

The Media's Guide to the Best on the Mendocino Coast
Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce
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Overview

The Mendocino County coastline stretches more than 70 miles from Gualala in the South to Westport in the North with 12 towns or villages to visit. North of Mendocino are: Caspar (4 miles); Fort Bragg (8); Cleone (13); Westport (24). South of Mendocino are: Little River (3 miles); Albion (7); Elk (18); Irish Beach (22); Manchester (28); Point Arena (33); Anchor Bay (43); Gualala (46). Activities/points of interest include more than a dozen state parks, two lighthouses, hundreds of spots for great photos, several history museums and dozens of art galleries. A few highlights:

- Lighthouses:** Point Arena (Point Arena), Point Cabrillo (Mendocino)

- Long Beach Walks:** Schooner Gulch State Beach (south of Point Arena), Manchester State Beach (Manchester), Irish Beach (Irish Beach), Ten Mile Beach, MacKerricher State Park (Fort Bragg), (see Stornetta Ranch Preserve text under Coastal Hikes below)

- Unusual Beaches:** Bowling Ball Beach (north end of Schooner Gulch State Beach), Glass Beach (south end of MacKerricher State Park - Fort Bragg)

- Cozy Beaches:** Bonham Beach (formerly Cook's Beach, Gualala), Fish Rock Beach (Anchor Bay), Greenwood Creek State Beach (Elk), Caspar State Beach (Caspar), Jug Handle State Reserve (Caspar) Russian Gulch State Park (Mendocino) Westport Union Landing Beach (Westport).

- Best Activity Beaches:** Big River State Beach (Mendocino) – bike/hike/horse trail, river, volleyball, dog walking, fires on beach, shopping above the cliffs in the Village of Mendocino, Fish Rock Beach (Anchor Bay) overnight camping in protected cove, dog walking, creek, tide pooling, small boat launch area, surfing, boogie boarding and skim boarding (in season), shopping/restaurants above the cliffs in Anchor Bay. MacKerricher State Park (Fort Bragg) lake with fishing and a walking trail that goes around the perimeter, seal watching station, tide pooling, bike/walking trail along coastline.

- Best Coastal Forest Hikes:** Jug Handle State Reserve trail to Pygmy Forest (Caspar), Russian Gulch State Park trail to waterfall (Mendocino) and Forest History Trail (Jackson State Forest, Mendocino), while not a forest hike, the recently opened Stornetta Ranch Preserve (Point Arena) offers a 2.5-mile-long stretch of oceanfront bluffs overlook thundering waves, and a tidal estuary that is

home to wintering tundra swans, threatened salmon and the region's most scenic bean farm. The new public land on the Stornetta Ranch offers access to more than 1000 acres of rugged cliffs, ruffled dunes, rolling meadows, picturesque sinkholes and a 50-foot waterfall that splashes merrily into the Pacific Ocean. It is bisected by the gleaming Garcia River, a coastal salmon stream that's the target of extensive restoration efforts.

•**Best Big Wave Watching:** Point Cabrillo Light Station (north and south trails, Mendocino), Jug Handle State Beach (ocean cliffs, north of Caspar), Vista Point south of Schooner Gulch State Beach for spectacular views of Saunder's Reef. MacKerricher State Park (Fort Bragg), Seaside Beach (North of Fort Bragg)

•**Spectacular Gardens:** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens (Fort Bragg)

•**Acclaimed Art Centers:** Gualala Art Center (Gualala), Mendocino Art Center (Mendocino)

•**Golf:** Sea Ranch Golf Links (Gualala), Little River Golf Course (Little River)

•**Redwood Forest Train Ride:** historic Skunk Train (Fort Bragg).

•**Canoe/Kayak:** Gualala River (Adventure Rents, Gualala), Big River (Catch-a-Canoe & Bicycles, Too, Mendocino)

•**Local Private Airports:** Little River Airport (Little River) – Coast Flyers offers custom tours. Ocean Ridge Airport (Gualala)

•**Fishing Harbors:** Arena Cove (Point Arena) and Noyo Harbor (Fort Bragg) – both support active fishing fleets. Noyo offers fishing, whale watching and pelagic bird watching trips for local and visitors. Arena Cove has a fishing pier (free fishing, no license required) and private boat launching.

•**Horseback Riding:** beach and redwood trail rides – Ricochet Ridge (Fort Bragg), Shoreline Riders (Fort Bragg), Ross Ranch (Manchester)

•**Wine Tasting:** Annapolis Winery (Gualala area), Pacific Star Winery (Westport with a tasting room in downtown Fort Bragg), Mendocino Wine Company (Mendocino) carries a variety of Parducci wines for a real taste of Mendocino County wines.

•**Hottest Surfing Spots:** Arena Cove (Point Arena), Caspar State Beach (Caspar), Virgin Beach (Fort Bragg), Blues Beach (Westport)

About Mendocino County's Coast Communities (uh...Bruce...you left out Gualala!)

Anchor Bay

This small southern Mendocino County coastal village lies in the heart of the "banana belt", because of its unique microclimate; a warm column of air from inland spills over the protective coastal mountains, making the area warmer, with less fog and wind, than the surrounding areas.

Nature: Fish Rock Beach – tide pools and beach to walk dogs off leash.

Point Arena

Point Arena is the smallest "city" in Mendocino County and yet Point Arena has lodging, restaurants, shops, a community library, a campground, schools, the CITYART gallery, two markets with delis, a bakery, medical and dental center, pharmacy, ATM, and the magnificent Art Deco-style Arena Theatre, which produces a number of live shows every month including musical groups, stand-up comedy, magic shows, dance and theatrical productions and houses Arena Cinema , which shows first-run films and hosts the Berlin & Beyond Film Festival in January.

Arena Cove is home to the Arena fishing pier where the local fishermen bring their catch.

Manchester

Manchester State Park takes its name from the village of Manchester, located on Highway 1 about seven miles north of Point Arena. This is an area of rich grazing lands flocks of sheep and herds of cattle which add a pastoral note to some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in the world. The works of man are definitely secondary to pounding surf, screeching gulls, and grazing animals that dominate the scene. Manchester includes a Post Office, an Elementary School, the Manchester Grange and a multi-use store with groceries, building supplies and general merchandise. A county road north of Manchester leads past Manchester KOA Kampground to Manchester State Beach.

Irish Beach

The entire strand of beach that includes Irish Beach begins at the Garcia River just north of the Point Arena Lighthouse, encompasses Manchester State Beach (public access) and ends at the rocky promontory below the Irish Beach community. Depending on the tides, the beach varies in width from 50 to 100 feet. From the private parking lot the beach is a few steps away through a tangle of driftwood that remains from logging activities in the distant past.

Elk

The quaint seaside village of Elk is the best-kept secret on the Mendocino Coast. The spectacular views from the oceanfront Bed & Breakfast Inns and cottages are absolutely breathtaking and inspiring. This picturesque hamlet perched upon the bluffs, offers everything from an upscale wine and martini bar to an Irish pub and dinner house. A history museum, state park and spectacular sea stacks are squeezed into this small community.

Little River

Just two miles south of Mendocino, you'll discover the relaxed atmosphere of Little River. Combining a beautiful coastline and Fern Canyons with fabulous lodging and restaurants, you've found the perfect getaway from the hectic pace! For fun, you can snorkel off Van Damme State Park, stroll along sandy beaches or enjoy a round of golf with an ocean view. Popular among abalone divers.???

Mendocino

Mendocino Village is situated on a peninsula and surrounded on three sides by picturesque wildflower covered bluffs and crashing surf. Established in the 1850's, many of the New England style Victorians have been lovingly restored into romantic Bed & Breakfast Inns, world class restaurants and quaint shops. Best known as Cabot Cove, Maine, in the TV show "Murder She Wrote", (Big River Beach and Point Cabrillo Light Station)

Fort Bragg

The harbor town of Fort Bragg is best known for the Skunk Train that takes its riders on a trip back in time, through the redwoods and along the river. The harbor bustles with activity from fishermen bringing in their daily haul for the local restaurants and charter boats that offer fishing and whale watching adventures. The flowers meet the sea at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, a flower lovers paradise. The Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, Glass Beach, Noyo Harbor and art galleries are attractions.

Major Coast Events (a brief summary – see <http://mendocinocoast.com> for details)

Whale Festivals: March - 1st weekend Mendocino; 3rd weekend Fort Bragg; both Point Cabrillo Light Station State Park in Mendocino. Food, beer and wine tasting, 10k run, whale watching.

Paul Bunyan Days: September – celebrating Fort Bragg's logging history with parade, food and beer tasting, car and quilt shows, logging demonstrations and competitions.

Wine & Mushroom Fest: November – January - County and coastal celebration of two of our favorite things: fresh crab and great wine! Please visit the following link for details about this week-long event: <http://www.goMendo.com>.

Redwood Coast Whale & Jazz Fest: April - enjoy 4 days of music and whales on the Redwood "Mendonoma" Coast! Poetry & Jazz, features poetry with improvisational jazz accompaniment. Dinner & Jazz and Sunset & Jazz events at local restaurants return by popular demand, as well as the Chowder Challenge, Wine & Microbrew Tastings and FREE Jazz Concert at Gualala Arts Center

World's Largest Salmon BBQ: July - In Noyo Harbor off of South Harbor Drive, Hwy 20 in Fort Bragg \$20. adults, \$10 juniors (under 12yrs old). For more information <http://www.salmonrestoration.org> All proceeds are used by the Salmon Restoration Association of California, Inc.- a non-profit corporation - for the rebuilding of our once great salmon resource.

4th of July Parades: traditional Main Street parades with floats in Fort Bragg and Mendocino.

Mendocino Music Festival: August – two weeks of world class music under a tent on Mendocino Headlands State Park, overlooking the ocean.

Holiday Lights Parade: December - Lighted parade, christmas tree lighting, carolers, and Santa! Downtown Fort Bragg. Lighting of the christmas tree and Santa begins at 6pm Parade starts at 7pm.

Mendocino Coast Candlelight Inn Tour: December – first week of December in Albion, Elk Little River, Mendocino, Fort Bragg. This event is sponsored by MUSE & Big Brother Big Sisters.