



It's nearly 400 miles by highway when you drive north from Los Angeles to San Francisco (or reverse), the two largest cities in California. The most direct way is by Highways 101 or 5, inland routes that require about eight hours, including a gas/potty/dining stop on a good clear, no-delay day.

The most scenic way is via the Pacific Coast Highway, U.S. 1. The intercity route starts in LA neighbor Santa Monica, and follows the Pacific shore north. It offers many interesting places and beautiful ocean front scenery along the way. The distance, because of beach and cliffside twists and turns, goes about 30 miles longer than the inland route.

With beach towns as Malibu, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Monterey and Carmel along U.S. 1, it's well worth the extra time. There are many great restaurants, beaches, historic places and scenic vistas.

About two hours up the coast from Santa Monica, a stop in Santa Barbara is good for sightseeing and great seafood restaurants near the beaches.

Halfway between Santa Barbara and Monterey is Hearst Castle on the inland side of the highway, and requires a reservation and fee to visit. For movie fans of "Citizen Kane", it's worth a stop to see the opulent structure, priceless artifacts and beautiful surrounding gardens.

Monterey is also a very picturesque oceanside town, the setting for John Steinbeck's book and movie, "Cannery Row." Neighboring Carmel is a quiet coastal spot, except when Hollywood celebs and spring breakers are 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 echo Coney Island and Atlantic City in their heydays. Spend a night at one of its

beachfront hotels before the final 70 miles to San Francisco.