

Free! ♦ Big Sur Guide ♦ Free!

Summer 2019 - Spring 2020



China Cove at Point Lobos State Natural Reserve ~ Photo by Stan Russell

“The Greatest Meeting of Land and Sea”

Big Sur is located along Scenic Highway One approximately 150 miles south of San Francisco and 300 miles north of Los Angeles. Historically, the name Big Sur was derived from that unexplored and unmapped wilderness area which lies along the coast south of Monterey. It was simply called el país grande del sur, the Big South Country. Today, Big Sur refers to that 90-mile stretch of rugged and awesomely beautiful coastline between Carmel to the north and San Simeon (Hearst Castle) to the south. Highway One winds along its length and is flanked on one side by the majestic Santa Lucia Mountains and on the other by the rocky Pacific Coast.

Although there were two Mexican land grants awarded in the 1830's, which included most of the area north of the Big Sur Valley, neither grantee settled on the land. It was little more than a century ago when the first permanent settlers arrived in Big Sur. In the following decades other hardy persons followed and staked out their homesteads. The landmarks bear the names of many of those early settlers — Mt. Manuel, Pfeiffer Ridge, Post Summit, Cooper Point, Dani Ridge, Partington Cove and others. Some of their descendants still live in Big Sur.

At the turn of the 20th century Big Sur sustained a larger population than it does today. A vigorous

redwood lumbering industry provided livelihoods for many. The Old Coast Trail, which had been the only link between homesteads, was still little more than a wagon trail. Steamers transported heavy goods and supplies and harbored at Notley's Landing, Partington Cove, and the mouth of the Little Sur River.

Navigation was treacherous, and in 1889, the Point Sur Lighthouse began sending its powerful beam to protect ships from the hazards of the coastline.

In 1937, the present highway was completed after eighteen years of construction at a considerable expense even with the aid of convict labor. The highway has since been declared California's first Scenic Highway, and it provides a driving experience unsurpassed in natural beauty and scenic variety.

Electricity did not arrive in Big Sur until the early 1950's, and it still does not extend the length of the coast or into the more remote mountainous area.

The proximity of the Pacific Ocean provides for a temperate climate. Winters are mild, and rainy days are interspersed with periods of bright sunshine. An average rainfall of over 50

inches fills the many streams that flow down the redwood-lined canyons. Coastal fog cools the summer mornings, but it usually lifts by early afternoon.

It is wise to include both warm and cold weather clothing when packing for Big Sur. A damp, foggy morning can be followed by a warm afternoon. In the interior valleys of the Wilderness Area, the temperatures are more extreme; the fog bank seldom crosses the coast ridge, so the days are likely to be hot and the nights chilly.

The scenic qualities and the natural grandeur of the coast which result from the imposing geography, the rich vegetative compositions, and the dramatic meetings of land and sea are the area's greatest single attraction to the public. Big Sur has attained a worldwide reputation for its spectacular beauty. Hiking, backpacking and scenic driving are major recreational activities.

Highway 1 through Big Sur is a designated American National Scenic Byway and California Scenic Highway, an honor reserved for highways that are so distinctive they are destinations unto themselves. For more information visit www.byways.org.



www.bigsurcalifornia.org

Big Sur Guide

The official, complete and definitive travel guide to California’s Big Sur Coast Summer 2019 through Spring 2020.

Table of Contents

- Handling Big Sur with Care ... page 2
- Point Sur Lightstation page 3
- Hiking Trails page 3
- Ventana Wilderness page 3
- Map page 4
- Ventana Wildlife Society page 5
- Visitor Resources pages 6-7
- Where’s the Beach? page 8
- Redwoods page 8

Acknowledgements

Big Sur Guide is a publication produced by Stan Russell. Provided as a public service by :

- Big Sur Chamber of Commerce
- Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Big Sur Chamber of Commerce editorial committee – Stan Russell, Chris Counts. If you have any questions about the articles, information or revisions of this publication, please send them to:

Big Sur Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 87
Big Sur, CA 93920
Call (831) 667-2100
www.bigsurcalifornia.org
info@bigsurcalifornia.org

Photography

Stan Russell
facebook.com/BigSurCalifornia
Kodiak Greenwood kodiakgreenwood.com
Daniel Bianchetta bigsurphoto.com

About the Big Sur Guide

This publication is supported in part by the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Through this guide we hope to answer your questions regarding the Big Sur coast. The Big Sur Guide is printed on post consumer waste. Please recycle.

Emergency Information

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY DIAL 911. Other emergency phone numbers include:

- AAA (800) 400-4222
- Big Sur Health Center (831) 667-2580
- Big Sur Ranger Station, State Parks, U.S. Forest Service, Cal-Trans (831) 667-1112
- Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (831) 624-5311

Community Hospital is the nearest hospital to Big Sur. It is located approximately 30 miles north of Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Follow Highway 1 to Carmel, taking the Highway 68 exit (west) to the hospital.

Monterey-Salinas Transit

Providing public transportation for the entire Monterey County and beyond. Line 22 bus runs daily between Monterey and Big Sur Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

www.mst.org
1-888-MST-BUS1
(1-888-678-2871)

How to handle Big Sur with care



Big Sur is a very special place to many people. To help keep it that way and to help ensure your own safety, please observe some simple rules and follow these basic safety tips.

FIRES — Our biggest concern during the dry season is wildfire. Please extinguish cigarettes in your ashtray. Be extra careful, making sure that your fire is safe and legal. Be sure to extinguish your fire when you leave.

COLLECTING — Plants, animals, rocks and artifacts of Big Sur’s cultural and natural history are protected by law and should not be disturbed. Rockhounding and collection of driftwood and firewood may be allowed in certain designated areas. Collectors should contact the nearest ranger station for specific information.

RECYCLE — Most businesses have blue recycling bins. Please treat Big Sur gently and with respect so that it will remain the beautiful place we all love.

PRIVATE PROPERTY — Please be mindful and respectful of the property rights of others. Most of the land adjacent to the highway is posted private property, and trespassing laws are strictly enforced.

ROADSIDE CAMPING — Roadside camping is prohibited along Highway 1 from the Carmel River to the Monterey-San Luis Obispo County line. This does not apply to tired motorists stopping for a temporary rest.

POISON OAK — This toxic plant is found in Big Sur in abundance. Exposure to the plant can be spread by hands, clothing, pets, or equipment which has come in contact with the plant or from

the smoke generated when burning it. Much of the reactive substance can be removed by immediate washing with cool water and soap. Look for the triple leaf pattern, with prominent veins and a shiny surface. During the summer and fall, the leaves take on reddish hues. Try to avoid this plant.

PUBLIC RESTROOMS — All State Parks have public restroom facilities and do not charge day use fees to use the restroom. This includes Monterey Beach, Garrapata, Andrew Molera, Pfeiffer Big Sur, Julia Pfeiffer Burns, Limekiln State Park and the Big Sur Ranger Station. See map for locations. Please keep the roadway clean!

DRIVING TIPS FOR HIGHWAY 1 State Highway 1 through the Big Sur is recognized internationally as one of the worlds’s most beautiful highways. It is also one of the most maintained highways in America. No Camping along Highway 1. Keep these tips in mind when you travel this route:

- 1) Drive defensively! You never know what hazard may be around a blind curve.
- 2) Buckle up! It’s the law.
- 3) Keep your eyes on the road — if you want to enjoy the scenery, please use turn-outs.
- 4) Maintain your speed and abide by the posted speed limit which is 55 MPH unless otherwise posted. Slower traffic should pull over.
- 5) When pulling over, avoid quick stops on the unpaved turn-outs and shoulders.
- 6) Watch for touring bicyclists.

PRESERVE OUR SCENIC BEAUTY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Help us keep Big Sur and all of its surrounding landscape memorable. In Monterey County we understand the importance of traveling responsibly and treating our destination with care. Read the tips on this page and on our website for ideas on how you can experience a sustainable vacation with truly unforgettable moments. Find out more at SeeMonterey.com/Sustainable.



MONTEREY

Grab life by the moments

SeeMonterey.com

BIG SUR | CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA | CARMEL VALLEY | DEL REY OAKS | MARINA | MONTEREY | MOSS LANDING
PACIFIC GROVE | PEBBLE BEACH | SALINAS | SALINAS VALLEY | SAND CITY | SEASIDE

Tours Available at Historic Point Sur Lightstation

The Point Sur Lightstation, located on the Big Sur coast 19 miles south of Carmel, sits 361 feet above the surf on the seaward brow of a large block of volcanic rock. This rugged promontory has long been regarded as a navigational hazard. Prior to construction of the lighthouse (1887-1889), the area was the site of several disastrous shipwrecks.

Designated as a State Historic Landmark in 1980, Point Sur contains all the buildings necessary to maintain a self-sufficient 19th-Century lighthouse facility. It is the only intact light station along the California coast open to the public. As a part of the Big Sur coast for over 125 years, the picturesque buildings inspire an aura of mystery and haunting beauty, continuing to be an important landmark to modern day mariners as well as travelers along Highway 1.

Construction of the lightstation began in 1887 and was completed two years later. At that time Point Sur was one of the more remote light stations. In place of Highway 1 there was a horse trail—the Old Coast Road—which made trips to Monterey long and infrequent.

Pt. Sur remains an active US Coast Guard aid to navigation, although the last keepers left the Lightstation in 1974. The U.S. Department of the Interior gifted the majority of the lightstation to the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1984. The lightstation itself and remaining parcels were gifted to State Parks in 2004. Restoration work began in 1985, and today, classified as a State Historic Park.

For information regarding guided tours, check the interpretive notices posted in the state parks. Trained volunteer docents provide an informative and pleasurable tour to the visiting public, and provide access to the Point Sur Lightstation. Visit us on the web at www.pointsur.org



Point Sur Light Station ~ photo by Kodiak Greenwood

HISTORIC LIGHTSTATION — A landmark along the Big Sur Coast for over 100 years, the Point Sur Light Station is now a State Historic Park. Tours are available to the public.

Visitors will hear tales of service by generations of lighthouse keepers and their families, as well as the important role of the U.S. Lighthouse Service, which was the creator and administrator of the facility from 1889 to 1939.

POINT SUR LIGHTSTATION TOURS CLOSED FOR REPAIRS until late 2019

WHEN: Docent guided tours. Summer (April through October) Wednesday & Saturday 10am & 2pm, Sun. 10am. July and August; Sat. & Sun. 10am and Wednesday at 1pm. Visitors should arrive at least one half hour before.

WHERE: Meet along the west side of Highway 1 at the locked entrance gate one quarter mile north of the former Point Sur

Naval Facility. Tours are limited to 40 people. No large motorhomes, trailers or buses. There is no public beach access. Tours of the Naval Facility, a Cold War listening station, expect to begin in 2019.

ADMISSION: \$15 for adults, \$5 for ages 6 to 17. 5 and under are free (moonlight tours: \$25/\$10). A video featuring the Pt. Sur tour can be viewed at the Big Sur Station. Tours are not recommended for small children. Dogs, food, and smoking are prohibited.

TOURS: Each tour takes about 3 hours, and involves a one-half mile hike each way, with a 300-foot climb in elevation. Always be prepared for cold, windy weather even in the summer. www.pointsur.org

Big Sur Offers a Bounty of Hiking Trails

Ventana Wilderness owes its name to a dramatic mountain peak known as Ventana Double Cone. Legends relate that at one time the unique notch at the mountain's top was roofed over by a rock bridge. Because of this legend, the early Spanish inhabitants named the outcrop "Ventana," which means window in Spanish.

Ventana Wilderness contains 240,026 acres straddling the Santa Lucia Mountains south of the Monterey Peninsula and is part of the Los Padres National Forest. Los Padres National Forest encompasses nearly two million acres in the beautiful coastal mountains of central California. The forest stretches across almost 220 miles from the Big Sur Coast in Monterey County to the western edge of Los Angeles County.

A unique area of rugged coastal mountains, the Ventana Wilderness is managed by the United States Forest Service.

Topography in the wilderness is characterized by steep-sided, sharp-crested ridges separating V-shaped valleys. Elevations range from 600 feet, where the Big Sur River leaves the wilderness, to about 5,862 feet at the wilderness at the summit of Junipero Serra Peak. Most streams fall rapidly through narrow vertical-walled canyons flowing on bedrock or a veneer of boulders. Waterfalls, deep pools and redwood trees are found along major streams.

The climate is mild. Precipitation falls primarily as rain from November to April and ranges

widely from more than 100 inches annually along the Coast Ridge to less than 30 inches only a few miles inland. The cool marine influence does not extend past the coastal ridges, thus most areas east of the divide are hot and dry during the summer and early fall.

Much of the wilderness is covered by chaparral. Contrasting annual grass meadows and open pine stands may be found throughout the wilderness. The deep canyons cut by the Big Sur and Little Sur rivers support virgin stands of coastal redwoods. Scattered stands of the endemic Santa Lucia Fir are found in rocky outcrops and rugged slopes at higher elevations. This rare spire-like tree is only found in the Santa Lucia Mountains.

Hikers and backpackers can find solitude while enjoying the diverse natural features of the Santa Lucia Mountains. The 237 miles of trails provide access to the 55 designated trail camps.

Pine Ridge Trail provides visitors to the Big Sur Valley with one of the most popular portals into the Ventana Wilderness. The trailhead at the Big Sur Station has excellent parking, plenty of water, and clean restrooms. Big Sur Station, provides hikers with maps and other literature associated with the natural history of the Big Sur region. **Pine Ridge Trail and Sykes Hot Springs are closed throughout 2019 for trail repairs.**

When hiking the trails please refrain from entering any campground section of the State Parks. Try to keep your impact to a minimum by practicing

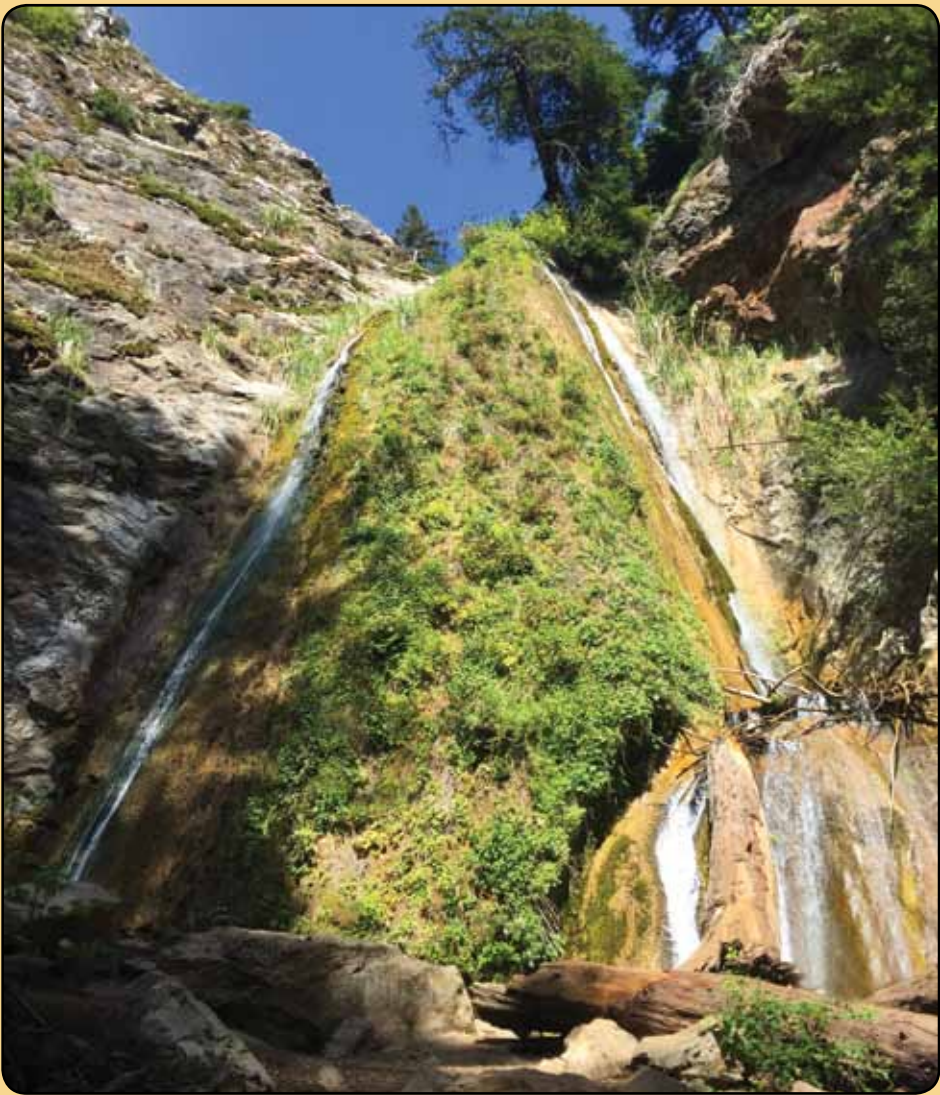
Leave No Trace Principles, including proper waste disposal, pack it in, pack it out for all trash, leftover food and litter. Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug and buried 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water, campsites and trails.

For all campfire and stove use in the backcountry, you must have a valid California Campfire Permit in your possession and know and comply with all current fire restrictions that may be in effect. You can fill out and print your campfire permit online on our hiking page. You can also pick one up at the Ranger Station if they are open. To be safe, all water from backcountry sources should be boiled, filtered or treated in some fashion.

PETS — (mainly dogs) can evoke a sense of companionship for some visitors and stir negative emotions from others. On U.S. Forest Service lands, pets must be leashed in developed campgrounds, picnic and day use areas. Although not required, it is strongly suggested that pets remained leashed at all times while on the trails and other areas of the National Forest. This is not only for their safety, but for other visitors including hikers and stock users, as well as local wildlife, which can be intimidated, injured or killed by unleashed pets. In the State Parks, pets must be on a leash at all times and are not allowed on the trails.

Ventana Wilderness Alliance has a wealth of wilderness hiking trail information and much more. www.ventanawild.org

For local Big Sur trail information call (831) 667-2315 or visit our website at www.bigsurcalifornia.org/hiking-trails.html



Limekiln Falls, Limekiln State Park Photo: Stan Russell



Andrew Molera State Park, Big Sur Rivermouth Photo: Stan Russell



Pfeiffer Beach Photo: Stan Russell

Big Sur, California



Rare California Condor soaring along cliffsides (9.5 ft wingspan) - Photo by Stan Russell

Ventana Wildlife Society California Condor Recovery Program

In 1997, VWS began reintroducing California condors to the Big Sur coast, and the population has steadily risen each year. Condors are now breeding again in the wild and are feeding on their own on marine mammal carcasses and other large dead animals, including whales! The California condor is North America’s largest land bird with a nearly 10-foot wingspan. They almost went extinct when at one time there were only 22 birds alive in the world. They remain highly endangered today but can be frequently seen along the Big Sur coast. Ventana Wildlife Society leads once-in-a-lifetime wild-life tours, including viewing opportunities for condors. Call (831) 455-9514 to find out more and sign up for tours. You can also watch Big Sur condors in the wild through “Condor Cam” which is live, streaming video located at the VWS condor sanctuary.

While in Big Sur, visit the Discovery Center at Andrew Molera State Park to see the in-depth story of how condors are being saved. Condors in Big Sur are sometimes poisoned when having ingested lead fragments from spent ammunition in the carcasses they eat. Since they eat only dead animals, lead fragments are unfortunately often ingested which is a significant threat. If you hunt or know someone that does, please use nonlead ammunition. Also, trash is becoming a big problem for wildlife. Some condors, as well as other bird species, mistakenly feed their chicks small pieces of trash, which can kill the young birds before they can even leave the nest! Please be careful and discard all of your trash, no matter how small, in an appropriate way. Litter can harm condors and other wildlife and it fouls the beauty of Big Sur.

Ventana Wildlife Society is the only non-profit organization in California releasing the condor to the wild. Mission: to conserve native wildlife and their habitats through research, education, and collaboration. Contact us at 9699 Blue Larkspur Lane, Ste. 105 Monterey, CA 93940. www.ventanaws.org

Henry Miller In Big Sur

One of America’s most famous and controversial authors called Big Sur: “The face of the earth as the Creator intended it to look.” From 1944 to 1962, he also called it “home.” Nestled in the redwoods on Highway 1, between Nepenthe and Deetjen’s you will find the Henry Miller Memorial Library. Like many things in Big Sur it is a place out of place and out of time. Not content to be a library or memorial, it is a place where you can still get free coffee or tea, or just relax among the towering redwoods that are an oasis for the weary traveler or hungry heart. Summer brings occasional Open Mic, Thursday night film screenings, Sunday night modern storytellers, live music, poetry, art and the eclectic with events every week. A sculpture garden to picnic or relax in, a wonderful bookstore, and no less than two free public restroom, makes you want to skip that trip to Hearst Castle. With its extensive archives it also pays homage to the many other great artists and writers who called Big Sur home like Jeffers, Ferlinghetti, Kerouac, Watts, Brautigan and dozens of others. www.henrymiller.org

A 501(c) 3 non profit, HML champions the works of its namesake and also advocates the support of art, the creative life, and freedom of expression everywhere. Simple, unadorned and irreverent, this is the place to get away from what Miller called The Air Conditioned Nightmare, a place where you can still Stand Still Like the Hummingbird or simply Smile at the Foot of the Ladder. Open daily 11am-6pm, ph. 831.667.2574

Do Nothing in Big Sur!

Evenings offer the opportunity to dine in restaurants from fanciful to exquisite. Relax in lodging that ranges from rustic to ultra-luxurious. Camp out in the many well equipped campgrounds. Luxuriate at health spas. And of course, one of the favorite ways to pass the time in Big Sur is to simply *Do Nothing*.



Monarch butterflies migrate to Big Sur annually. Photo: Daniel Bianchetta



Salmon Creek Falls Photo: Stan Russell



Little Sur Rivermouth Photo: Stan Russell



Gray whales migrating along the Big Sur coastline Photo: Stan Russell



Elephant Seal Rookery with observation platform near San Simeon Photo: Stan Russell

Art Galleries & Gift Shops

BIG SUR LODGE GIFT SHOP An array of eclectic gifts, State Park souvenirs, jewelry, pottery & the largest selection of T-shirts & sweatshirts in the area. 8:00am - 9:00pm daily. (831) 667-3108 bigsurlodge.com

COAST is a truly unique destination along Highway 1 for fine art, one-of-a-kind gifts and a picnic-inspired menu. COAST cafe offers third wave coffee, beer and wine sourced from California’s Central Coast, grab n’ go pastries, soft-serve ice cream and stunning ocean views from a rooftop terrace. (831) 667-2301 coastbigsur.com

FERNWOOD GIFT SHOP & CAMP SUPPLY STORE Providing camping gear, clothing and outdoor equipment. Maps & backcountry information, books, bicycle repair equipment. Everything you need! (831) 667-2422 fernwoodbigsur.com

HAWTHORNE GALLERY Representing the work of Gregory Hawthorne and six additional talented members of the Hawthorne family & ten other nationally known artists in contemporary painting, sculpture, blown glass, ceramics and cloissoné. Located across from Nepenthe. Open daily 10:00 am - 6:00 pm. (831) 667-3200 hawthornegallery.com

HENRY MILLER LIBRARY a non-profit organization championing the works of Henry Miller. A treasure of fine books, art and history of the area. Rare books. Available for special events. (831) 667-2574. henrymiller.org

LUCIA LODGE STORE General store and gift gallery. (831) 667-2391 lucialodge.com

NEW CAMALDOLI HERMITAGE Located near Lucia we offer an combination of art, paintings, gifts, and fine religious and spiritual books. Open 7 days a week. Features art created by members of our community and local artists. Jewelry, cards, candles, and more, including our Holy Granola and famous brandy-dipped fruitcakes and date-nut cakes. (831) 667-2456 X 105 contemplation.com

PHOENIX SHOP is a unique gift shop featuring exceptional merchandise from around the world as well as from local artisans. Handcrafted fine jewelry, home décor and furniture, boutique clothing, books, toys, textiles, ceramics and personal care products are just some of the wide array of creative items for sale. The Phoenix is proud to feature Erin Gaffill’s plein aire oil paintings & Kaffe Fassett’s one-of-a-kind knits and fabric artwork. Open 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. (831) 667-2347 nepenthe.com

POST RANCH MERCANTILE offers fine goods from Post Ranch Inn, featuring collections of all-natural clothing, natural body care products, organic cotton bedding and towels, distinctive pottery and glass, unusual home accessories, hand-made jewelry, painting, sculpture and more. Located at Post Ranch Inn. 9:30am-5:00pm daily. (831) 667-2795 postranchmercantile.com

THE GLASS HOUSE GALLERY Ventana’s Glass House Gallery features exquisite work from local artists and artisans. Take a peek inside and experience for yourself the unique collection of painting, sculpture, jewelry, hand blown glass, stone and wood work, ceramics, basketry and photography that we’ve carefully selected from artists’ studios in Big Sur and all around Monterey County. You can also visit the gallery for sustainably-created Ventana logo wear made of luxuriously soft organic cotton, recycled polyester or bamboo. (831) 667-4298 ventanabigsur.com

SOFANYA’S DOME GALLERY & STUDIO Visit local artist’s magical Gallery & Studio in the Redwoods. Paintings, redwood carvings, classes, retreats, Essence Portraits. By appointment (831) 238-0543 sofanya.com

Big Sur Events

BIG SUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Complete activities guide. (831) 667-2100 bigsurcalifornia.org

BIG SUR FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL November 7-9, 2019 (831) 596-8105 bigsurfoodandwine.org

BIG SUR INTERNATIONAL MARATHON April 26, 2020 (831) 625-6226 bsim.org

BIG SUR RIVER RUN October 26, 2019 BigSurRiverRun.org or call (831) 624-4112

HENRY MILLER LIBRARY Summer calendar of music and family entertainment. henrymiller.org (831) 667-2574

JADE FESTIVAL October 11-13, 2019 at Pacific Valley School. (831) 659-3857 FREE.bigsurjadefestival.com

BIG SUR FORAGERS FESTIVAL January 16-19 2020 bigsurforagersfestival.org

Camping

ANDREW MOLERA STATE PARK at mouth of Big Sur River. Walk in 1/4 mile to 24 campground sites in open meadow setting. Bicyclists welcome. 4-people/site, non-reservable. 4,800 acres hiking, surfing, and picnic tables. (831) 667-1112 parks.ca.gov

BIG SUR CAMPGROUND & CABINS Year-round family camping among the redwood trees along the Big Sur River. Store, laundry, playground, and basketball court. Inner tubing on the river. Tent camping with hot showers. RV camping w/water & electric hook-ups as well as a dump station. (831) 667-2322 bigsurcamp.com

FERNWOOD CAMPGROUND Tent and RV camping on both sides of the Big Sur River. Forest cabins with kitchens. Bordering Pfeiffer State Park with towering redwoods and beautiful mountain views. Adventure tents under the redwoods and tent-cabins on the river, access to hiking trails, horse shoes, volley ball, store, restaurant, tavern, and espresso bar. Home of the albino redwood tree. Free Wi-Fi. (831) 667-2422 fernwoodbigsur.com

JULIA PFEIFFER BURNS STATE PARK Two very popular walk-in environmental campsites at this 3,762 acre park. Requires early reservations. Reservations: (800) 444-7275 Info: (831) 667-1112 www.parks.ca.gov & reserveamerica.com

KIRK CREEK CAMPGROUND U.S. Forest Service campground featuring 34 sites. Hike & Bike Camp. Reserved and first come, first served camping. (805) 434-1996 campone.com

LIMEKILN STATE PARK Thirty-three developed campsites on 716 acres. The park features breathtaking views of the Big Sur coast and the beauty of the redwood canyons, the rugged coast and the cultural history of limekilns and adjoins the Ventana Wilderness area of the Los Padres National Forest. The park is located 56 miles south of Carmel. (805) 434-1996 parks.ca.gov

NACIMIENTO CAMPGROUND, 11 miles from Kirk Creek Campground up Nacimiento Ferguson Road. Open Year Round. Bring Water. No Reservations. 1st come 1st serve. Forest Service Campground, 8 sites. (805) 434-1996 campone.com

PFEIFFER BIG SUR STATE PARK This 1,006 acre park offers camping (169 campsites, no hook-ups, sanitation station), picnic tables, hiking & swimming. Bicyclist camp. (800) 444-7275 Reservations, (831) 667-1112 for information. parks.ca.gov & reserveamerica.com

PLASKETT CREEK CAMPGROUND U.S. Forest Service Campground. 44 Sites. Winter & Summer, Hike & Bike Camp. Reserved and first come first served. Group site reservations (877) 444-6777, (805) 434-1996 campone.com

PONDEROSA CAMPGROUND 13 Miles east from Kirk Creek campground on Nacimiento-Ferguson Road. Enjoy mountain trout stream located under a canopy of trees. Accessible through Highway 101 or Highway 1. Open year round. Bring water in winter. 1st come 1st serve. (877) 444-6777, (805) 434-1996 campone.com

RIVERSIDE CAMPGROUND & CABINS Our beautiful 16-acre dog friendly property offers RV & tent camping as well as 12 cozy cabins nestled in majestic redwoods along the Big Sur river. Hiking & beach access are just minutes away. Enjoy seasonal catch & release fishing, swimming and inner tubing in the river. (831) 667-2414 riversidecampground.com

TREEBONES RESORT Features 16 yurts and 5 campsites with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean & Cape San Martin. Amenities include gas fireplaces, generous redwood viewing decks, swimming pool, hot tub, massage services, gift shop and the Wild Coast Restaurant and Sushi Bar. Reservations (877) 4BIG SUR, (877) 424-4787 treebonesresort.com

VENTANA CAMPGROUND Ventana Campground is located approximately 65 miles north of San Simeon and 30 miles south of Carmel, is an amazing 40 acre redwood canyon. All of the traditional sites follow the existing contour of the canyon and Post Creek without disturbing its natural beauty. We have three modern bath houses and each campsite has a picnic table and fire ring with water faucets a short walk away. We are centrally located near general stores, restaurants, cafes, gift shops, delis, taverns, and the post office in the Big Sur community. Ventana Campground is a tent only campground. We cannot accommodate RV’s, motor homes, travel trailers or pop-up tent trailers. We do accept camper vans and trucks with roof tents or small campers on top (no longer than 22 ft.) (855) 391-8683 ventanacamping.com

Wedding Services

BIG SUR / CARMEL WEDDINGS & ELOPEMENTS WITH KEN ROBINS Specializing in intimate & personalized ceremonies that embrace the beauty of Big Sur. (831) 298-7353 weddingsinbigsur.com

BIG SUR CEREMONIES BY SOARING STARKEY Interfaith minister performs heartfelt and personalized ceremonies for weddings, commitments, and special life events with a keepsake script of the service. (831) 667-2928 bigsurceremonies.com

ELEGANT EVENTS - Specializing in Big Sur weddings and receptions with exclusive sites to choose. (831) 625-3523 bigsurweddings.com

KATE HEALEY FLOWERS Kate is a boutique farmer florist and a connoisseur of all things botanic. She is Big Sur’s original petal pusher creating one of a kind arrangements for weddings, elopements and special events. As an artistic free spirit she custom grows, forages and arranges the unique, romantic and old fashioned flowers she uses in her award winning designs. From seed to bouquet with love and always with the guiding mantra of SIMPLE, ELEGANT, WHIMSICAL AND WILD. (831) 667-2649 bigsurflowers.com

IAN MARTIN WEDDING PHOTOJOURNALISM has photographed more than 500 weddings. (831) 601-5344 ianmartinphotography.com

LOMA VISTA INN Weddings, parties, and gatherings in the historic gardens located just off Highway 1 in the heart of Big Sur. (831) 667-0540 lomavistainn.com

SEA STARS CATERING Specializing in full service catering and planning from private elopement to a large wedding. Sea Stars is a zero waste catering company, using only organic and sustainable meats, seafood and produce from local sources. Inspired by foods foraged in the wilds of Big Sur and the bountiful farmers’ markets year round, to showcase unique, seasonal menus custom designed for each client. Sea Stars also provides talented mixologist bartenders to create custom cocktails for your event. Chef Jamie also creates custom wedding cakes in any size, handmade chocolates and dessert bars for any occasion. (831) 915-8477 seastarscatering.com

WEDDINGS WITH SOFANYA I would be honored to officiate and work with you in creating a unique and memorable ceremony! (831) 238-0543 sofanya.com

Real Estate Services

A BIG SUR HOME Nancy Sanders - Sotheby’s International Realty. abigsurhome.com (800) 779-7967

BEN HEINRICH, COLDWELL BANKER REAL ESTATE (800) 585-6225 bigsurhomes.com

BIG SUR COAST PROPERTIES Hillary Lipman (831) 596-4607 bigsurproperties.com

Additional Services

BIG SUR GUIDES & HIKING Stephen D. Copeland (831) 594-1742 bigsurguides.com

BIG SUR TOURS & MORE, Customized tours of Big Sur, Monterey, Pebble Beach and beyond in a luxury automobile. Ideal for 2-4 people. (831) 241-2526 bigsurtoursandmore.com

MONTEREY COUNTY BANK (831) 649-4600 montereycountybank.com

MONTEREY COUNTY FILM COMMISSION is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire and facilitate film and media production throughout Monterey County, creating positive economic impact. It was established by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors in 1987. (831) 646-0910 FilmMonterey.org

BIG SUR JADE COMPANY By appointment only. One of a kind artwork. (831) 241-1154 bigsurjadeco.com

VENTANA WILDERNESS ALLIANCE
OUR MISSION: Protect, preserve, and restore the wilderness qualities and biodiversity of the public lands within California’s northern Santa Lucia Mountains and Big Sur coast. VWA is composed of people from all walks of life who share a love of Wilderness and a goal to ensure it remains wild in perpetuity. (831) 423-3191 ventanawild.org

Public Service Announcement

BIG SUR is a fragile environment visited by more than four million visitors each year. Please help us maintain the stunning beauty of this coastline by using the trash and recycling stations provided at the businesses throughout Big Sur. Public restrooms are provided at all State Parks. Day use fees are waived for the short period of time it takes to use the restrooms. PLEASE do not discard cigarettes along Highway 1. California condors are known to pick them up and take them back to their nests and this road trash can be deadly for a condor chick. With your help we can improve the visitor experience for everyone. **CAMPING PROHIBITED ON COUNTY ROADS.**

Lodging

BIG SUR CAMPGROUND & CABINS A variety of cabins in a redwood grove along the Big Sur River. Most with fully equipped kitchens and fireplaces. Summer tent cabins along the river. Inner tubing on the river. Store, laundry, playground, and basketball court. Reservations recommended. (831) 667-2322 [bigsurcamp.com](#)

BIG SUR LODGE Located within ancient groves of redwoods and oaks in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Gorgeous views of the Santa Lucia Mountains, 61 cottage style units, many with fireplaces and/or kitchens, accommodate up to 6 people. Resort includes scenic Big Sur river and hiking trails, heated pool, gift shop, restaurant & general store. (831) 667-3100 or (800) 424-4787. [bigsurlodge.com](#)

BIG SUR RIVER INN Features 20 cozy guest-rooms, full service restaurant & bar and heated swimming pool on the Big Sur River. Also features a gas station and general store stocked with natural foods and convenience items. High speed wireless internet access is available on the property. (831) 667-2700 or (800) 548-3610. [bigsurriverinn.com](#)

DEETJEN’S BIG SUR INN Offering lodging in a picturesque, historic Big Sur setting. Nestled in the redwoods of Castro Canyon, the Inn has 20 rooms and offers a quiet, retreat atmosphere. Reservations suggested. (831) 667-2377 [deetjens.com](#)

ESALEN INSTITUTE The pioneering educational institute dedicated to personal and social transformation. Weekend and 5-day programs are offered year-round, and personal retreats may be reserved when available. Reservations available for nighttime bathing in the natural hot springs 1am-3am. Property visits limited to guests only. 1-888-8ESALEN [esalen.org](#).

FERNWOOD RESORT Twelve Unit motel, some with hot tubs and gas fireplaces. Cabins with kitchens on the meadow and nestled in the redwoods bordering Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Immediate access to hiking trails. Tent Cabins as well as tent and RV camping along the Big Sur River. Pets are allowed in the tent cabins and campsites only. Family friendly Fernwood Bar & Grill with tavern atmosphere, big screen TV’s and outside dining on the deck under the redwoods. General store with groceries, espresso bar and Lapperts Ice Cream. Gift shop and Camping Supply store. Free Wifi in the bar & grill with live music on Saturday nights. Ping Pong table behind the bar. Open year round. (831) 667-2422 [fernwoodbigsur.com](#)

GLEN OAKS BIG SUR Modern post adobe hotel and cabins in gracious garden setting and serene redwood grove. 24 uniquely designed guest rooms and romantic cabins; available year round. Moderately priced. (831) 667-2105 [glenoaksbigsur.com](#)

GORDA SPRINGS RESORT Beautifully appointed cottages with sweeping Pacific Ocean views. The General Store features convenience items, camping supplies, groceries, and a variety of ready-made sandwiches and food items. Whale Watcher Cafe is open 7:30 AM to 9:00 PM, seven days a week. Offering a gas station open 24 hours, with a minimart and espresso bar. Close to Sand Dollar beach, Jade Cove and numerous hiking trails. 65 miles south of Carmel and 75 miles north of San Luis Obispo. (805) 927-3918 [gordaspringsresort.com](#)

HYATT CARMEL HIGHLANDS Impeccable service. World-class dining. Awe-inspiring views. Perched on a hillside in the Carmel Highlands with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean, Highlands Inn combines true Carmel luxury with an approachable and sophisticated spirit. A haven for artists and discerning travelers since its opening in 1917, Highlands Inn features 48 luxuriously renovated guest rooms, including 11 suites, 32 ocean view rooms and five garden view rooms. Spectacular wedding venues: Celebrate your special day in one of the most breathtaking seaside wedding locations you can find with award-winning catering services. (831) 620-1234 [highlandsinn.hyatt.com](#)

LUCIA LODGE Coastal cabins with views of the rugged South Coast. Overnight accommodations range from single units with double beds, to the honeymoon cottage’s breathtaking view, queensize four poster bed, and sitting room. (831) 667-2391 Reservations (866) 424.4787 [lucialodge.com](#)

NEW CAMALDOLI HERMITAGE is a monastery located on a mountainside above the Pacific Ocean. The hermitage offers guests several options for private and silent retreats, which include rooms with ocean views and all meals. Guests are not required to be of any faith, and are welcome to join the monks in beautiful daily prayers in our chapel if they wish (831) 667-2456 [x100contemplation.com](#)

POST RANCH INN Ocean front boutique hotel hideaway with luxurious guest rooms and ocean view villas with private decks, spa tubs, fully stocked complimentary pantries, and select amenities. This award winning romantic retreat is a perfect escape for special occasions and private retreats. The unique architecture fits harmoniously into the Inn’s 100 acres of naturalistic landscape and offers hiking trails, swimming pool, two cliff-edge soaking pools, as well as complimentary guest activities such as yoga, guided nature walks, stargazing. A five star resort that produces a majority of its electricity with a solar array. 831.667-2200 or 800.527.2200 [postranchinn.com](#)

RAGGED POINT INN & RESORT Seventeen cliff-side acres overlook the rugged Pacific, across from Sur Sur Ranch in south Big Sur. Most of our 35 rooms feature magnificent ocean views, fireplaces, decks or balconies. Cliff House has 5 bedrooms, 6 baths, gourmet kitchen, private dining room, sitting room, lawn, great views. Restaurant. Wedding and conference facilities. Sandwich stand. Espresso and wine bar. Gift Shop. Minimart. Gas station. Sunday concerts throughout the summer. WiFi. Dog-friendly. (805) 927-4502 [raggedpointinn.com](#)

RIPPLEWOOD RESORT is a rustic resort property located in Big Sur featuring a General Store, Café, a Chevron Gas Station, and 17 Cabins, eight of which are perched over the Big Sur River. Most of the free standing cabins have modestly equipped kitchens and wood burning fireplaces. Kitchen amenities include refrigerator, four burner stove with oven, basic utensils, and cookware. All of the cabins include housekeeping daily, and are provided with bedding and bath amenities. (831) 667-2242, (800) 575-1735, [ripplewoodresort.com](#)

RIVERSIDE CAMPGROUND & CABINS Our beautiful 16-acre dog friendly property offers RV and tent camping as well as 12 cozy cabins nestled in majestic redwoods along the Big Sur river. Hiking and beach access are just minutes away. Enjoy seasonal catch & release fishing, swimming and inner tubing in the Big Sur river. (831) 667-2414. [riversidecampground.com](#)

SAN SIMEON LODGE Three miles south of Hearst Castle. 65 rooms with panoramic ocean view and 1-block from easy beach access. Heated pool, infrared sauna, free wireless Internet. Next to large restaurant and cocktail lounge with entertainment. Market, coffee bar, ATM (866) 990-8990, (805) 927-4601 [sansimeonlodge.net](#)

TREEBONES RESORT Features 16 yurts and 5 campsites with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean & Cape San Martin. Amenities include gas fireplaces, generous redwood viewing decks, swimming pool, hot tub, massage services, gift shop and the Wild Coast Restaurant and Sushi Bar. Reservations (877) 4BIG SUR, (877) 424-4787 [treebonesresort.com](#)

VENTANA BIG SUR Featuring 160 sprawling acres to explore; 59 guestrooms and suites; glampsites; two resort pools with panoramic coastal views; a signature restaurant; the rejuvenating Spa Alila, which features treatments in outdoor cabanas overlooking the redwood forest; and The Sur House, offering an expansive terrace with ocean views, fire pits and bar. Spa Alila at Ventana Big Sur: Featuring treatments rooted in both traditional and modern methods from around the world, as well as products that meld the healing properties of both earth and sea, Spa Alila is rejuvenating and regenerative for mind, body and soul. Outdoor treatment cabanas overlooking the redwood forest provide the ultimate inspiration. (831) 667-2331 or (844) 540-2021 [ventanabigsur.com](#)

Restaurants

BIG SUR DELI & GENERAL STORE Located at the center of Big Sur next to the US Post Office. Family owned and operated full service deli, serving the community with good food at affordable prices for over 25 years. Featuring made to order and specialty sandwiches, burritos, tamales, calzones, salads, baked potatoes, BBQ chicken and more! Open early for coffee, chorizo burritos, breakfast sandwiches, pastries. Micro-brews and wine, Big Sur souvenirs and T-Shirts. Open daily 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. (831) 667-2225 [bigsurdeli.com](#)

BIG SUR LODGE RESTAURANT & ESPRESSO HOUSE Indoor and patio dining on the banks of the Big Sur River. Freshly prepared foods served in a spacious, airy atmosphere with views of the redwoods. Children welcome. Breakfast, lunch and dinner. Fresh pastries, speciality coffees and teas. Take out. (831) 667-3111 [bigsurlodge.com](#)

BIG SUR RIVER INN Enjoy breakfast, lunch & dinner served daily alongside the Big Sur River or in front of the huge stone fireplace. Children welcome. Take out available or enjoy freshly prepared fast food at our Big Sur Burrito Bar. Live entertainment on Sunday afternoons. (831) 667-2700 (800) 548-3610 [bigsurriverinn.com](#)

BIG SUR TAPHOUSE Family owned and operated beer and wine bar offering microbrews on tap and bottled beers from breweries across the country. Enjoy a light meal by the fire or catch a game on our two large flatscreens. A Big Sur taphouse with unique woodwork and a warm inviting atmosphere. The Taphouse is a great place to stop by and unwind. Pet-friendly garden patio with a beautiful view of the Santa Lucia Mountains. Free WIFI! Open daily from 12:00 p.m. - 12:00 a.m. [bigsurtaphouse.com](#)

CAFE KEVAH offers brunch & light lunch in an outdoor setting. Located on a terrace just below Nepenthe. Open mid-February through December, 9am-4pm. (831) 667-2344. [nepenthe.com](#)

COAST cafe offers third wave coffee, beer and wine sourced from California’s Central Coast, grab n’ go pastries, soft-serve ice cream and stunning ocean views from a rooftop terrace. (831) 667-2301 [coastbigsur.com](#)

DEETJEN’S BIG SUR INN Fine dining in cozy, historic Big Sur. Breakfast daily from 8 am - Noon. Dinner from 6:00 - 9:00 pm. Reservations recommended. (831) 667-2378 [deetjens.com](#)

FERNWOOD BAR & GRILL Family friendly and home style food. House cured and smoked meats, hand tossed pizzas and hearty soups made from scratch. Local seafood and creative specials round out a fun and approachable menu with plenty of vegetarian options. 11 am to 11 pm daily in the rustic dining room or on the deck built around towering redwoods. Micro brews, reasonable prices and live music on weekend nights makes Fernwood Resort a local’s favorite. (831) 667-2129 [fernwoodbigsur.com](#)

LUCIA LODGE RESTAURANT Lucia Lodge restaurant offers spectacular deck dining, as well as a charming and historic dining room. Our coastal cuisine is recognized for the great quality and generous portions. Fish & Chips were judged Top 10 in the US. Summer; lunch is served between 11:00 am & 4:30 pm. Dinner, 5 to 9 pm. Continental breakfast is available to our cabin guests. Off-season hours vary. (831) 667-2391 [lucialodge.com](#)

NEPENTHE One of the most picturesque dining spots in California, this restaurant overlooks 50 miles of coastline. Family owned since 1949. Open daily, 11:30 am -10 pm (831) 667-2345 [nepenthe.com](#)

RAGGED POINT RESTAURANT Original gourmet cuisine presented in an enchanting garden setting with a 360 degree ocean/mountain view. (805) 927-5708 [raggedpointinn.com](#)

RIPPLEWOOD CAFE Serving home-style breakfast & lunch & a grocery store with coffee & sandwiches to go. (831) 667-2242 [ripplewoodresort.com](#)

SAN SIMEON BEACH BAR & GRILL. Three miles South of Hearst Castle in Southern Big Sur. Panoramic ocean view. Indoor & outdoor dining (pet ok), exotic decor, stage & sound. From burgers, pizza & sandwiches to steak & lobster. Cocktail lounge w/crystal fireplace, pool table, TV’s, live entertainment. Coffee bar. Take-out, gift shop, mini-market, ATM. Free WiFi. Next to San Simeon Lodge. (805) 927-4604 [sansimeonrestaurant.com](#)

SIERRA MAR RESTAURANT Located at Post Ranch Inn and overlooking the Pacific Ocean with a spectacular view of the Big Sur coastline, Sierra Mar serves innovative cuisine in an awe inspiring setting. The prix fixe dinner menu changes daily and focuses on organic seasonal fare. Our Wine Spectator Grand Award wine list features one of the most extensive collections in North America. Lunch 12:15 to 3:00 pm. Reservations suggested. Bar and snack menu 3:00 - 5:30 pm. Dinner begins at 5:30 pm; reservations required. (831) 667-2800 (800) 527-2200 [postranchinn.com](#)

THE GRILL AT TREEBONES RESORT, casual dinners nightly starting at 7 PM. Enjoy grilled specialties from our ocean view dining room. (805) 927-2390 [treebonesresort.com](#)

THE SUR HOUSE features a menu created with local, sustainable ingredients from California’s Central Coast, for memorable dishes to pair with our award-winning wine list. Located at Ventana Big Sur, advance reservations are recommended. Please call 831.667-4242 [ventanabigsur.com](#)

WHALE WATCHERS CAFE, GORDA SPRINGS RESORT Dine in or takeout. Enjoy an ample selection of local and imported wines and beers on tap. Open 7-days a week 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM (805) 927-3918 [gordaspringsresort.com](#)

WILD COAST RESTAURANT AND SUSHI BAR AT TREEBONES RESORT. Award winning restaurant features the freshest local ingredients including vegetables from our on-site organic garden. Innovative cuisine in our dining room and Sushi Bar are enhanced by spectacular ocean views and the personalized Treebones touch. (805) 927-2390 [treebonesresort.com](#)

Ancient Redwoods thrive along the Big Sur Coast

Redwood, also known as Coast Redwood, grows in a very narrow strip along the coast of California from the extreme southwestern corner of Oregon to 150 miles south of San Francisco in the Soda Springs drainage of Big Sur. This area is about 500 miles long and rarely more than 20 or 30 miles wide in a region of frequent thick summer fog, moderate year-round temperature, and considerable winter rainfall. Redwood does not grow naturally beyond the belt affected by this combination.

Redwood is a rapidly growing tree, and some individual trees have been measured at more than 360 feet in height, making it the tallest measured tree species on earth. In favorable situations, trees 20 years old may average 50 feet in height and 8 inches in diameter. Average mature trees are from 200 to 240 feet high with diameters of 10 to 15 feet at 4 feet 8 inches above the ground. Exceptional individuals sometimes reach a height of 350 feet, a diameter of over 20 feet, and an age of approximately 2000 years.

Redwood leaves are green, flat, and sharp-pointed. The brown cones are egg-shaped and only one-half inch in diameter. Their seeds average about 123,000 to a pound.

The soft, reddish-brown bark, six to twelve inches thick, is one of the Coast Redwood's most distinguishing characteristics and, together with the wood, names the species. On older trees the bark has a grayish tinge, and is deeply furrowed, giving the trees a fluted appearance. Although the thick bark of older trees is relatively fire resistant, repeated fires can damage these trees considerably. The large hollows or "goose-pens" frequently found in the base of large trees give evidence of this fact. Fire also either seriously injures the young growth or kills it outright. However, redwood is exceptionally free from fungus diseases, and there are no insects which materially harm it. Human demand for lumber is responsible for most of the destruction of first growth Coast Redwood forests.

Adjacent to the softball field at Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park is one of Big Sur's largest redwood trees. The size of this ancient tree, known locally as the "Colonial Tree," is deceiving — due to lightning strikes, this majestic specimen's top has been severed.



Pfeiffer Falls, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park
Photo: Stan Russell



1,100 year old Colonial Redwood tree in Pfeiffer Big Sur State State Park Photo: Stan Russell

The Big Sur Coast — an off-season treat!

The summer months in Big Sur offer the traditional summer treats — warm weather, refreshing dips in the river and general good fun. What many people don't realize, however, is that the months of October through May offer a special experience in Big Sur and chance to enjoy the natural splendor at a more relaxed pace.

The second half of September and the month of October bring reduced crowds, Indian summer weather fall colors and the Big Sur River Run. The poison oak displays its deep red leaves and the Maple, Sycamore and Cottonwood trees all contribute with their golden yellows and oranges.

December through May is the time to watch

for migrating Gray whales offshore as they travel to and from the warm lagoons of Baja California.

The spring months are a wonderful time to visit Big Sur if you have a love for greenery and wildflowers. Wildflowers abound in March and April as lupines and poppies brighten the grassy hillsides.

May provides a great opportunity to enjoy the off-season peace and solitude before the summer season begins in June. Also, great camping weather.

Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park has been voted "America's Top 100 Campgrounds." Visit Big Sur during the off-season. You'll be pleasantly surprised by the experience!

Big Sur Beaches — hard to reach, but worth the effort

While Big Sur's beaches hardly resemble the vast stretches of sun-baked sand that dot Southern California's easily-accessible coastline, they offer the visitor a wide variety of recreational possibilities.

Even during the summer, Big Sur's beaches are subject to generally cool weather. Sunny days are sporadic as a blanket of seasonal fog often hugs the coastline, dropping the temperature in the process. To be prepared, bring a change of warm clothes. Also, bring a pair of sturdy shoes — Big Sur's beaches require at least a short hike.

Private property and Big Sur's steep terrain makes most of its coastline inaccessible to the public. Fortunately for the visitor, however, several State Park and U.S. Forest Service beaches are open to the public all year. The following beaches are recommended due to easy access and breath-taking scenery:

ANDREW MOLERA STATE PARK — Located 23 miles south of Carmel, Andrew Molera State Park is the largest State Park on the Big Sur Coast. A wide, scenic, mile-long path leads to a sandy beach that is sheltered from the wind by a large bluff to

the north. The path itself is as much a delight as the beach, taking you through a meadow filled with wildflowers and sycamore trees, offering fine views of the coastal mountain range to the east. The path parallels the Big Sur River, which enters the sea adjacent to Molera's beach.

PFEIFFER BEACH — Big Sur's most popular coastal access point, the U.S. Forest Service's Pfeiffer Beach is hard to find if you've never been to it before. The trick is locating unmarked Sycamore Canyon Road. Here's a tip — Sycamore Canyon Road is the only paved, ungated road west of Highway 1 between the Big Sur post office and Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Once you find the turnout, make a very sharp turn. Then follow the road for about two miles until it ends. Drive carefully as this is a narrow and winding road unsuitable for trailer traffic. From a large parking area at the end of the road, a short, well-marked path leads to the beach. Cliffs tower above this breathtaking stretch of sand, and a large arch shaped rock formation just off shore makes for great photo opportunities and some of the most spectacular sunsets. Watch for the purple sand on the beach along the cliffs.

SAND DOLLAR BEACH — Just a mile south of the U.S. Forest Service Station in Pacific Valley and 14 miles north of the San Luis Obispo County line lies Sand Dollar Beach.

From a large parking lot across the Highway One from Plaskett Creek Campground, a well-built stairway leads to a crescent-shaped beach that's protected, like Andrew Molera State Park's beach, from the wind by bluffs. Sand Dollar offers visitors the widest expanse of sand along the Big Sur Coast, and possibly the mildest weather. Standing on the beach and looking northeast, towering 5,155-foot Cone Peak is visible.

For an interesting side trip, visit Jade Cove, which is located two miles south of Sand Dollar Beach. Big Sur's south coast is famous for its jade reserves. Jade Cove is a popular spot for beachcombers and rockhounds.

Other points of public coastal access in Big Sur include Garrapata Beach, Partington Cove, Mill Creek and Willow Creek. Visit us on the web for information about more local beaches.

www.bigsurcalifornia.org