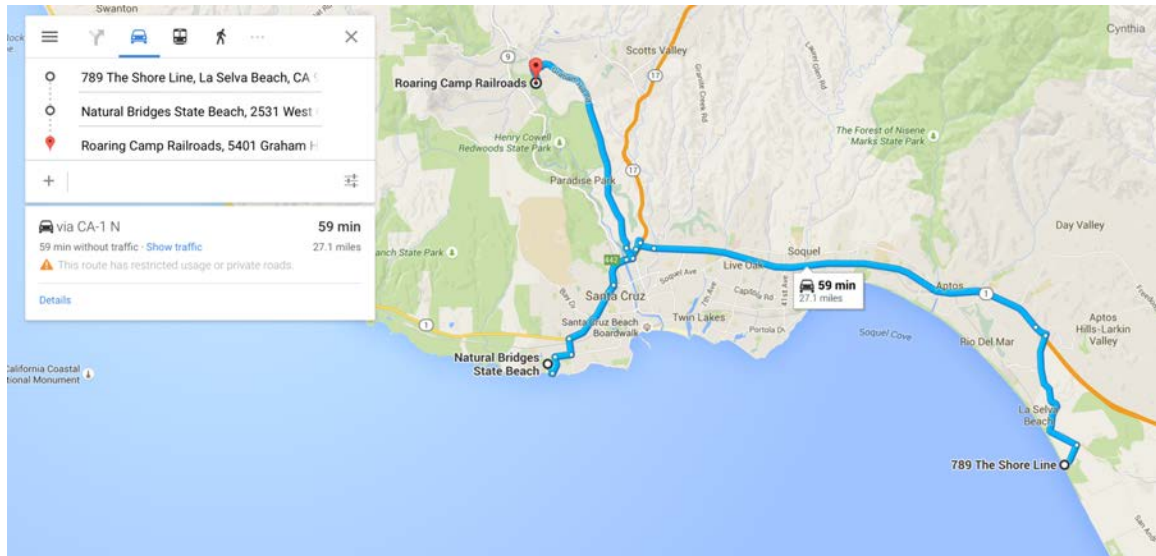


Things to do:

Check Trip Advisor for lots more options and reviews. Here is a very high level list

Heading north: The Shoreline to Roaring Camp Railroad and Natural Bridges



Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk – not open every day all year round. Only weekends in the non summer months. Check for prices and hours. Fun iconic boardwalk experience. Ride the Giant Dipper for a truly fun wooden roller coaster ride.
<http://beachboardwalk.com>

Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park
http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=546

Roaring Camp Railroads – beautiful park. Fun trains. In summer you can take the train from the redwoods right to the Boardwalk
<http://www.roaringcamp.com>

Natural Bridges – spectacular coastal park – especially when the monarch butterflies are nestings
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_Bridges_State_Beach

Santa Cruz Mission – have some tours. Stop by if you're in the area or drive by. Not worth planning an special excursion.
<http://www.missionscalifornia.com/keyfacts/santa-cruz.html>

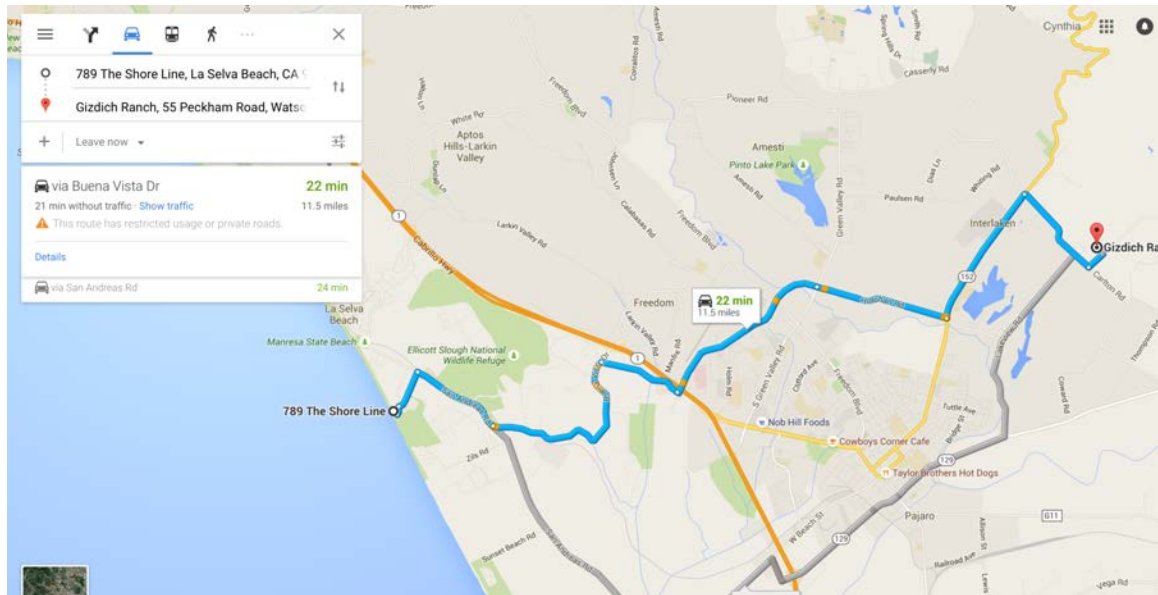
Lighthouse Field State Beach
<http://www.thatsmypark.org/cp-parks-beaches/lighthouse-field-state-beach/>

Lighthouse/surf museum – really fun piece of Santa Cruz history
<http://www.santacruzsurfingmuseum.org>

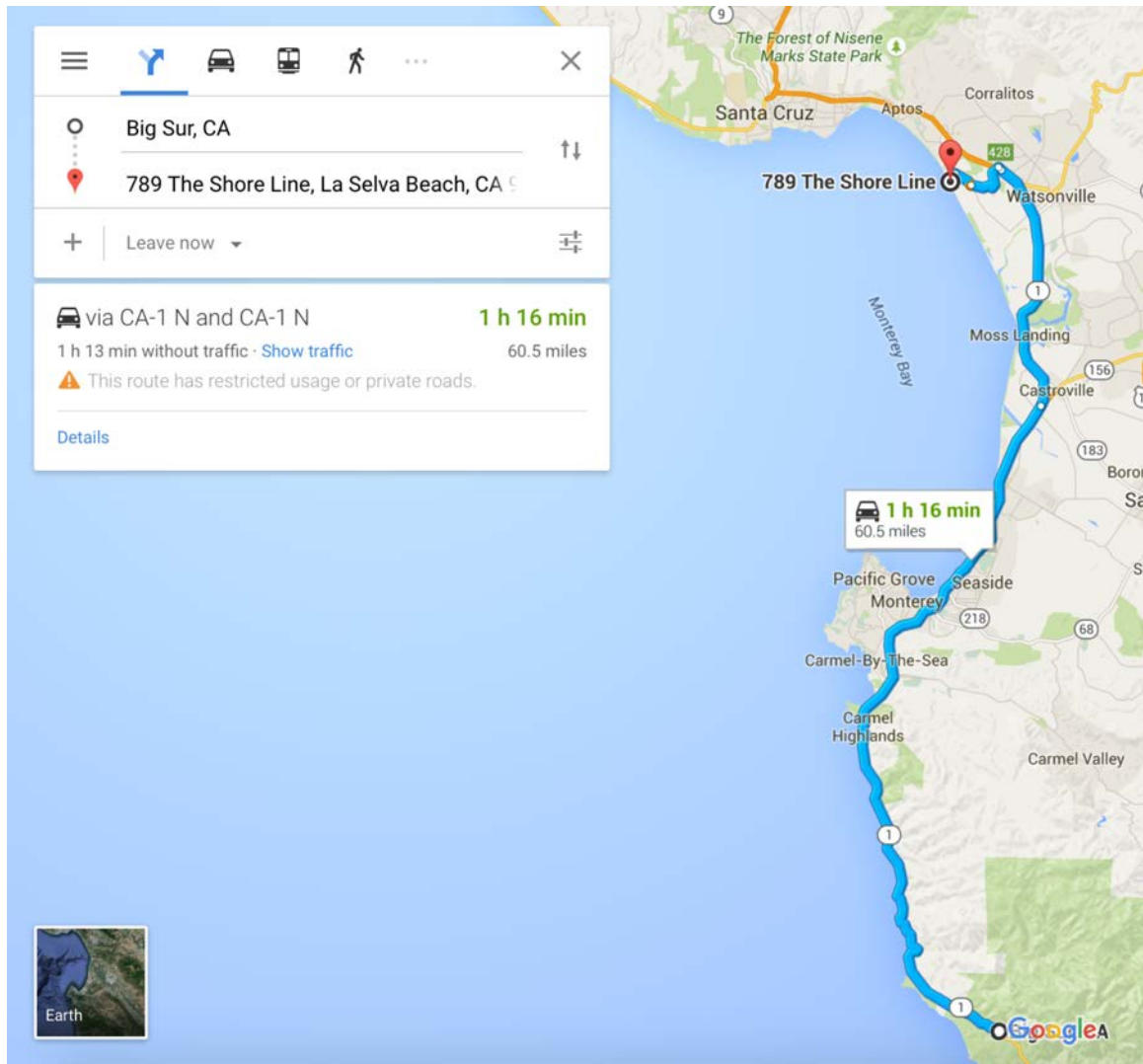
Heading east : The Shoreline

Gizdich Ranch / berry picking - great fun – you can also just go buy things, you don't have to pick.

<http://www.gizdich-ranch.com>



Heading south : The Shoreline to Big Sur



Elkhorn Slough – highly recommend, You can park and walk around – hiking is all super easy. Lots of wildlife especially birds to see. Nice visitor center.

<http://www.elkhornslough.org>

Kayaking on the slough seeing otters – have done this and it was fantastic. Highly recommend. Save energy for kayaking back because you are going upwind on the return.

<http://www.montereybaykayaks.com>

Whale watching – seasonally –

<http://www.blueoceanwhalewatch.com>

Monterey Bay Aquarium – every trip should include a visit to the aquarium. Plan for most of a day. It is truly spectacular. The cafeteria in the aquarium is quite good but gets very crowded at the typical lunch times. Go early, eat early or late. Give plenty of time to the jelly fish exhibit and kelp garden. Check the schedule right away for feeding and demonstration times.

<http://www.montereybayaquarium.org>

Carmel Valley wineries / tour – did this with some friends and it was really fun. Try to get the trolley tour, but even the van with a small group was great.

<http://www.toursmonterey.com/WTPages/WTTourDetails.html>

17 mile drive – Definitely don't miss this. Go early!! Traffic can be terrible. There is a fee.

<http://gocalifornia.about.com/od/camontereycarmel/ss/17-mile-drive.htm>

Carmel-by-the-sea – wander from top to bottom and end up at the whitest white sand beach in California. Lots of great restaurants and quaint shops.

<http://www.carmelcalifornia.com>

Carmel Mission – one of the most beautiful of the 21 California missions. Burial site of Junipero Serra, founder of the missions. Gardens are also beautiful.

<http://www.carmelmission.org/museum/>

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve

http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=571

Big Sur – it is ALL about the scenery – don't be in a hurry. Spend a whole day if you have it. If you don't, then plan for another time. Great article on the drive:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/David-Landsel/california-big-sur-driving-the-coast_b_5095299.html

Beaches:

There are beaches everywhere! What do you want to do? The beach in front of us is usually very safe, fun surf to swim, boogie board or surf in. Uncrowded, lifeguards sometimes. Fire rings most of the time (we have our own as well).

There are about 20+ beaches in Santa Cruz County alone:

http://www.californiasbestbeaches.com/county_beaches/santa_cruz_co_mob.html

<http://www.santacruzca.org/things/beaches.php>

