



It's about 390 miles when you drive 101 from Los Angeles to San Francisco on the Pacific Coast Highway. It's eight to 10 hours, with a gas/potty/dining stop or two on a no-delay roadway day.

Starting from Santa Monica's ocean front, PCH follows the Pacific shore, offering many interesting places to visit and beautiful scenery. There are Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Monterey and Carmel along the way.

About 90 miles up the coast from Santa Monica, Santa Barbara offers great seafood restaurants and pristine beaches. A visit to the 17th Century Mission Santa Barbara is worthwhile for rest and reflection. It was founded by Father Junipero Serra, one of many he established in early California years.

Halfway between Santa Barbara and Monterey on PCH 101 is the Hearst Castle. It requires a reservation and fee to visit. For senior fans of the movie, "Citizen Kane", it offers the opulent structure, priceless artifacts from all over the world and beautiful surrounding gardens and pools.

Monterey is also a very picturesque oceanside town, and the world-famous National Marine Sanctuary can provide some interesting hours. The neighboring town of Carmel is usually a quiet coastal vacation spot, except when Hollywood celebrities and spring break students vacation there. Clint Eastwood once served as mayor and owner of a popular tavern.

Santa Cruz has maintained its fun beach town atmosphere for decades, and a walk along its boardwalk and amusement park reminds senior visitors of Coney Island and Atlantic City in their heydays. It may be worthwhile to spend a night at one of its beachfront hotels before doing the final 70-mile drive to your San Francisco destination.