

Hit the surf of Santa Cruz

by Leanna King

Natural Bridges State Beach is one of the very unique examples of this. Named after a natural outcrop of rocks that have since partially collapsed, this beach has next to everything needed for a relaxing day. Picnic benches and a barbecue area just above the sand line offers shade when it's needed and a nice picnic area. The beach itself is good for swimming with mostly smaller waves, and off to one side tide pools filled with various sea creatures are accessible to anyone. As an extra benefit if you're there from October-February, this is a site along the Monarch butterfly migration path and the trees just a short walk above the beach are filled with the butterflies.

Lighthouse Field State Beach is another option, situated a short drive from Natural Bridges. It houses a lighthouse at the top of the cliffs which is also home to California's first surfing museum. This site also overlooks Steamer Lane, an internationally renowned surfing spot.

No guide would be complete without mention of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. This amusement park along the beach is the oldest in California, and is home to what is officially called the Loeffl Carousel and Roller Coaster, which consists of the national historical landmarks of a Loeffl Carousel and the Giant Dipper roller coaster. Because of the amusement park this is one of the more crowded beaches in Santa Cruz, but it's not a site to miss.

Recreation

Beyond the sights, food and beaches, Santa Cruz has plenty of other options for entertainment.

Shakespeare Santa Cruz is a professional theatre company in the city. They hold plays seasonally from mid-July through August at the UC Santa Cruz campus, both in the indoor theatres there and on an outdoor stage within the surrounding redwood forest. Check online for more information about their current season and performance dates.

The downtown area is definitely small compared to some of the nearby cities to Santa Cruz and consists mainly of Pacific Street. This is the main shopping area of the city and houses various boutique-style shops. This is also where most movie theaters, concert venues, and many of the city's popular restaurants and bars can be found.

Coast of Santa Cruz