Highway 1 Big Sur – Central Coast  
By Tim Mayhew

Ride the Big Sur Coastline Carmel to Cambria  
100 Miles – LENGTH  
Coastal highway, constant maintenance – PAVEMENT  
Smooth, tight, endless – CURVES  
Carmel to Cambria to San Louis Obispo - CONNECTS

*Quick Ride:*

*One of the most desirable rides in the nation, 70 miles of curves in the most pristine of settings. A must-ride Bucket List Road for every motorcyclist. A true wonder and a national treasure.*

It will be in every article, news report, web blog you'll come across. California Big Sur. One of the most beautiful stretches of ocean coastline in the world reads the tagline. A bit lofty, so let's keep it simple and say the Big Sur Coastline has the beauty part covered in spades. Motorcycle or 4-wheeled conveyance, it's absolute wonderment.

This 70-mile stretch of Hwy 1 along the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary offers up a cadre of variety. There are miles of ocean coastline with minimal development, where 1/6th of the coast is state parkland contained within the Los Padres National Forest atop the Santa Lucia Range. About 60% of the coastal region is owned by governmental or private agencies which do not allow any development. Numerous parks, hiking trails, waterfalls, campgrounds and pristine views are everywhere you look. Lighthouses and elephant seals, just one of the things you have to cross off your list. And the road? Long straights, sweeping corners, tight corners, blind corners, smooth corners. Little bit of everything.

The California Big Sur Coastline is also the Santa Lucia Mountain Range. A narrow range with peaks up to 5000 feet that drop suddenly into the ocean. Micro-climates abound, from grassy hillsides, to moist redwood forests to arid and dry in the rain shadowed eastern slope.

It's said that 3 million tourists will visit the Big Sur Coastline each year although I'll admit, it's never felt that crowded. Weekdays, early mornings before 8, and other odd times- you will have the road entirely to yourself. Stuck at the back of a caravan of cars? Just pull over and enjoy the view for a while. Worst times to ride are likely headed north into Carmel at peak travel times.

You may find yourself going in and out of fog banks. Even in the middle of the day. During early mornings, fog and damp roads are almost a surety. Fog is especially common in the height of summer and fall when inland temps are 30 degrees higher just a few miles away. We have ridden this with Pashnit Tour groups in August and never saw the ocean, just a continuous tunnel of fog. That was Friday.

When ridden the opposite direction on Sunday, it was beautiful clear skies, not a cloud in sight. Statistically, expect 300 days of sunshine. Other times we’ve led tour groups in light rain down the coast, but wait a day and the sun is shining. Strangest day we ever had in 20 years of riding Big Sur was coming over Nacimiento Rd in the snow- in April. Then at the summit overlooking the ocean, we had snowball fights with fresh powder.

While the sign at left says 74 miles, it is a 100 mile stretch to Cambria and 125 mile stretch from Monterey to Morro Bay. One guide book insists this is a 6-hour trip.

The unincorporated region of Big Sur does not have specific boundaries, but is generally considered to include the 71-mile segment of California Highway 1 between Malpaso Creek near Carmel Highlands in the north and San Carpóforo Creek near San Simeon in the south, as well as the entire Santa Lucia mountain range between these creeks. The road straightens out once you reach San Simeon.

The Big Sur portion itself will take about 3 hours with stops for picture-taking and lunch. You could easily spend all day along this famous stretch of highway and you should! If riding southbound, make sure to gas up in Carmel with the last major oasis at Rio Rd which has two gas stations and a small strip mall. Northbound, gas up in San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay or Cambria. There is no gas in San Simeon.

There are endless lists of sandy beaches. One worth mentioning is the public beach in Carmel. Exit onto Ocean Avenue and ride into downtown Carmel, and continue a few blocks to the ocean.

There's a small parking lot here (the adjacent home was for sale at $6.5 Million on last visit) and you can walk directly out onto the beach. Protected from the surf and heavy coastal winds, my wife and I even exclaimed at the quality of the sand. It was so smooth and fine, we wondered if they trucked it in special just because. After all, this is Carmel.

Leaving the Carmel Highlands behind and headed southward past Point Lobos State Reserve, Hwy 1 is a smooth ride, if not a bit slow through this congested area. Million-dollar homes cling to the edge of the sea encircled by high gates that offer a mere glimpse of an affluent life. Occasionally a hilltop overlooking Hwy 1 holds a home perched high above with a 360-degree view.

The road is actually somewhat straight here, smooth curves a mile long, and vast sight lines. The ride has only just begun. No tight corners beyond the Carmel Highlands and speeds are moderate plus a mini-Grand Canyon road cut. But once out of Carmel, local traffic fades away and it's just you and the tourists.

There are several long stretches of road with places to pass south of Carmel, but the majority of Hwy 1 Big Sur is one turn to the next.

There will be an endless befuddling array of drivers who you will swear just got their drivers license yesterday. Challenged IQ drivers pulling off the highway suddenly. Or going slow creating long trains of cars behind one car, pulling out onto the highway blindly. California has a law that if you are holding up traffic with a train several cars long behind you, you must pull over. These people were absent that day, and the obliviousness and lack of spatial awareness will drive you batty.

You have two options, you can pass when it's safe to do so, or you can pull over at the next viewpoint. Many California drivers will be amazingly polite and pull over to let you pass and are used to sharing the road with motorcyclists. Don't be a dickhead. Pass when safe, wave, continue your journey.

About 12 miles south of Carmel is the Rocky Point Restaurant, a favorite stopping point for a meal. The food is exorbitantly expensive ($16 for a sandwich), but you're paying for the view so be forewarned. The view from the open deck area is fantastic and wide-open views to the south are well worth it. If it's raining, indoor seating provides a shelter from the weather and large windows offer sweeping views of the coastline.

Expensive and rare cars are often found in the parking lot, we’ve parked next to Mercedes 300SL convertible and Ford’s GT40 which you can pick up for a mere $500,000. Beside the lower parking lot is a short path to a promontory punched out into the ocean with a million-dollar view. It’s an introduction to what lies ahead and this stunning view becomes the norm after a few miles.

If you miss Rocky Point, just to the south is the Nepenthe Restaurant 29 miles south of Carmel, first opened in 1949. Also ridiculously expensive, quit whining about the food cost and enjoy the view. The view from your outdoor table or even inside next to big picture windows spans miles across the Big Sur coast. If it’s raining, the Nepenthe is also a great place to stop and enjoy a meal. Nepenthe is well-known for its Ambrosiaburger, a ground steak sandwich served on a French roll with a custom "Ambrosia Sauce."

The restaurant is also known for its Bohemian look and feel, belly dancing, and poetry readings. While waiting for a table, you can rest on the built-in bleachers. Yes, they are concrete, but there are plenty of cushions to keep you moderately comfortable. Several art pieces round out the grounds with a small gift shop adjacent to the parking lot, then walk up to the restaurant from the parking area below past Edmund Kara's sculpture "Phoenix Bird" with wings extended on the terrace of the Nepenthe restaurant (pictured below). The bird is covered in moss, and pleasing addition to the grounds.

The Ventana Restaurant rounds out the three main places to eat in this northern portion of the ride. Again, don't let the prices deter you, fork over the dough and be happy about it. The Ventana sits high above the Pacific on a ridge line on the east side of the highway, at the edge of the forest, often above the fog line. The outdoor seating overlooks the ocean and on a warm summer’s day presents a stunning view of the ocean. An adjacent art gallery rounds out the Big Sur feel. Stomachs full, it's after Rocky Point, the ride begins to live up to the name.

Worth noting is the Coast Ridge Rd (dirt fire road) that curls around the restaurant and continues upwards to ride the very spine of the ridge, looking thousands of feet down on the Pacific Ocean.

Looking for something a bit more basic, try the Big Sur Roadhouse Café in Big Sur. This small collection of buildings centers around the alcove of Big Sur. Not really a town, but a central gathering place, there are two gas pumps of expensive gas, and a camp store surrounded by cabins & campgrounds. Traffic may slow here due to the congestion, be advised to watch for people walking across the highway. The Roadhouse Café only does breakfast and lunch, and the burger is still $16.

There is a redwood grove and quaint cabins to rent. Temps may push up on foggy days since Hwy 1 pulls away from the ocean as Hwy 1 goes through the Big Sur Valley. Reservations are a must and this is not a place you want to roll the dice hoping there's a room at the inn. Even the campgrounds seem full year-round each time our Pashnit Tour groups roll on through here.

The Point Sur Lighthouse is perched atop an impressive 360-foot-high monolith, a lonesome rock out in the ocean. Known as Moro Rock until the U.S. Coast Survey renamed it Point Sur in 1851.

Twenty-five men were employed in the construction of the lighthouse and adjacent buildings. They built a road from the mainland to the rock, blasted a trail to the top of the rock, quarried stone, and built a tramway from the shore to the peak. Part of the top was blasted flat to allow for construction of the light-keepers home and the lighthouse.

A first-order Fresnel lens 9 feet tall was used to provide light to passing ships. It weighed 4,330 pounds, the largest ever made at that time and included 16 panels of prisms, each with a bulls-eye in the center surrounded by concentric rings of prismatic glass. Each ring projects the light beyond the previous one. The lighthouse was completed in 1889 and provided safe passage around the waters surrounding Point Sur.

Its light beam could be seen to the horizon, which for the Point Sur light, at 270 feet high, is 23 miles. Several buildings were completed including a cistern that held 53,000 gallons of water and a pump house that brought water from a well in the sand flats at the base of the rocks. The Station had a residence for the head keeper and his family, and another for the assistant keepers. Lighthouse keepers lived in complete isolation with their families. Bulk supplies such as coal, firewood, animal feed, and some food came by at boat known as a 'lighthouse tender' about every four months. The staff included the head keeper and three assistant keepers. There was a barn for cattle and horses and the carpenter and blacksmith could make anything or repair anything. Supplies for the lightkeepers were brought in by boat or the trip by road from Monterey took a full day until the completion of Hwy 1 in 1937.

The original Fresnel lens was moved in 1978 to the Allen Knight Maritime Museum of Monterey, where it was an exhibit. The Maritime Museum ceased operation and was renamed the Museum of Monterey. The museum no longer wanted to retain the Fresnel lens as part of its collection. Interested individuals and groups began efforts to return the lens to the Point Sur Light Station.

The lens is still owned by the United States Coast Guard who had to approve returning the lens. The nonprofit Central Coast Light Keepers collected more than $100,000 in donations to pay to return the lens. The project was approved in late 2017. The lens was disassembled, restored, and placed in storage until it can be moved to the lighthouse and reassembled in the lighthouse tower.

Point Sur is the only complete turn-of-the-century light station open to the public in California and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The light station is part of Point Sur State Historic Park. There are three-hour walking tours guided by volunteers available on Wednesdays and weekends throughout the year. Reservations are required and any visit has to be pre-planned in advance. If you miss this one, there's one more lighthouse along the ride- Piedras Blancas Lighthouse on the southern end of the ride near San Simeon.

As you make your way along Big Sur, there are numerous bridges that span many creeks that flow off the steep mountain sides into the Pacific Ocean. Highway 1 Big Sur spans five major canyons, two of them are easily accessible and are worth stopping at. There are also several waterfalls you can hike up to.

The Rocky Creek Bridge completed in 1932 is the first major bridge 12 miles south of Carmel. A turnout with limited parking space exists to the northwest of the bridge. Easily park your motorcycle here, as the nearby Bixby Bridge one mile away will be more congested with tourists.

Its twin is the Bixby Creek Arch Bridge, made TV famous by its inclusion in the title sequence of 'Then came Bronson', a short-lived 1960s TV series about a vagabond biker on a Harley. A quick bit of trivia is the Donner Summit Bridge (Old Hwy 40 above Donner Lake) looks a bit similar because the bridge engineer, Norman Raab, designed both bridges. Said to be one of the most photographed bridges in California, the 360 feet span opened in 1932 whereas prior, this area was cut off during winter due to the often-impassable Old Coast Road that cut inland 11 miles. At the time it was built, the Bixby Bridge was one of the tallest single-span bridges in the world.

Be aware that congestion has increased dramatically over the last few years at this bridge. Traffic can come to a standstill with the limited parking. You’ll often see people walking up the highway to reach the bridge. Every stereotype about intensely idiotic tourist behavior applies to this bridge. The good news is the further south you ride away from Carmel, the more the traffic spreads out.

Those of you that are dual-sport aficionados need to know about the Old Coast Road. The northern terminus is found at the Bixby Bridge as a dirt fire road that climbs high above the Pacific and parallels Hwy 1 for some distance. This dirt road on the north side of Bixby Bridge is a favorite with photographers as the road slowly climbs up the canyon circling around the bridge clockwise providing a constantly changing angle of the bridge with a backdrop of the Pacific Ocean.

Old Coast Road is an 11 mile stretch around Bixby Canyon that offers some great views of the Big Sur Coastline. There are some steep uphills if you ride from the south, but if this is your thing and you are dirt capable, always worth the detour. Into the Little Sur Valley and through several groves of redwoods. At times along the Little Sur River, Old Coast Road emerges at Andrew Molera State Park, 25 miles south of Carmel and near Hurricane Point. Be on the lookout for bicyclists as this is a favored loop for them combined with Hwy 1. Note that Nacimiento Road when it reaches the crest of the range offers a similar dirt fire road to explore along the spine of the Santa Lucia Range high above the ocean.

Two miles south of the Roadhouse Café is Sycamore Canyon Rd headed out to the ocean. This road is pointing south when it joins with Hwy 1 so southbound, it’s easy to miss.

This is a one-lane paved road in a thick canyon out to Pfeiffer Beach. A day use parking lot is available and a guard shack takes the couple bucks to access the beach. The beach resembles a scene out of Lord of the Rings with massive rock formations a few yards offshore adjacent to flat sand beaches complete with the Keyhole Arch at Pfeiffer Beach through which waves come crashing through a giant hole in the rock to the shore.

On the hills above the beach are several private roads that lead up the spine of the ridgelines to numerous private residences.

Aside from the Big Sur River Valley, there are numerous State Parks located along the ride. Some have actual campgrounds, others primitive tenting areas, and for the diehards- some are hike in primitive campgrounds. It's also worth mentioning that as you ride on by, look up and consider that high atop the range above Hwy 1 are many primitive campgrounds with lofty panoramic views. Consult a site specific to the region's campgrounds, and point that dual-sport to Coast Ridge Road.

Be on the lookout for California Condors which have been released into the wild along Big Sur. With wingspans of over 9 feet and weights up to 26 lbs, they can be clearly visible circling overhead and are similar to a turkey vulture. The population of the birds neared extinction in the late 1980s when just 27 were left. Biologists captured every last one and began breeding them in zoos. They were finally re-introduced to the region in 1992. They were also reintroduced in northern Arizona and southern Utah (including the Grand Canyon and Zion National Park).

While the population has grown to around 463 condors in existence, 38 California Condors are known to live in the Big Sur region & are currently monitored by biologists tasked with preventing the extinction of these giant birds. Condors are also one of the world’s longest-living birds, with a lifespan of up to 60 years. The birds are known to have unusually large ranges, and California Condors have been known to travel 160 miles in search of carrion.

One particular Pashnit Motorcycle Tour through Big Sur, we pulled in next to a ranger with a set of binoculars studying one of the condors along the rugged mountainside. The Ventana Wildlife Society also stations docents along Hwy 1 Big Sur, so you may run into them like we did. Currently, the birds are considered critically endangered.

Another stop worth mentioning is Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park found 37 miles south of Carmel.

This easy to miss park has McWay Falls that falls 80 feet directly onto the beach. You'll need to watch for the signs, and there's no indication the waterfall exists unless you know about it. Julia Pfeiffer State Park is well-marked with signs, exit on the east side of the road into a small parking area below Hwy 1. A short walking path provides a bird's eye viewpoint high above the ocean of the waterfall pictured below. McWay Falls is fed by underground springs on McWay Creek, and so flow is rather consistent throughout the year, even in the dry season.

Granted it's a bit anti-climactic, after all it's just a waterfall, but for the photographers in the bunch (always a handful already there), it's one of those spots you have to cross of your list. See if you can go there at sunset to add to the effect, or bring your significant other for extra brownie points. You’ll never see people down on the beach though beneath the falls as the beach is closed to the public and it’s illegal to walk on the beach to the falls.

After walking the path to view the falls, go a bit further north around the bend (photo at left) and you’ll come to the ruins of the house Julie Pfeiffer lived in. Only the foundation dating to 1940 remains. In 1939, construction began on the waterfall house, originally a beautiful contemporary building, with gardens around the house and across Saddle Rock cove. No driveway was built to the house and it was only reached via a funicular railway which is a railway track built into the steep hillside with a railway car being lowered down to the house via a cable.

When the owner, Lathrop Brown died in 1959, the house and surrounding ranch land was given to the State of California as the Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park with provisions that the home be used as a museum and center for local artists, and if that could not be done, the agreement stated the house should be destroyed. When funds could not be found for the original stipulations in the agreement, the house was bulldozed into the ocean below, which today is absolutely unthinkable.

Aside McWay Falls, Julie Pfeiffer State Park covers some 1860 acres and 10 miles of Pacific Coastline. There is an additional trail to the south side of the falls where it overlooks a rock cove surrounded in a forest of pine (no, it doesn't overlook the falls). The hiking trails headed inland provide an intense visual panoramic of the Big Sur coastline as the trodden paths climb bluffs up to 3000 feet through old growth redwood forests.

Forget about all that artsy-fartsy tourist stuff, what about the ride? ‘One of the most beautiful rides in the World’ is quite the claim to fame. And likely this is one place where the photos should do the talking. While Hwy 1 has an ample supply of relaxed straights and meandering corners, it also dishes up several up-and-overs, where the road rises from sea level to hundreds of feet above the ocean.

Curves at times are banked, and tight. Endless blind turns abound although I often tell our tour groups that decreasing radius corners are not as much of a problem as the portion of Hwy 1 north of San Francisco.

Hwy 1, both the north and south sections, are known for the road constantly cutting back into the canyons and hillsides every time a creek appears. While Hwy 1 Big Sur does this on occasion, the path around is a smooth and fast sweeper.

Road builders of the 1930s also built more bridges along Big Sur such as the 3 bridges pictured here to span these gorges and small canyons vs. the northern counterpart above San Francisco.

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The photos don't lie, and if you look into these pics of these sweeping s-curves, imagine an endless supply of them that lasts for hours. Sounds a bit far-fetched. Not really. Hwy 1 curves come in several chapters. Picture several miles to traverse over and around a jagged mountainside pushed out into the Pacific, then you'll get a breather with an ensuing set of smooth straights. After a few of these chapters, you realize it's just the right balance of curve, straight, and ocean.

Questions arise about the amount of traffic one could expect, after all 3 million visitors to a 100 mile stretch of coastline? It's true that traffic can build up, in fact, it can feel as though traffic on busy weekends is really in a series of caravans of cars, campers and rental vehicles, with clear open road in-between.

One aspect of riding Hwy 1 that surprises out-of-state riders to the Pashnit Tour groups is how often automobiles will pull over to let motorcyclists pass on by.

I'll often explain with the high concentration of bikers here, it's quite common and motorists can be especially thoughtful and polite. Autos are usually well-aware that the biker behind them wants to get around them. However, the reverse can be true. If there are two or three automobiles in front of you, no one pulls over. Pass when it's safe and motor on.

South of Carmel 50 miles and at the halfway point of Hwy 1 Big Sur is a tiny outcropping of buildings anchored by the Lucia Lodge. The lodge was constructed on a secluded stretch of Hwy 1 in the 1930s by the Harlan family, which settled the area in the latter half of the 19th century. Today Lucia Lodge is run by the 5th generation of the Harlan clan. There are ten updated cabins and a small restaurant. The cabins are perched on a cliff overlooking the ocean 300 ft below with the usual wide-open expanse of stunning coastline right outside the door. A few hundred yards to the south of Lucia is a portion of Hwy 1 that fell into the sea not too long along. Ten years ago, it was just gravel filled into the hole, then it was repaved the following year, but poorly and little more than a patch. Each year it changes. The following year, the gravel was perfect asphalt, and the cycle continues.

In the photo below, Hwy 1 appears to be little more than a gravel farm road than a main state highway. Also notice the blind corner up ahead for opposing riders. Scrub speed, and coast across for no problems.

These sorts of conditions come and go through the years. This section has since been repaired. They are typically well marked along the Big Sur portion of Hwy 1, yet the story goes a group of 4 bikers where having a grand old time barreling down this section of road. Rounding a bend, they saw there was no road in front of them, only a gravel patch.

The first biker hit the road edge so hard, he bent the front rim on his nifty BMW and was unable to continue. The 2nd biker also suffered damage to his bike while the third and fourth riders had enough time to reduce speed and ride safely into the gravel patch. Winter storms bring heavy seasons of rain, and the road is never the same, just part of the package when we talk about Hwy 1.

Aside from gravel patches, Hwy 1 is known for these short one lane sections where they are constantly repairing the road. A stoplight appears out of nowhere, and traffic takes turns running through the short one lane section. My advice to the solo rider is don’t be shy, just ride directly to the front of the line. No one will mind and again, motorists are quite used to motorcyclists in their midst.

Lime Kiln State Park lies two miles to the south of Lucia at the southern end of the Los Padres National Forest. This park has a small but popular campground with 31 sites among the redwoods and 11 sites with an ocean view. There are four large kilns built in 1887 that 'cooked' the limestone out of the rocks for use in building materials in the late 19th century. Besides providing access to Cone Peak, Limekiln Falls is one of more spectacular Big Sur Waterfalls, pouring 100 feet down a wall of limestone splitting into two separate parallel waterfalls fanning out at the base. Water flow is seasonal and spring will see the highest flow pushing the waterfall wider into a fan shape.

The arrival of Lime Kiln SP marks the location of the only paved road that heads up and over the Santa Lucia Mountain Range for the duration of the Big Sur ride. This is Nacimiento Road and it shouldn't be missed. You'll need to watch for it as it resembles little more than a narrow ranch road when it connects to Hwy 1, cattle grate and all, but it is only marked with a small road sign. The sign also warns this road can be a narrow winding one-lane mountain road and is not suitable for large vehicles or pulling trailers.

One of our all-time favorite vistas in the state, these viewpoints pictured here are easily missed if you didn't know about Nacimiento Road. It's worth it to at least get off the main highway and just climb up the range until you hit an elevation with a great view. After 7 miles of sharp turns, switchbacks and jaw-dropping views, it reaches the 2780 ft summit. The views never stop and you can ride all the way up to the top of the crest of the range or stop half-way up.

Nacimiento Road is paved, but goaty, narrow and the usual drop-offs into the valley below. Some claim it is one of the best motorcycle roads on the Central Coast. I suppose that depends on what you came for, and what bike you are on. Views, yes. Great pavement, nope. It also dips in and out of forest alcoves that blanket the hillsides at times, and then bursts out into steep hillsides covered in scrub brush. Watch out for car clubs. Trains of corvettes coming over the range from King City may suddenly appear coming around a blind corner.

The view alone is worth it, just to ride on up to the viewpoint of your choice, and then ride back down. We think it’s a can’t miss and have taken every tour group up to one of the viewpoints for nearly 20 years. During the heat of summer, the temperature will change 20 degrees in 5 miles as you ride out of the cool blanket of air that sits atop the ocean surface.

If your Hwy 1 ride is non-stop fog, this detour is a must to run up Nacimiento Rd until you ride above the ocean fog layer.

One of the strangest stories I have about Nacimiento Rd happened while leading a motorcycle tour down Carmel Valley Rd in April. The detour was necessary due to landslides closing Hwy 1 at Lucia. But Hwy 1 was open from Nacimiento Rd south. It started to rain and we thought nothing of it, after all it’s April in California. I pulled the tour group over, on went the rain suits, and we continued to Fort Hunter Liggett to get our pictures with the Sheridan M551A1 tank at the entrance of the Army base which spans 200,000 acres south of Monterey.

The rain had stopped by the time we set off across the Army base which is a tank range and routinely used for live fire exercises. Signs along the road sternly tell you not to stop and you may see tanks on less wet days.

As we climbed up Nacimiento Rd steadily gaining in elevation headed towards the ocean, snow began to appear at the side of the road, slushy as first, then an inch, then two inches as we climbed up the range. We weren’t going to turn around, and the riders dutifully followed the tour guide up the hill riding gingerly in the wheel tracks which were clear of snow. At the summit, the tour group stopped and we had a snowball fight overlooking the ocean. Not something you get to experience very often, grown men playing in the snow.

It was a fun experience and one we’ll not soon forget. We still talk about it. Remember that tour we did a few years back where it was snowing and you guys followed me over the Santa Lucia range to the ocean? Since the road was closed at Lucia, there was zero traffic headed south and we had Hwy 1 Big Sur curves entirely to ourselves.

A detour off Hwy 1 and up Nacimiento Road is well-worth the extra time. You can't take a bad picture up here. And that ocean, what an intoxicating expanse of endless blue water, an addictive sense of space. Continuing east over the range will take you into Fort Hunter Liggett. In the old days, say 10 plus years ago, you had to show your license, registration and insurance at a remote guard shack to get into the military base and ride on over to Highway G14, but that is no longer, and you can ride clear across the range and through the base unhindered.

Note that stories abound of riders getting pulled over by military police for even a few miles per hour over the posted speed limit. And as you ride across the tank firing range, there are multiple signs that prohibit stopping or parking. If you are Monterey based, it's easy to ride this loop to King City, then connect back northward via Carmel Valley Road.

Located within the Fort Hunter Liggett military base, The Hacienda is a historic building within that now functions as a hotel. The 1930s hotel was built by William Randolph Hearst and designed by Hearst Castle architect Julia Morgan.

The property was placed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 2, 1977. Sold by Hearst in 1940 to the United States Army, the hotel was originally known as the Milpitas Hacienda, Hacienda Guest Lodge and Milpitas Ranch House.

The Hacienda also sits a short distance away from the Mission San Antonio de Padua established in 1771. The mission fell into disrepair in the late 1800s, and was further damaged by the 1906 earthquake.

Restoration efforts have spanned over 50 plus years, and beginning in 2005, a team of volunteers began restoring the gardens in the interior courtyard of the Mission. Over 8 million dollars has been spent on a state-mandated seismic retro-fit and the mission states 75% of the work has been completed although they expect to spend another $35 million to restore this historic site. The mission is made out of adobe, which is mud bricks often mix with straw. Steel rebar is added to the adobe walls to give the structure strength as this site is over an active earthquake zone.

At the top of the range on Nacimiento Road are two fire roads heading both north and south from the summit. North is the Central Coast Ridge Road (aka Cone Peak Rd or Forest Road 22S05) and southward the aptly named South Coast Ridge Road. The northern route heads up about 6 miles before it dead ends at the Cone Peak Trail. Cone Peak is the highest point along the Big Sur Coastline and also the highest coastal mountain in the Lower 48 at 5155 feet.

Cone Peak is said to be one of the most spectacular coastal mountains in the Lower 48 States. At 5155' high and less than 3 miles from the ocean, the average gradient from summit to sea is 33%, which is steeper than Mt. Whitney to Owens Valley. From the summit on Nacimiento Rd, take a 2 mile trail to the summit with 1300' of elevation gain. You can also hike the mountain starting from the ocean at Kirk Creek Campground and hike the 23-mile round trip up Vicente Flat Trail with a 5300 ft elevation change. You can even camp at the summit near an old fire lookout. The views are amazing. (Do a Google Image search for Cone Peak Trail fire lookout).

This region may experience wildfires. In 2016 during the height of a 4-year drought, the Soberanes Fire burned 132,127 acres through steep canyons and as we rode down the coast with the Pashnit Tour group, we could see the fire had burned down the hillside all the way to edge Hwy 1 and almost to the ocean in some places.

South Coast Ridge Road is a yearly graded fire road that will connect back with Hwy 1 some 23 miles later. Easily tackled on your garden-variety dual-sport or larger adventure bike, South Coast Ridge Road (FR 23S05) runs for 15 miles to Los Burros Road (FR 23S01) with an additional 8-mile sequence carved into the spine of the range. Satellite maps also show Plaskett Ridge Road connects back to Hwy 1, but county level maps also reveal at least three gates on it too.

The southerly entrance to this ride of Los Burros Road (aka Willow Creek Rd) is found at Cape San Martin 2 miles south of Plaskett Creek Campground and 1 mile north of Gorda. If you venture onto roads such as this, take detailed maps such as USFS maps or GPS as numerous unmarked spur roads split off from this 23-mile route atop the range. Also note that this route borders the vast Fort Hunter Liggett Military Reservation to the east.

South of Nacimiento Road, it's a straight shot to Ragged Point with the small alcove of Gorda (gas yes, but expensive!) in-between. Gorda is located 9 miles south of the turnoff for Nacimiento Rd. Gorda was originally a stagecoach stop dating to 1878 and the town expanded and contracted.

What Gorda is most famous for it the gasoline prices. In April 2008, gas prices here were nearly $7 per gallon, the highest in the nation. Despite that, we'll invariably see some poor-planning-sucker getting gas when less expensive go-juice is just miles away in Cambria. Part of this cost goes to subsidize the 100 gallon per day Diesel generator fuel bill for the town.

Riding past Gorda introduces the last hurrah for Big Sur curvation. Curves leading up to Ragged Point are hurried adrenaline-laden affairs of motorcycle smiles and the tourist traffic has thinned out at this most remote spot on the Big Sur coast. Curves build in a crescendo of cascading bends pushed up against each other like one of those springy snakes stuffed into a can you gave your little brother for his birthday. Some can be very high-speed sweepers, and others are 180 degrees tight and blind. Variety abounds and all the while that Pacific Coast will be egging you on to pull over and enjoy the view.

Pullouts for the duration have been plentiful; in fact, there are hundreds of them. It would seem as though every few hundred yards, wherever possible, there's another viewpoint and pullout. Some are barely large enough to park a car, and other are paved broad areas large enough for an RV. In the end, it doesn't matter which one you choose, they're all great and you can't take a bad photo along this coastline.

Note that as Hwy 1 curls around some of the outermost mountainsides (called capes) that push out into the ocean, that's your best bet if you want the best photos and most impressive views. None to point out in particular, although one clue is the best of the best are often paved and marked as Vista Points with signage.

Parking areas to the south of Big Creek Bridge, just south of Nacimiento Rd, and Ragged Point are especially popular photo ops providing 180-degree panoramas both north and south.

About 7.5 miles south of Gorda (3.5 miles north of Ragged Point) at the first large hairpin is another waterfall worth checking out. Salmon Creek Falls drops 120 feet and could be an enjoyable place for lunch. The Salmon Creek Trailhead is marked, but you'll need to be looking for it. You can see the waterfall from the road, but it's a short walk to reach the falls, about a mile round trip. The trailhead is on the south side of the bridge, climbs to a cleared area (visible on the satellite map), then spurs into several trails down to the creek. There are two main cascades and a large boulder at the top splits the creek into two flows. I quickly found it on the Google Interactive Map below by focusing in on Gorda (click to hybrid view) and scrolling down to the first large sweeping hairpin. You can even see the walking trail in the satellite view.

Ragged Point is found 12 miles south of Gorda and 350 feet above the ocean on a promontory in the Pacific. It marks the southern terminus of the super-twisty and rugged portions of Highway 1. Hotel, gift shop, even weddings on a grassy area overlooking the ocean below. There is gas here, and even a small espresso bar. The view of the rugged Big Sur Coastline to the north at Ragged Point is easily missed as you can't see it from the road and requires a short stroll behind all the buildings onto a broad green lawn often used for weddings.

There’s also a steep walking trail on the north side of the point that switchbacks 400 feet down to the ocean. On cold blustery days, Ragged Point is a great rendezvous point for riders to stop and grab a coffee or hot cider. Ragged Point started up in the 1950's and operated by the same family that has owned the grounds since 1961. Ragged Point also lays claim to the largest waterfall on the Big Sur Coastline. The views are quite simply stunning. Wouldn't expect anything less.

Leaving Ragged Point refreshed, wired up on coffee, and reminiscing over one’s wedding (past or future), Hwy 1 descends from its average 400 ft elevation down to ocean level. The twisties are over and so is the ruggedly steep coastline. It's a relaxed ride to Morro Bay and then turning inland to San Luis Obispo. If you look in your mirrors, you may see the photo below. If you are headed north, you'll be staring at that impressive Santa Lucia Mountain Range and it’s a magazine-cover photo stop.

The Mud Creek slide in the spring of 2017 created one of the largest landslides along Highway 1 in decades pushing 15 acres of material in a slide 1750 feet wide 600 feet out into the ocean. The slide reshaped the coastline and deposited so much material on the top of Highway 1, it left road engineers scratching their heads how to remove 2.4 million yards of dirt.

Highway 1 was closed for 18 months while road engineers stabilized the slide material and worked to pave right across the top of it. Slides & perpetual repairs may create one-way sections of Highway 1. You’ll hauling along and come up on a stoplight in the middle of nowhere.

The Santa Lucia Mountains end here at Ragged Point along with the ruggedly steep coastline. However, Big Sur doesn't lose any of its allure and the view is still grand, just different.

This final lazy stretch of Highway 1 from Ragged Point to Morro Bay offers up several stopping points and you'll have to decide what interests you most. Not just good views here, but several touristy type options.

There's always a lighthouse buff in the bunch and Big Sur offers one more. Built in 1874, the Piedras Blancas lighthouse served duty until 1948 when an earthquake produced a large crack in the tower. Deemed unable to support the 6-ton weight of the lens and related mechanisms, the first-order Fresnel lens and ornate trim were removed eliminating the upper three floors truncating the lighthouse to 70 feet. This 'capped' lighthouse is what we see today still in operation. The lens was transferred to nearby Cambria and is currently located on Main Street. By 1975, the light was automated, the sound signal removed, and the light station is now unmanned although the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse continues to serve as an aid to navigation. A Vega VRB-25 light produces a flash every 10 seconds.

At the midway point between Ragged Point and San Simeon a short distance from the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse is Seal Beach. Somewhat self-descriptive, yes, it’s a beach with seals on it. Lots of them. Hundreds. And yes, its actual name is the more official sounding Piedras Blancas Beach.

You'll notice a lot of cars parked in a large gravel parking lot along the ocean, which may even seem a bit out of place but you’ll be able to see hundreds of seals as you ride by year-round.

This elephant seal colony at Piedras Blancas Beach began in 1990 and has rapidly expanded along the Pacific Coast to over 10,000 seals. The elephant seals are always entertaining to watch and it's definitely worth the stop. These seals were thought to be extinct by 1880, but have made a sweeping comeback as a protected species.

In peak times, there are up to 17,000 animals on the local beaches. There are three peak times of the year that have large populations of seals – January, April, and October. From near extinction, they are said to number at least 150,000 along the Pacific Coast. Interesting to note that the males can be as much as 3000-5000 lbs and have been known to dive as far as 5000 feet down in search of food. Birthing of pups takes place during the last part of January each year in case you're out riding around in the winter. A broad parking lot offer ample parking and be advised of tourists slowing to pull in or campers pulling out onto the highway. Wooden walkways extend north and south from the parking lot and either direction will give you a perfect view of the noisy barking seals.

Starting in November, adult male elephant seals start to arrive on the shore. Adult males will stake claim to female pupping areas on the beach. When another adult male challenges a pupping location, a fight for dominance ensues. Adult males will fight for mating rights from December through January. There are often docents wearing blue jackets to chat with who are volunteers there to answer questions about the seals.

​From December through March, female elephant seals arrive on the beach to give birth. Pregnant females begin to arrive in December with the majority of expecting mothers arriving in January. Births will typically occur a few days after arrival. Elephant seals pups are typically born at night and weigh about 60 pounds at birth and can weigh as much as 300 pounds at weaning. During the last week of nursing her pup (about 24 days), a female will mate with the alpha bull. Once she has mated, the female will typically go to sea and leave her pup behind. Pups are left alone to learn to swim and find food. Most pups are ready to depart for the sea in March and April. The shore has the least amount of animals in August.

At San Simeon, you'll notice a huge cathedral like building on a hill top visible for miles. That's Hearst Castle. Do stop by if you have the time although be prepared to plunk down a couple bucks to get in. While reservations are recommended on the website, the several times I've been there it was easy to get in and waiting (on a weekend) was minimal. Visitors are bused from the large Visitor Center parking lot up to the complex for the 1-hour tour.

My riding partner loves to tell the story of coming here as a kid with his parents. They drove their family car right up to the front of the castle, he hopped out and they walked right in the front door. That was probably the late 1950s. Times change and it’s a bit more commercial.

There are 5 tours offered and I'd advise skipping the 1st tour (advertised as the main one) and take some of the other tours that cover some of the more obscure parts of the home like the Gothic Study pictured at right (Tour #2).

The entire home is interesting, and the most striking impression is that of a piecemeal home- just stuff all thrown together. In a sense, it's a massive concrete home to house all the items Hearst had collected from travels around the world. Hearst never finished building the home and it's been left to age just as it was built- unfinished.

If you take a morning tour, plan on staying the entire morning and yes, the movie is worth seeing in an adjacent movie theater about the life and times of William Randolph Hearst. If you have the time, it’s a must see, but plan your visit at half the day.

On the ocean side of the highway is a road that leads to San Simeon bay and also the San Simeon Pier that you can walk out over the ocean on.

The pier dates to the 1870s when this small bay was used a base for whaling and eventually a base to take in materials for Hearst to build his house. The Sebastian Store is still here and worth the visit dating to 1852 and still in operation today known for its large burgers made with Hearst beef and ample outdoor seating.

There are numerous hotels in nearby San Simeon, a small collection of townhouses and residences of about 500 people. The Chamber of Commerce is here, but no gas.

Cambria is seven miles away from San Simeon and the first major town truncating the end of the Big Sur Coastline. There is normal priced gas here, so this would be your first recommended fill up location if you're running low. On the north end of town is a sign for Moonstone Beach, a parallel road along the ocean with a long-series of motels. We’ve stayed here many times over the years with tour groups and the Castle Inn is our long-term favorite. In the heart of Cambria, the aforementioned Piedras Blancas Lighthouse lens is located here if you'd like to check that out. Find breakfast at the Redwood Cafe and coffee on Main Street before you set off.

On the southern end of town, intersecting Main Street, is the well-marked Santa Rosa Creek Rd. One of the best goat trails in the region, this is an extremely scenic ride in spring when the hills are a glowing green and often the setting for a magazine cover photo shoot or full-page magazine advertisement. If you have knobby tires on your bike, you can ride up and over the range via Cypress Mountain Dr to Adelaida and into the backside of Paso Robles. Pavement starts back up once you reach Klau Mine Road, from here Cypress Mountain Dr was recently re-paved.

For those who enjoy a slice of Roadside Americana, you'll find a juicy one in Cambria, that of Nit Witt Ridge. Arthur Harold Beal, aka Captain Nit Witt, bought the lot in 1928 and set about to carve out a home for himself on the 2-1/2-acre lot. Beal became the town garbage collector in the 1940s and 1950s and used much of what he collected to build his home.

He built the home entirely by hand starting in 1945 from waste materials, some of which he is said to have brought home from Hearst Castle where he worked for a time. Beal spent 50 years slowly expanding the home. He used concrete, old car rims, ample beer cans, abalone shells, even old stoves and assorted car parts. When he needed a water feature, he simply used a series of discarded bathtubs

A frame for a picture? A toilet seat. Nit Witt Ridge was deemed a Registered Historical Landmark in 1986, 6 years before Beal’s death in 1992 at the ripe old age of 96.

The historical landmark sign reads: Nitt Witt Ridge, one of California’s remarkable twentieth century folk art environments, is the creation of Arthur Harold Beal (Der Tinkerpaw or Capt. Nitt Witt) A Cambria Pines pioneer, who sculpted the land using hand tools and indigenous materials, remarkable inventiveness, and self-taught skills. A blend of native materials and contemporary elements, impressive in its sheer mass and meticulous placement, it is a revealing memorial to Art’s unique cosmic humor and zest for life. California Registered Historical Landmark No. 939.

The 1200 sq. ft. house can be viewed standing on Main Street in the middle of town, at Cornwall Street, it sat vacant until 1999 when it was purchased for $42,000 by Michael and Stacey O'Malley who worked to restore the home and open it up to the public. The home was listed for sale again in November 2018 for $425,000. The house is still full of knickknacks, curiosities and unique touches that Beal created. Nitt Witt Ridge is full of many treasures that Hearst had, including Marion Davies’ bathtub who was Hearst’s longtime mistress.

Local residents of Cambria created the Art Beal Foundation to preserve the property, in deed and spirit, for Art to spend the remainder of his life at his home. A dedicated group of folks from San Luis Obispo created a non-profit for the purpose of raising funds for restorations.

Tours are available by reservation and include a short 4-minute video. For information and a tour, call the O'Malleys at 805-927-2690. The place is considered a residential home, and not a commercial establishment so kick over a $10 donation if you go to continue upkeep and restoration of the home.

Nitt Witt Ridge is located at 881 Hillcrest Drive in Cambria, about 3 blocks behind Main Street. Take Cornwall St to Hillcrest Dr. There is a very short parking spot across the street and plenty large for your motorcycle. Tours are available by reservation and include a short 4-minute video.

Santa Rosa Creek Rd merits its very own page on the California Motorcycle Roads website, but for now it's worth a quick mention as one of my all time favorite goat trails. Clinging to Santa Rosa Creek, this narrow road crawls up a canyon until climbing sharply up the face of the mountain to pop over other side and lazily join back up with Hwy 46.

South of Cambria, Morro Bay comes up fast after passing by Highway 46 which is the first major inland-bound highway that starts here and runs clear across the state to the Hwy 99 freeway. We typically use Hwy 46 to provide a connector to the Sierra Nevada Mountains clear across the state as it's the quickest and fastest way to get across the Central Valley. Someplace you don't want to be, especially if it's the height of summer and a 100-degree ambient temperature.

Also worth mentioning is the Santa Rosa Creek-Old Creek Road loop split by Hwy 46. If you don't want to ride the northern Santa Rosa Creek Rd goaty half pictured above, you should ride the short 11-mile distance up Hwy 46, which includes some outstanding views of Morro Bay especially at sunset, and then take a right on Old Creek Road. There's higher quality pavement than Santa Rosa Creek yet the swoops and downhill thrill are maxed to an all-time high. This short loop will get you away from the bustling Hwy 1 and is well worth the additional 8 miles. Ride Hwy 46 up the hill, turn right on Old Creek Rd, and the route will take you past Whale Rock Reservoir right back into the south end of Cayucos.

The large rock out in Morro Bay is appropriately known as Morro Rock and provides an instant sense of identity for several small ocean communities surrounding this natural bay. At nearly 600 feet tall, it's called the Gibraltar of the Pacific and is actually a plug from an extinct volcano.

Morro Rock marks the first of several ancient volcanic peaks that run in a chain for 12 miles inland to San Luis Obispo called the Nine Sisters. The Nine Sisters or the Morros are a chain of nine volcanic mountains and hills in western San Luis Obispo County, central California. They run between Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo. The highest is Bishop Peak at 1,559 feet.

Morro Rock was quarried on and off from 1889 to 1969, provided material for the breakwater of Morro Bay and the improvements at Port San Luis Harbor before someone finally figured out in the late 1960s, we probably shouldn’t be chipping away at such a unique natural landmark. In 1966, a state law was adopted that transferred title to the State of California.

The Big Sur portion of Hwy 1 ends here, and the road turns inland for the 12-mile ride to San Luis Obispo and the Hwy 101 freeway. If freeway riding doesn't excite you much and the day is young, it is possible to thread a series of backroads together to continue the ride south.

Turri Road

A very fun but short ride, it will be completely deserted when you ride it. One of those 'no reason to be out here' sort of places, yet it parallels the main highway on the south side of the Seven Sisters Range. Exit South Bay Blvd at the immediate eastern edge of Morro Bay as if you were headed for Baywood Park. Traffic can be a bit thick on this main connector to Baywood Park, the ocean community just south of Morro Bay, but after 6 miles, you'll see Turri Road headed east. Turri Rd is 5 miles long, has decent two-lane country road pavement, and dips and curves through the surrounding hillsides while flowing alongside Los Osos Creek which flows into the 2300-acre Morro Bay State Marine Reserve, an estuary that drains into the ocean. Estuaries form when rain runs off the land through rivers, streams, or groundwater, meets and mixes with saltwater from the ocean, and creates partially enclosed bodies of water along the coast. Riders have been known to ride to the end, then turn right around and ride it back the other way. Great fun!

Prefumo Canyon

Just southeast of Turri Road and a short 5 miles away via Los Osos Valley Rd, the ride can continue with Prefumo Canyon. This is a residential street where it intersects with Los Osos Valley Rd and you may need some pre-planning with Google Maps or a county level map to find it. Found in-between Descanso Street & Laguna Lane, not much would elude that this quiet residential street lined with suburban homes actually becomes a very fun canyon ride. First climbing up and over the low range, Prefumo Canyon offers some stunning birds eye views of San Luis Obispo below.

Buyer beware, there is a short gravel section in the middle, but it only lasts a hundred yards before pavement mysteriously resumes. Prefumo Canyon lasts an enjoyable twisty 13 miles past several vacation rentals and & Airbnb places like Prefumo Crest Inn and Irish Hills House sitting high atop the range, the views up here at the right time of day and year are stunning. In spring, sparsely treed rolling hills are adorned in layers of green grass. A marine layer of fog rolls in from the ocean and the Seven Sister peaks poke up through the marine layer of fog. At the summit, you’ll need to pull over and drink in the view of San Luis Obispo below. Prefumo Canyon becomes See Canyon on the southern half. Again, this ride parallels the 101 freeway and shouldn't be missed for the backroad connoisseur. At the southern end of See Canyon Rd, Avilia Beach is a mile down the road. Northbound riders on Hwy 101 freeway can exit at Avila Beach Drive. See Canyon Rd is 1 mile west of the 101 freeway past Avila Hot Springs Spa.

Nearby Motorcycle Rides:

Carmel Valley Road from Carmel and Hwy 25 out of Salinas parallel this section of road on the northern end. Another parallel ride to Highway 1 in-between Paso Robles and King City is the relaxed Highway G14. Also try the aforementioned Nacimiento Road headed inland from Lucia.

East: Hwy 58 heads back into the central valley (along with Highway 166) from San Luis Obispo- or loops around to Hwy 33. A northward intention from Highway 58 provides a handful of motorcycle roads that easily are nominated to the 'Can't Miss!' road list. The Pozo Loop, Huer Heuro, Las Pilitas, Hwy 229, Shell Creek, and Bitterwater Rd easily round out an entire day of riding. Join us for a Pashnit Motorcycle Tour of the San Luis Obispo County region of motorcycle roads.

Also note on the east side of the Santa Lucia Range is an easily missed batch of 4 exciting backroads just north of Hwy 46 and west of Paso Robles. Vineyard Drive, Peachy Canyon, Adelaida Drive and Chimney Rock to San Marcos Rd. These roads are favorites of Pashnit Tour riders and after leading motorcycle tours through here for over 15 years, we were ecstatic to find them freshly paved in 2018. Ride them all and you'll end up in San Miguel (gas) with a mile-wide grin. Indian Valley-Peachtree could continue your ride north or Vineyard Canyon over to Parkfield is also an option.

South of San Luis Obispo, civilization encroaches and your ride melts away. Aside from the aforementioned Turri Road and Prefumo Canyon, one alternative is to head inland on Highway 166 and ride Tepusquet Road, then Foxen Canyon Road on over to Solvang.

Then visit the Solvang Vintage Motorcycle Museum located at 320 Alisal Road, Solvang, CA. The motorcycle museum is an absolute can’t-miss. Vintage motorcycles are crammed into a single room displaying the collection of a Dr. Virgil Elings who collected for 20 years. Virgil and his son Jeff were involved in vintage motorcycle racing and motocross.

The highlight for many tour groups I have brought here is the Britton V1000, one of ten in the world made from scratch in the garage of New Zealander John Britton. The Vincent Black Lightning made famous for Rollie Free in his bathing suit attempting to set a land speed record at Bonneville Salt Flats in 1948 – wearing nothing more than his swim trunks- is here. He succeeded in achieving an extra bit of aerodynamics needed and set the record at 150 mph creating one of the most famous photographs in motorcycle history. The museum is open weekends 11-5 and mid-week by appointment. Admission is $5 stuffed into a jar. The museum rotates some of the bikes each month so that the bikes on display are constantly changing and expanding. Rare motorcycles such as Ariel, Crocker, Evans, Flanders Thor, and Jawa can be found at the museum.

For the truly adventurous, ride Figeroa Mountain Road northeast of Solvang. Incredible views await you at the summit. Even if you ride up to the summit and turn around and come back, the view and ride is worth it to check out Figeroa Mountain Rd. Note that Neverland Ranch, the home of the late Michael Jackson is over on the southern half of Figeroa Mountain Rd (5225 Figueroa Mountain Rd, Los Olivos, CA). The 2700 acre property was recently for sale for a sum of $67M.

You can stick to Hwy 1 as it heads through the farming community of Guadalupe down to Vandenberg Air Force Base. If you like space stuff, look up the schedule for rocket launches from the air base and find a good viewing spot while the launches light up the night sky for miles. Here you can ride Jalama Road to the Pacific which is a dead-end road out to Jalama Beach, or better yet, ride Santa Rosa Rd, then Alisal Rd into Solvang which ride directly to the Solvang Vintage Motorcycle Museum. These are local favorites and fun motorcycle roads into the south side of Solvang. Remote, unknown and glowing green in spring through acres of vineyards when the color comes out.

Vineyards reign in this region and vast expanses of wine grapes are everywhere and produce stunning photography. For the history buffs, stop by the La Purisima Mission State Park in Lompoc.

Hwy 1 becomes a four-lane freeway after this headed towards greater Los Angeles. If you want something that runs parallel to Highway 1- try Hwy 192-Hwy 150 through Ventura (north side of Highway 1) is a nice little ride past Mission Santa Barbara.

Note Highway 33 is nearby in Ojai. The next good ride in just a few miles away in the Santa Monica Mountains just south of Thousand Oaks. South of this portion is the infamous Rock Store, Latigo, Piuma, and several other great Santa Monica Alps motorcycle rides.

Don't forget to head north of San Francisco and ride the northern section of Hwy 1 from the Golden Gate Bridge to Leggett.

Closing Thoughts

Hwy 1 Big Sur is a treasure within our state. A true experience every rider should do not once but as many times as possible. The ride is beyond scenic and you'll enjoy every moment of your ride up or down Hwy 1. Ignore the people, the campers, the tourists, get on the bike and fall in love with the sensation of being on the bike. At that exact moment in time, there are countless riders wishing they were doing what you experiencing at that very moment - Riding Hwy 1 Big Sur.

-Tim Mayhew  
www.Pashnit.com