY FARMS: HARLEY FARMS; HAWK: GETTY IMAGES; MARKET HARBOR



After riding on a lesser-used ribbon of road, I arrive at Harley Farms, a restored 1910 dairy farm in the town of Pescadero. One of the pens houses goats napping in the sun. The farm is open for dairy tours and seasonal farm dinners, and its shop sells the chèvre, feta, ricotta and fromage blanc cheeses that have won awards from the American Cheese Society.

Around the corner on Stage Road, the Slow Coast shop sells locally produced items, such as soaps, clothing, honey and tea. According to

Wallace J. Nichols, an accomplished marine biologist, he chose the name after restaurateur Alice Waters dubbed his 2003 journey by foot from Davenport to San Francisco “a slow walk to Slow Food Nation up the slow coast.” Nichols’ family decided that the area would be their home. Their shops can be found from Santa Cruz to Pescadero, including the flagship Airstream trailer shop, based in Davenport.

Just south of Pescadero, Highway 1 Brewing Company also cares about slow food on this slow coast—its menu features food grown within 15 miles of the building, and with sustainable farming practices. I particularly enjoy the Slowcoast Session IPA that’s brewed here.

The roads in this area draw cyclists looking for solitude, but you don’t have to be on two wheels to get outdoors. Butano State Park is an earthy forest of redwood trees (and the occasional banana slug) with miles of hiking trails.

And the beaches and dunes of Año Nuevo State Park are home to northern elephant seals. These creatures, with their leisurely beach lounging, seem to heartily embrace the slow coast ideal that I cherish on my trips along this stretch of California coastline. ✕

Writer Jill K. Robinson lives near Half Moon Bay.

EVEN MO’ SLOW

For other slow excursions in California, travel on foot. The outfitter Slow Adventure offers inn-to-inn walking trips from Santa Cruz to Monterey, and from Half Moon Bay to San Francisco. The newest of these walking trips is tailored to walkers who are interested in learning about the birds of the region. Visit slowadventure.us. —J.K.R.

