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 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.
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 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 Monastery 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 area is recognized internationally as one of the world’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 turn off the headlights.
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.

MOMENTS
SUSTAINABLE
MONTEREY
Grab life by the moments.
SeeMonterey.com

Preserve our scenic beauty for generations to come.
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

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-ridged canyons 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. Contrastingly 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
Big Sur, California

- Big Sur Bakery
- Big Sur Coast Gallery
- Jade Cove
- Lucia Lodge
- Esalen Institute
- Deetjen's
- Nepenthe/Phoenix/Cafe Kevah
- Ventana Big Sur
- Post Ranch Inn/Sierra Mar/
  Post Ranch Mercantile
- Pfeiffer Beach
- Post Office
- Big Sur Deli
- Big Sur Taphouse
- Kirk Creek Campground
- Mill Creek
- San Simeon Beach Bar & Grill
- San Simeon Lodge
- San Simeon
- Fernwood Resort &
  Campground
- Big Sur River Inn
- Post Ranch Inn/Sierra Mar/
  Post Ranch Mercantile
- Nepenthe/Phoenix/Cafe Kevah
- Esalen Institute
- Big Creek Reserve
- Lucia Lodge
- New Camaldoli Hermitage
- Nacimiento-Ferguson Road
- Pacific Valley Ranger Station
- Piskett Creek Campground
- Treebones Resort
- Goroda Springs Resort/
  Whale Watchers Cafe
- Salmon Creek Waterfall
- Ragged Point Inn
- Elephant Seal Rookery
- Hearst Castle State Historical Monument
- San Simeon Lodge
- Pfeiffer Beach

Limekiln Falls, Limekiln State Park Photo: Stan Russell

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

Pfeiffer Beach Photo: 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 wildlife 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 restrooms, 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.
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 features third wave coffee, beer and wine sourced from local farms. Situated in the heart of California’s Central Coast, grab n’ go pastries, soft-serve ice cream and stunning ocean views from a rooftop terrace. (831) 667-2303 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

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 Pfieffer 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 all-time redwood tree. Free Wi-Fi. (831) 667-2422 fernwoodbigsur.com

JULIAPFEIFFER 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. Bike & Bike Camp. Reserved and first come, first served camping. (805) 434-1996 campone.com

LINKMILN STATE PARK Thirty-three developed campsites on 11/2 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 linkimls and adjoins the Ventana Wilderness area of the Los Padres National Forest. The park is located 56 miles south of Carmel. (831) 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

PEFFER BIG SUR STATE PARK This 1.006 acre park offers 160 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


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) 484 SUR (877) 424-4787 treebonesresort.com

VENTANA CAMPGROUN Our goal is to ensure it remains wild in perpetuity. (800) 585-6225 bigsurhomes.com

VENTANA CAMPGROUN Ventura County Bank (831) 649-4600 montereycountybank.com

VENTANA CAMPGROUN 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) 646-6910 FilmMonterey.org

VENTA 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

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

BIG SUR FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL November 3-5, 2022 (831) 596-8035 bigsurfoodandwine.com

BIG SUR INTERNATIONAL MARATHON April 30, 2023 (831) 625-6226 basin.org

BIG SUR RIVER RUN October, 2022 Big Sur River Run: 23rd Annual 06112 JADE FESTIVAL October 11-13, 2019 at Pacific Valley School. (831) 659-3857 FREE. bigsurjadefest.com

BIG SUR FORAGERs FESTIVAL January 2023 bigsurforagersfestival.org

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

BIG SUR CEREMONIES BY SOARING STARKEE 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

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

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

SEEKING VENTURE PHOTO are adventure photographers who help fellow couples create their dream elopements and small weddings on the Big Sur coast. We help craft a once-in-a-lifetime expedition based upon your unique vision and story. (201) 562-2685

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) 512-2536 coldwellbanker.com

CONCIERGE SERVICES If you are traveling to Big Sur or any-where on the Monterey Peninsula, we invite you to use the Big Sur Guides Concierge for reservations, restaurants, planning and pre an itinerary of 1-7 days. (831) 594-1742 bigsurguides.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) 646-6910 FilmMonterey.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 equipped kitchens and fireplaces. Summer tent camps 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, the LODGE sits atop a hilltop offering breathtaking redwood coastal views; a signature resort; the rejuvenating Spa Alila, which features treatments in outdoor cabanas overlooking the redwood forest; a full-service restaurant offering an expansive terrace with ocean views, fire pits and bars. Spa Alila at Ventana Big Sur: A new beach house for the modern traveler. Nature and serenity await you, along with the world, 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 relaxation. (831) 667-2331 or (844) 540-2021 ventanabigsur.com

VENTANA BIG SUR Featuring 160 sprawling acres to explore; 59 guestrooms and suites; glamping; two resort pools with ocean views; dynamic coastal views; a signature restaurant; the rejuvenating Spa Alila, which features treatments in outdoor cabanas overlooking the redwood forest; a full-service restaurant offering an expansive terrace with ocean views, fire pits and bars. Spa Alila at Ventana Big Sur: A new beach house for the modern traveler. Nature and serenity await you, along with the world, 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 relaxation. (831) 667-2331 or (844) 540-2021 ventanabigsur.com

BIG SUR RESORTS & CABINS Offering 16 acres of dog-friendly, pet-friendly resort property along the Big Sur River. The Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort offers luxurious accommodations in 65 rooms and suites. 24 uniquely designed guest rooms and romantic cabins; two resort pools with panoramic coastal views; a signature restaurant; the rejuvenating Spa Alila, which features treatments in outdoor cabanas overlooking the redwood forest; a full-service restaurant offering an expansive terrace with ocean views, fire pits and bars. Spa Alila at Ventana Big Sur: A new beach house for the modern traveler. Nature and serenity await you, along with the world, 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 relaxation. (831) 667-2331 or (844) 540-2021 ventanabigsur.com

Big Surf Guide
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 Soberan 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 lighting strikes, this majestic specimen’s top has been reduced by them. The stumps are 14 feet in circumference. With a diameter of over 20 feet, and an age of approximately 2000 years. The “Colonial Tree” 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.

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 hangs 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 north of Monterey, 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 5,355-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