

# LA TRAVEL

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# Crusing THE CENTRAL COAST

By Peggy Tanous- Real Life with a Housewife

*When visiting California, people tend to choose the three big cities, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego but there are so many amazing places that can get forgotten. Recently, I decided we should take a family trip up to the Central Coast and tour all of the exciting destinations and activities it has to offer. Just a 3.5-hour comfortable drive from Orange County our first stop landed us in Pismo Beach. This quaint beach town offers beautiful sand dunes and a sand buggy ride in the dunes is certainly a must. We found a company Sunbuggy Fun Rentals that rents everything from quads, RZR's, desert racers, dune buggies and more.*

Photo Courtesy of Hearst Castle CA Pa



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Photo Courtesy of Hearst Castle CA Parks



Oceno Dunes is the only California State Park where vehicles can be driven on the beach. There are roughly 5.5 miles of beach and dunes open for cruising, it can be like touring Mars with hill after hill of sand to conquer.

After a few hours of getting dirty in the sand, we continued on our journey. Our next stop through the Central Coast was to one of the areas 250 wineries, Cass Vineyards and Winery located southeast of Paso Robles. This 145-acre vineyard specializes in Rhone varietals and was among the first vineyard in California to be planted entirely in ENTAV certified French clones.

We enjoyed a delicious lunch on the veranda with beautiful oaks surrounding our table. The restaurant itself is farm to table and their variety of meats are smoked on property. The BBQ Smoked Chicken Salad was decadent and paired perfectly with their crisp white wines and world-class reds. Cass will be opening Genesee Bed and Breakfast Inn this coming October, offering its guests a unique place to stay and enjoy wine country right amongst the oak trees and vineyards.

Heading north we made it to our next stop in Cambria. We booked a suite at the Cambria Pines Lodge only 9 miles from our final destination of Hearst Castle. This

lodge is situated on 25 acres of world-class gardens and Monterey Pines. Each room is like your own individual cabin with a fireplace in both the living and bedroom. There is also an outdoor heated pool and hot tub ensuring ample relaxation is always within reach. Take a stroll through the lawn areas with secluded pathways, rustic wooden benches, formal hedges and beautiful fountains.

Our final stop on this Central Coast tour was to see the most popular and spectacular monument in the area, Hearst Castle. William Randolph Hearst, best known for publishing the largest chain of newspapers in the late 19th century, began building Hearst Castle in 1919. This was his favorite childhood spot where he spent most of his summers. He hired the first licensed woman architect out of San Francisco, Julia Morgan, to design and build his hilltop castle. This collaboration lasted from 1919 until 1947. In 1958, the castle became part of the Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument. The first buildings constructed were three cottages that housed family and guests. Then in 1922 Casa Grande was started and this became the main house for Hearst and the cottages became for guest visits only. Casa Grande contains 115 rooms on 4 floors, including 38 bedrooms, 42 bathrooms, 14 sitting rooms, 2 libraries, a billiard room, kitchen and a movie theater.

The house resembles a cathedral due to its twin towers inspired by the church of Santa Maria la Mayor in Ronda, Spain. In total there are four major buildings, a tennis court, two pools and lush gardens. The tennis courts sit atop the indoor Roman pool that is 81 feet long and 10 feet deep. This pool design consists of more than a million Murano glass tiles. The outdoor pool, Neptune's Pool, is a sight for sore eyes. Named after the Roman God of the Sea, this pool is 104 feet long and 10 feet deep. The Roman columns and various statues throughout make it truly breathtaking. Morgan designed this Mediterranean revival estate and filled it with art and antiques from Hearst's private vast collection. He had the largest art collection ever assembled by a single individual. Today the Castle is admired daily by people fascinated with its beauty and the stories of Hearst and his famous guests.

The Central Coast of California is a land of beauty everywhere you look. From dramatic ocean views, vast sand dunes, beautiful wineries, abundance of rolling hills, sleepy beach towns with great seafood and the extraordinary Hearst Castle, it is a must see with no shortage of activities to engage in.