10-day Tour
The California Coast: San Francisco to San Diego

National Geographic listed LifeCycle Adventures as one of their Best Outfitters on Earth for 2008 and 2009.
Your Trip Overview

On your trip, you will ride across fertile wine valleys, through thousand-year-old redwood forests and along the ruggedly beautiful Pacific coast. Throw in California’s fantastic weather and quiet country lanes and you will soon see why this area is a cyclist’s paradise.

Your Trip Includes the Following Features:

- A Custom Exploratory Tour of the California Coast from San Francisco to San Diego
- 2 LCA guides will accompany you on this trip offering logistics and road support
- Accommodations in Bed & Breakfast or equivalent lodging (rating $$ to $$$).
- Rental Bikes available
- Maps and Directions
- Breakfasts included at some accommodations. This will depend on confirmed availabilities.

An Exploratory Tour is one that implies possible imperfections or last minute changes as you travel your routes. These changes may be due to seasonal, weather or safety or other unforeseen restrictions. We anticipate that all guest are experienced riders and can comfortably and independently cycle 60 to 80 miles (96 to 128 km) in a day with varied terrain. You will be equipped with maps and directions to travel the suggested itinerary. Your guides will accompany you on your journey and handle the logistics for you, offer road support, and cycle some of the routes with you.

Upon arrival at the destination towns, you are welcome to enjoy the town sights and offerings at your leisure.

“As the owner of one of the Southeast’s largest travel agencies, I could find no detail left out of our trip.
“First class all the way!”

Scott Townes
Greenville, SC
DAY 1 – San Francisco to Santa Cruz

You will be met at your hotel in San Francisco from where we head to a starting point just south of the city for the start of your cycling adventure.

Your Day One’s route will be mostly coastal following the legendary Highway 1 with spectacular views and scenic vistas.

Your overnight stay will be in the city of Santa Cruz – a classic California surf city. It is well known for its idyllic beaches, coastal redwood forests and a center for liberal and progressive activism.

Today’s route is approximately 80 miles (128 km) with an elevation gain of 2800ft. (854m). The terrain will be mostly rolling with a few short climbs. We may shorten the distance by modifying the starting point or a van transfer at the last leg of the trip.

DAY 2 – Santa Cruz to Carmel-by-the-Sea

Today’s route will continue along the coast following the Monterey Bay. This region of the coast is well known for its rich marine life: sea otters, harbor seals, bottle-nosed dolphins, gray and humpback whales on their migratory path, several species of fish and kelp varieties. The Monterey Bay Aquarium showcases this natural richness. This area is also rich with history and well known through the writings of Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winner, John Steinbeck. The writer was born in the nearby town of Salinas.

Your overnight stay will be in the city of Carmel-by-the-Sea at the south end of the world-famous Pebble Beach Resort in the Monterey Peninsula. This town is known for its natural scenery and rich artistic history. Many poets, artists, and writers have been inspired here. Also, actor-director Clint Eastwood served a term as mayor of this charming town in the late 1980’s.

Today’s route is approximately 50 miles (80km) with an elevation gain of 1500ft (457m). The terrain will be mildly rolling to flat.
DAY 3 – Carmel-by-the-Sea to Cambria

Today, we will begin with a drive along the coast toward Big Sur enjoying majestic views along the coast. Big Sur is a popular tourist destination and home to Cone Peak - the highest coastal mountain in the contiguous 48 states, ascending nearly a mile (5,155 feet/1571 m) above sea level. No worries, we will not have you climbing that high – yet! Your cycling begins here and you will again travel along the coast.

You will travel toward another charming coastal town – Cambria. Cambria is halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles on California’s Central Coast. It is surrounded by towering pines and dramatic rocky cliffs bordering the Pacific Ocean. It is no surprise that cycling, hiking, boogie boarding and surfing are some of the activities enjoyed in this relaxing town. The Hearst Castle is also a short distance away.

Your route today is approximately 70 miles (112km) with varied terrain and an elevation gain near 3800ft.(1158m). You will have a Tour de California (or France, if you wish) moment with one Category 3 climb. The classic scenery will be your inspiration!

DAY 4 – Cambria to Pismo Beach

Today’s route will travel along the coast for the beginning of the route and then start a gradual travel inland along farmland. You transition from central to southern California and will see a change in scenery, leaving the isolated coast and moving into the urban sprawl. You will pass Morro Bay – known for fishing and distinctive rock – before reaching the sand dunes of Pismo Beach.

Your overnight stay is in the city of Pismo Beach – a popular beach town in the county of San Luis Obispo. Pismo Beach is the classic California beach town which still holds to its roots. The Pismo Beach pier invites you to enjoy a walk above the water, view the sunsets, and even do some fishing. Nearby sand dunes, wineries, restaurants and even outlet shopping, all offer a full package for the visiting tourist.

Your route is approximately 60 miles (96km) over relatively mild terrain. Your elevation gain will be close to 1300ft (396m) with an equal descent – starting and ending under100 ft.(30m) above sea level. A couple of mild climbs will keep the route from feeling completely flat.
DAY 5 - Pismo Beach to Solvang

Today you will cycle along Highway 1 for the beginning of the route. The Vandenberg Air Force base separates the highway from the coast. The majority of your route offers scenic rolling hills that are perfect for cycling. You will travel inland valleys and eventually reach the Santa Ynez Valley. The Santa Ynez Valley is well known for its wines – especially Pinot Noir and Chardonnays.

Your overnight stay is in the Danish town of Solvang. This own has preserved its heritage with customs, architecture, and tasteful Danish cooking!

Your route is approximately 70 miles (112km) over rolling terrain. Your elevation gain will be close to 2300ft (701m). Climbs are moderate.

DAY 6 - Solvang to Ventura

Today you continue to cycle along the inland valleys out of Solvang and toward Santa Barbara. You will tackle the challenging San Marcos pass (a category 2 climb) before descending into Santa Barbara. Here, you find the coast again and will travel a mostly flat route into Ventura.

Your overnight stay is in Ventura. Ventura, formally known as San Buenaventura is one of the California Mission towns. The mission was named after the 13th century Franciscan monk, St. Bonaventure. Ventura is known for some of the best surfing in Southern California. The town was home to the creator of Perry Mason, Erle Stanley Gardner.

Your route is approximately 65 miles (104km) over mixed terrain. The start of your day will be the most challenging with the category 2 climb. You will gain 2657 ft (809m) overall, and 2231 ft (680m) in the extended climb alone. The latter part of the route is mostly flat, for a mild change of pace.

DAY 7 – Ventura to Santa Monica

Today you ride along the coast enjoying the vast and colorful ambiance unique to southern California. Spanish architecture, palm trees, famous surfing beaches and unique countryside will all entertain you as you cycle towards the outskirts of Los Angeles County.

Your overnight stay is in Santa Monica. Santa Monica is a beachfront city offering various amenities for its visitors. A downtown promenade, the pier and boardwalk, and an eclectic variety of entertainment and dining venues.

Your route is approximately 65 miles over mostly mild terrain. The day starts flat and concludes with some mildly rolling hills. You will gain 1400 ft (427m) of elevation.

DAY 8 – Santa Monica to Newport Beach

Today you will navigate through a combination of street and bike paths to travel through and out of Los Angeles. This routes’
challenges come in emerging from the largeness of the urban metropolis with its busy streets and larger sprawl.

Your overnight stay is in Newport Beach. This city is in Orange County, just south of Los Angeles. It houses the only harbor in Orange County and offers a variety of entertainment options. There is no shortage of shopping, dining, surfing, and sunset cruising in this fairly affluent corner of southern California.

Your route is approximately 60 miles (96km). Your route has not significant climbs, and will be rather mild with an elevation gain of 682 ft (207m).

DAY 9 – Newport Beach to La Jolla

Today you will navigate further south and cross yet another county line in southern California. You cross from Orange County into San Diego County, for the most part following the coast line. Again, there will be some navigation along busy city streets. Some of the towns that you will cycle through include Dana Pt, San Juan Capistrano, San Clemente, Oceanside (home to Camp Pendleton), Encinitas and Del Mar.

Your overnight stay is La Jolla in San Diego County. La Jolla is a hilly seaside resort located north of downtown San Diego. The beaches and stunning views along the sea & cliffs welcome visitors year round. Parasailing, the Salk Institute, Scripps Institute of Oceanography and the Scripps Aquarium call this jewel on the sea their home. The charming downtown La Jolla, although small, packs a grand offering of galleries, dining & shopping options, and viewpoints overlooking the pacific ocean.

Your route is approximately 80 miles (128km) with an elevation gain of 1942 ft (591m). Other than a short climb towards the end of the ride, the terrain is moderate with sections of rolling hills.

DAY 10 – Day trip in San Diego or departure day

Today you will have the option of a short day trip in San Diego or some down time to relax at the beach after the long journey south.

Your overnight stay is La Jolla in San Diego (or not applicable if this is your departure day).

Your route can be from approximately 30 to 50 miles (48km to 80km) and will include a mix of flat to rolling hills, with perhaps a short extended climb to keep things exciting.