

The Russians Came and Stayed Awhile

North of Jenner the hills jut straight up from the sea and Highway 1 twists from one scenic view to the next. Stop and wander around Russian Gulch Beach, part of Sonoma Coast State Park. From the parking lot, take a walk through a deciduous forest to a cove with small waves lapping the sand.

Fort Ross State Historical Park, established in 1906, preserves the Russian settlement that arose in the early 19th century. It's a lovely park, with an informative visitors center, the fort and a small beach.

About three miles north of Fort Ross is Timber Cove. The Timber Cove Inn has a huge obelisk sculpture by Benny Bufano. The 93-foot piece of concrete, lead and mosaic titled "The Expanding Universe," is only a few yards behind the inn.

Past Timber Cove there are a few places to stay. The Stillwater Cove Ranch Lodge and the Salt Point Lodge offer accommodations. Stillwater Cove Regional Park has pleasant campsites and two or three miles of easy trails. Ocean Cove Store also has a private

Cazadero was originally formed as a hunting resort called Ingrams in 1869. The town was purchased in 1888 and officially named Cazadero.



Photo by Robert Janney

campground. At the northern end of the coast, Sea Ranch Lodge offers romance and solitude with views of the ocean from atop rugged cliffs.

An Inland Delight

For a delightful alternative to the coast highway, take a drive up to Cazadero. The Cazadero Highway leaves Hwy. 116 just east of Duncans Mills and follows Austin Creek through six miles of redwoods to the tiny village.

About a mile before Cazadero is Raymond's Bakery, a favorite destination. Besides delicious breads and other baked goods, they serve pizza, wine and beer. Sometimes on the weekends in summer, they have spontaneous music, depending on who walks through the door.

Cazadero is mostly a post office, church, hardware store and country store. It's a place to stop, get a snack and beverage and just enjoy the ambiance. The area has more than its share of artists and musicians, and people come from all over to enjoy the works of creative locals.

Just past Cazadero there are an assortment of mountain roads, which all lead down to the coast at Fort Ross, Timber Cove, Stewarts Point and The Sea Ranch. Motorcyclists can while away an entire weekend exploring these winding roads.

For an alternative route back to civilization, take Annapolis Road out of The Sea Ranch to Skaggs Springs Road. You'll pass Lake Sonoma Recreational Area before finding Highway 101 at Geyserville. ■

AWESOME HIKING ABOUND

Salt Point State Park consists of 6,000 acres of wooded uplands and coastal bluffs and coves. It features 109 campsites, situated on both sides of the highway, along with miles of trails.

Hike down to Stump Beach, a deep, steep-sided cove fed by a small creek. Then cross the creek and hike several miles of trails along the bluffs.

Visit Kruse Rhododendron State Reserve in the spring when the rhododendrons are in brilliant bloom. Access is near the northern end of Salt Point. The five miles of trails in the 317-acre reserve range from the upland open forest with rhododendrons that tower overhead to a deeply wooded canyon, complete with moss-covered redwoods and a thick carpet of fallen leaves.

The Sea Ranch is mostly private homes. There is, however, a lodge and periodic public access paths to the rocky beaches.

The Gualala River marks the county line. You can rent kayaks and a family campground is just up river. Gualala is a good spot for art, food and beachcombing.

Lose yourself for two or three days on this windswept coast and return to the urban jungle refreshed and relaxed.



SALT POINT STATE PARK BEACHES:

- Horseshoe Cove
- Fisk Mill Cove
- Stump Beach
- Geratle Cove

