Route Description:
California’s scenic Highway 1 snakes along the coast, providing spectacular views of the state’s northern shoreline. Rugged, rocky headlands cloaked with ancient coastal redwoods, wave-beaten rock outcrops, tidepools, sandy beaches, and coastal marshes combine to provide an incredible array of habitat for wild life. Water-associated birds navigating the Pacific Flyway rely on north coastal sites for rest, feeding, and even breeding areas during their spring and fall migrations. Whales pass through offshore waters populated by California sea lions and harbor seals. Wildlife viewing sites range from sprawling Golden Gate National Recreation Area to compact Arcata Marsh. You could spend a full day or days exploring many of these sites. A few hours stopover can provide a nice break from traveling and allow you to sample the scenery and wildlife viewing potential.

There are dozens of wildlife viewing locations along the Highway 1 corridor. Those featured in this travel itinerary are within a ten mile drive of the highway. If you have time, ask about other wildlife viewing areas that are more off the beaten path. While peak viewing times are fall through spring, there is also excellent summer viewing and the coastal scenery is always breathtaking. Driving distances are figured from Sausalito. Roads are winding, so allow more time than normal for driving. Also, it is very rainy during winter.
**Location:** In San Francisco, located off the The Embarcadero, between Fisherman’s Wharf and the Golden Gate Bridge.

**Best Season to View:** Highest numbers present, August through June; peak viewing, January through May.

**What to See:** Shop, eat, and take a break to get close-up views of California sea lions that have taken over one of the docks at this famous shopping area. As many as 600 may gather on this public dock. Occasionally, harbor seals can be spotted in the group. The experience is a fine example of a private enterprise capitalizing on nature tourism!

**Visiting Tips:** Allow 1/2 to 1 hour.

**Contact:** (415) 705-5500 or (800) 325-7437

**Local Accommodations and Travel Information:** San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau, (415) 974-6900  [www.sfvisitor.org/](http://www.sfvisitor.org/)

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**Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

**Location:** Many locations in San Francisco, and in Marin County, about 12 miles from San Francisco. In San Francisco, get a map to city access points at Fort Mason on Bay and Franklin streets; in Marin County cross Golden Gate Bridge and take the first Sausalito exit. Follow signs to Visitor Center.

**Best Season to View:** Good year-round viewing. Fall through spring are peak periods for water-associated birds. Birds of prey best in September and October.

**What to See:** This huge complex begins in San Francisco, nearly in the shadow of skyscrapers. The Marin County portion offers everything from beaches, estuaries, and lagoons to forested ridges, lush redwood groves, and grasslands. These diverse habitats attract a wide array of water-associated birds, songbirds, small and large mammals, and more. Hawk Hill is famous for its fall views of migratory birds of prey.

**Visiting Tips:** You can get a taste of the wildlife in San Francisco with an hour of viewing. Marin County sites require at least a few hours; a full day excursion would provide opportunities to see more variety. Bring a picnic lunch.

**Contact:** (415) 561-4700  [www.nps.gov/goga/](http://www.nps.gov/goga/)

Mt. Tamalpais State Park: (415) 388-2070 can be accessed from Highway 1 while you are in the Marin County portion of the site. [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=471](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=471)
Audubon Canyon Ranch/Bolinas Lagoon Preserve

**Location:** Approximately 15 miles north of Sausalito, Highway 101 exit to Highway 1. Best Season to View: Rookery best in April through June. Other waterbirds good in Bolinas Lagoon in fall and spring.

**What to See:** The main feature of Audubon Canyon Ranch is excellent views of an active great egret and great blue heron rookery with nearly 200 nests. A boardwalk and viewing deck are nestled into a heavily forested slope; in the spring, earthen trails are bordered by many wildflowers. The lagoon below the rookery is home to many species, including many migratory birds.

**Visiting Tips:** Allow at least a half-day. Bring a picnic lunch or enjoy local restaurants at Stinson Beach or Bolinas.

**Contact:** Phone (415) 868-9244  www.egret.org/ www.nps.gov/ggbr/acr_map.htm

Local Accommodations and Travel Information: Marin County Convention & Visitors Bureau, (415) 499-5000 www.visitmarin.org/frame.htm

Point Reyes National Seashore

**Location:** Approximately 30 miles north of Sausalito, Highway 101 exit to Highway 1.

**Best Season to View:** Excellent year-round birding. Peak waterfowl season is fall through spring. Shore birds best in fall and winter.

**What To See:** A birder’s paradise, with more than 430 species observed. A variety of coastal habitats provide views of harbor seals, sea lions, and gray whales; uplands include many resident mammals visible year-round, including tule elk. The site is also known for its flowering plants.

**Visiting Tips:** Hard to spend less than a full day here; it encompasses 71,049 acres! There are three visitor centers.
Sonoma Coast State Beaches and Vista Trail

Location: 69 miles north of Sausalito, Highway 101 exit to Highway 1.

Best Season to View: Year-round for birds, harbor seals, and sea lions; whales best in December through April. What to See: From the Russian River estuary at Jenner and north for ten miles, you can enjoy a series of coastal beaches with pullouts and easy coastal access. Marine birds, shorebirds, and other waterbirds abound; so do tidepools and marine mammals. The vista point is seven miles north of Jenner.

Visiting Tips: The entire stretch offers excellent opportunities to stop for a half hour and see wildlife. Contact: (707) 875-3483 www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=451

Contact: (707) 875-3483 www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=451

Local Accommodations and Travel Information: Sonoma Country Tourism (707) 565-5383 www.sonomacounty.com/

Salt Point State Park

Location: 89 miles north of Sausalito, Highway 101 exit to Highway 1.

Best Season to View: Year-round viewing; whales best in winter.

What to See: Stunning coastal scenery ranges includes an underwater reserve, tidepools, rocky points, beaches, and rolling hills dotted with cypress and pines. A full range of species can be viewed, particularly marine mammals, birds of prey, birds, and some small mammals.

Visiting Tips: Stop for a few hours or a day. Nice picnic opportunities.

Contact: (707) 847-3221 www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=453
**Point Cabrillo Preserve**

**Location:** About 160 miles north of Sausalito, Highway 101 exit to Highway 1.

**Best Season to View:** Some year-round viewing. Nesting birds and sea lions in spring. Whales from November through March.

**What to See:** This windswept headland offers a .5 mile walk and breathtaking views of battered coastal rocks and quiet coves. Lots of marine mammal and marine bird activity below the headland. Hawks and spring songbirds abound. Take time to enjoy wildflowers and a 1906 lighthouse.

**Visiting Tips:** Stop to stretch your legs and glass the horizon or stay for an hour.

**Contact:** (707) 937-0816  [www.pointcabrillo.org/](http://www.pointcabrillo.org/)

**Local Accommodations and Travel Information:** Fort Bragg/Mendocino Chamber of Commerce, (707) 961-6300.  [www.mendocinocoast.com/](http://www.mendocinocoast.com/)

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**MacKerricher State Park**

**Location:** About 171 miles north of Sausalito, Highway 101 exit to Highway 1.

**Best Season to View:** Good year-round viewing. Waterfowl best in winter and whales best from December through March. Spring wildflowers.

**What to See:** Eight miles of coastal tidepools, beaches, and dunes are bordered by a wetland, lake, grasslands, and dense forests. A rare chance to see so many habitats in one area. Marine birds are numerous, as are inhabitants of tidepools and dunes. Catch a glimpse of a harbor seal rookery and passing gray whales. Many varieties of marine birds, waterfowl, birds of prey, and songbirds.

**Visiting Tips:** Plan on at least a few hours or a half day. Bring a picnic or stop at Fort Bragg for the fixings.

**Contact:** (707) 964-9112  [www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=436](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=436)

**Local Accommodations and Travel Information:** Fort Bragg/Mendocino Chamber of Commerce, (707) 961-6300.  [www.mendocinocoast.com/](http://www.mendocinocoast.com/)