

San Luis Obispo County – From Dunes to the Nacimiento River



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Driving Direction for Auto Route

Continue north on CA 1 to Pismo Beach and turn north on Price Canyon Road. At the intersection with CA 227, go north on CA 227 to the City of San Luis Obispo. Follow signs to Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa. From San Luis Obispo, travel north on US 101. In the City of Atascadero, follow the scenic route to several miles of trail along the Salinas River. Return to US 101. At Paso Robles, turn northwest onto County G14. Just south of the intersection of Nacimiento Rd., on the east side of the road, Gate 10 of Camp Roberts is posted with an Anza Trail marker. Continue north on G 14 to Monterey County. Access to the base is from US 101 north of *San Miguel* in Bradley.

Hiking/Biking Ideas

In Guadalupe, stop at the Dunes Center to get directions to *Oso Flaco* Lake in the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Preserve, and explore the ecology of the dunes. The Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area provides swimming, surfing, surf fishing, camping, and hiking. The Atascadero Trail (6805 Sycamore Rd.) offers a 4 mile hike. Further north, about 8 miles of trail are marked at Camp Roberts.



The Tuquski Wa Suwa (Bear and Child) statue at the Mission.

photo: Ron Ory

Scenic Route

From Hwy 101, take Hwy 58 east through the town of Santa Margarita and turn north on El Camino Real. In Atascadero, take Viejo Camino east and then Halcyon Rd. to the Salinas River. Return to El Camino Real in Atascadero. *Oaks in which woodpeckers have stored their acorns, are a significant natural feature in the area, as noted by Father Font. Some of the largest of these trees can still be seen near 6905 El Camino Real in Atascadero.* Continuing on the El Camino, turn east on Curbaril Ave. and follow it toward the Salinas River. Turn right on Gabarda Rd., then left on Tampico Rd. which ends at the Wranglerette Arena. To continue on this route, see “**Learning on the Trail**”.

About Your Visit to San Luis Obispo County

Continuing north from Santa Barbara, Anza and his colonists passed dunes near Pismo beach, and continued along the coast for several miles before turning inland at Price Canyon, finally reaching the Mission San Luis Obispo. While there, an Indian boy was baptized, with Anza serving as his godfather. Upon leaving, they followed San Luis Creek to the top of the *Cuesta Grade*, descended to the Salinas River and crossed it.

Sites of Interest

A. Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge

The sand dunes near a long lake are mentioned in the diaries of Anza and Font for their March 1, 1776 entries. The lake, southeast of *Guadalupe*, was called *Laguna Larga* by Anza and *Laguna Grande* by Font. During the 1769-1770 expedition, Gaspar de Portolá named *Oso Flaco* Lake for the “lean bear” killed there. The area still contains pristine wind-swept coastal dunes, wetlands, and rare plants. Visitors may hike the dunes from either the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park to the south, or the Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area to the north. Access to the preserve is off State Highway 1 west of the town of Guadalupe, and more information is available at the Dunes Center at 951 Guadalupe Street.

B. Pismo Beach and Expedition Camp #81

On the coast to the north, but part of the same sand dunes, is Pismo Beach State Park and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area. The city names *Nipomo* and *Pismo* are Chumash words. The site of the Chumash village of El Buchón is located in Price Canyon, and it was at this village that camp was made on March 1. Nearby, the Price House grounds preserve several buildings of John Michael Price’s Rancho Pismo in Price Canyon. It is located at 580 Frady Lane in Pismo Beach.

C. Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa Camp #82

Founded in September of 1772, the mission greeted the expedition on March 2 with bells, volleys and the singing of the *Te Deum*. The colonists rested here a day and Font baptized a native boy, with Anza serving as Godfather. Belonging to the Diocese of Monterey, the mission today serves as a parish church. The Mission is located at Monterey and Chorro Streets (35° 16' 54" N, 120° 39' 39" W).

D. Cuesta Canyon County Park.

This five acre park in San Luis Obispo (35° 17' 36" N, 120° 38' 22" W) spans San Luis Creek, the route of the expedition. The Stagecoach Road trail west of Cuesta Grade is a rural, single lane road that climbs Cuesta Grade just north of the city limits of San Luis Obispo, and is quite probably the route of the expedition along San Luis Creek. It is currently the bicycle route over the grade as bicycles are not permitted on Highway 101.

E. Santa Margarita River to Expedition Camp #83

Font mentions a village at Santa Margarita River. Going further along the Anza trail, the Atascadero Trail (via the Scenic Route) is a hike on level ground. Camp #83 was at *Asunción* (now called Assumption) located along the Salinas River near Ferrocarril Rd. in Atascadero. On March 5, the Anza party crossed the Nacimiento River near Camp Roberts, and camp #84 was made at their first crossing of the San Antonio River, and so was called *Primer Vado* (First Ford).

Learning On The Trail in San Luis Obispo



Continued from Scenic Route

From the Wranglerette Arena, return to Curbaril Ave., and before the bridge over the Salinas River, turn left onto Sycamore Rd. (Hwy 41) and follow it northwest along the river. Passing under the railroad tracks, turn right on Ensenada Ave., then right on Via Ave., and right again onto Traffic Way; follow it northwest along the river and railroad tracks. Walk around the site of Camp #83 in the vicinity of Ferrocarril Rd. along the Atascadero trail. Continue along Traffic Way, turning left onto Carrizo Rd., turn right on El Camino Real, and then enter highway 101 north. Take the Vineyard Dr. exit east across the Salinas River, turn left on El Pomar Dr., left on Neal Springs Rd., and left again onto South River Road. Follow River Rd. north to highway 46, turning left on County Road G14 to rejoin the marked auto route in *Paso Robles*. (See first page.)

On the CD: Carpenter Birds

Listen to the audio for Monterey County to hear the *Woodpeckers* and the *Te Deum* chant.

Continuing north from Santa Barbara, Anza and his colonists passed dunes near Pismo beach, and continued along the coast for several miles before turning inland at Price Canyon, finally reaching the Mission San Luis Obispo. The mission greeted the expedition on March 2, 1776 with bells, volleys and the singing of the *Te Deum*. The colonists rested here a day and Font baptized a 7 year old native boy, Anza standing in as Godfather. Mission records indicate that he was given the name Carlos Antonio de Ansa and that his native name was Chayussosso. He lived until 1849, the year of the California Gold Rush.

By the Santa Margarita Creek, Font mentions small holes in the oak trees that were made by what he called *carpinteros* (woodpeckers). Father Font noted, "...along here, there are some birds which they call carpenters, which make round holes in the trunks of the oaks. In each hole they insert an acorn so neatly that it can be taken out only with difficulty, and in this way they make their harvest and store, some of the oaks being all dotted with acorns in their trunks." Both the birds and their trees can still be seen nearby, and the song of the woodpecker can be as triumphant and inspiring as the *Te Deum*.

Additional Resources

Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge, The Dunes Center – 1055 Guadalupe St., Guadalupe, CA 93434; tel.: 805-343-9151, web: dunescenter.org/

Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, Formerly Pismo Dunes SVRA – 576 Camino Mercado, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420; tel.: 805-473-7223, web: <http://ohv.parks.ca.gov>

Price House 580 Frady Lane, Friends of Price House – P. O. Box 1418, Pismo Beach, CA 93448-1418; web: pismo-beach.org

Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa – 751 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo CA, 9340; tel.: 805-781-8220, web: missionsanluisobispo.org

Atascadero City Hall, Parks & Recreation Dept. – 6500 Palma Ave., Atascadero, CA 93422; tel.: 805-461-5000, web: atascadero.org

Cuesta Canyon County Park, San Luis Obispo County Parks – 1087 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo, CA 93408; tel.: 805-781-5930, web: slocountyparks.com