



15 Pescadero CA Travel Secrets

The human population of Loma Mar, home to The Cottage at Where Water Falls, is far eclipsed by its redwood population (in both height and number)—and we like it that way! With just 167 permanent residents, Loma Mar is the place to go when you want to disappear under a thick green canopy to contemplate and recharge.

But in this post, we'd like to give a shout-out to our "bustling" neighbor to the west, Pescadero—with its booming population of 643 people. Pescadero is where you go for a town outing, 10 minutes by car from Loma Mar and en route to the Pacific Ocean.

In Pescadero, you can shop for handcrafted goods, stroll quaint sidewalks (downtown is about one block), eat local food that whole California coast buzzes about, and, of course, take in dramatic Pacific Ocean vistas.

But Pescadero's most valuable resource? Its people. Lonely Planet [nails it](#) when they call Pescadero "a close-knit rural town of sugar-lending neighbors and community pancake breakfasts."

Case in point:

For this post, we asked some sugar-lending Pescadero locals for a favor of another kind, and they responded with gusto. We requested they tell us a travel tip that they'd share with a friend who was coming to visit. Something travel guides might leave out.

From their thoughtful answers, we created **15 Pescadero Travel Secrets**, which features some great travel tips from Pescadero locals, plus hints from a few travel experts who visited Pescadero and shared its secrets on their own blogs.

And without further ado, here they are. Enjoy!

Tips for Outdoor Exploring in Pescadero



Our Pescadero experts unanimously agreed that all visitors should get their butts outside. That's probably preaching to the choir...if you're planning a visit to this redwood-cloaked, seaside area, you're likely already into wild places.

But here the best outdoor spots to explore...and when, and what to bring with you.

1. Take a secluded beach hike at low tide to San Gregorio Beach.

"One of my favorite spots is **the beach hike from Pescadero Beach to San Gregorio beach on low tide**. It is a beautiful walk of about 4 miles of empty beaches because it can be done only on a low tide, teeming with wild life and abundant sea life, from whales, dolphins, and sea bass jumping through the waves to birds galore.

It is so quiet that often you can come across deer on the beach moving from one trail to another. My wife and I will pack a loaf of bread, cheese and wine and make that walk once in awhile. **It is especially beautiful on a full moon low**

tide, although it could be dangerous as when the tide comes up you have to wait it out on a high point. It is not recommended unless you are aware of the dangers.”

--Mike from [Arcangeli Grocery Company/Norm's Market](#) in Pescadero.

(Read on to see why you *must* plan a visit to Arcangeli if you come to Pescadero/Loma Mar.)

2. Forage for wild edibles.

“One of my favorite things to do is forage for wild mushrooms up in the hills, and go out to the beach and get some mussels and make a great combined dish. Both beautiful hikes and with a reward!”

--Ken Periat from [Made in Pescadero](#), a dazzling handcrafted and custom wood furniture shop in downtown Pescadero.

3. Check out historic Pebble Beach.

“I really like the beach at [Pebble Beach](#). Not the one in Carmel, but the little cove on the north end of the Pigeon Point frontage road. It's a spot with a crazy history—an old hotel was there, the owner of which everyone supposedly hated. It was also purportedly a favorite dropzone for alcohol shipments during Prohibition. It's a great place to watch the Pacific Ocean be itself now.”

--John Benedetti of [Sante Arcangeli Family Wines](#).

4. Pack a locally sourced picnic.

Another tip from John of Sante Arcangeli echoes a sentiment of many locals: this area offers amazing food and drinks and breathtaking scenery...and they are best enjoyed together. Says John:

“I like to envision people grabbing a bottle of my wine at my [tasting room](#) or at my [brothers' bakery](#), grabbing some goat cheese from [Harley Farms](#), a loaf of Garlic Herb bread from my brothers' place, and then **parking their butts in the sand at one of the non-state beaches and having a picnic** and maybe some covert romance.

Look for roadside turnouts on HWY 1, small trails down the cliffs, and **not state park signs**. State Parks likes to buy up land that people have lots of fun on and then close it and/or create lots of rules so people can no longer have fun on

it. Yes, you can quote me on that. As long as people pack their picnic trash and leave no trace, I don't mind sharing.”

5. Ride a bike, then dance a jig.

The bicycle-friendly, redwood-shaded, ocean-view back roads of Pescadero are a popular spot for those blogger and biker [Ginger Jui](#) affectionately calls “spandex warriors.”

Whether you want to pedal five miles or 50, Pescadero is a great place to be on two wheels. Ginger recommends a bike trip that begins 45 miles away in Menlo Park and ends in Pescadero at just the right time:

“The monthly barn dance at [Pie Ranch](#) [third Saturday of every month] is hands-down my favorite destination for a hoe-down.

The mild, coastal climate of the Peninsula makes this an ideal ride in winter, spring, summer or fall... **If you have an outrageous bike camper appetite, do bring a dish and heartily partake in the post-work day potluck** (6pm just before the dance).”

--Ginger Jui of [The Flaming Bike Blog](#).

Pie Ranch used to offer camping for bicyclists, but do not any longer. Instead, try nearby [Costanoa](#) (about 2 miles away from Pie Ranch) if you'd like a night under the stars.

If you're not into biking, we highly recommend carving out some time for the [Pie Ranch barn dance](#) anyway!

Pescadero/Loma Mar for Foodies



Pescadero is a bona fide food destination in a state (California) that's known for its food. Here are some tips about getting to know Pescadero's pastoral food culture...where everything was artisanal and local before "artisanal and local" were culinary buzzwords.

6. Take a food and history tour.

"Pescadero is a tasty town at any time of year. At [Harley Farms](#) we are always open for cheese tasting and usually have seasonal delicious things, like cheesecake.

The farm has been our family home for almost 30 years, and we've seen Pescadero change from a backwater to a weekend hot spot. There's no chance of hubris, though. Pescadero was a fashionable resort a hundred years ago, with two hotels, until the great fire of 1926 burnt the town to the ground. There are remnants from these glory days.

The eucalyptus trees by the side of the cemetery would have welcomed stagecoaches into town. The magnolia alongside the [taqueria](#) is all that remains of the hotel on that spot.

And, perhaps best of all, the bar at [Duarte's Tavern](#) is the original Victorian bar, hauled from the flames by a posse of farmers and saved for posterity. Have a drink in Duarte's saloon to top off your tasty trip.”

-- Kate Cox for [Harley Farms](#), an award-winning goat farm that you'll be hearing more about in this post!

7. Eat some artichokes.

The unique and delicious California artichoke gets a special mention because of its importance to the Pescadero food “scene.” Two of Pescadero’s signature dishes are built around artichokes, in fact. But I’ll let a travel and food blogger, Stacie Tamaki, tell you all about that.

First, about the **Artichoke Soup at [Duarte’s Tavern](#)** (made with artichokes grown in the backyard garden), Stacie says:

“I'd done some research online and chatted with a friend before our food tour and learned that the best way to try the soup is to **order both the Artichoke and the Green Chile Soups and combine them together.**

We ordered a bowl of each (\$8.75 for each bowl) and asked for extra bowls to combine them...Just stir together and YUM! I have to say between the two the Green Chile Soup was my favorite flavor but it was just a bit too rich and creamy. Adding the less creamy, more full-bodied Artichoke Soup really made for a perfect flavor and texture combination.”

And then, for a carb-laden compliment, Stacie tried the **Artichoke Bread at the aforementioned Arcangeli Grocery Company:**

“This is what we came for, the Artichoke Garlic Herb bread...”

OMB. Oh My Bread. Seriously? The bread blew my mind. The outside was nice and crisp and crusty and the bread inside was sweet and so soft and fresh it was just dreamy. But the artichokes. . . Remember how I said I thought small pieces would be mixed in the dough? GET OUT OF HERE! The loaf was literally stuffed with artichokes!

I can't get over how they make this bread. If you love bread, I do, and you love artichokes, I do, you will love this bread! It could seriously be a meal all by itself.”

--Stacie Tamaki of [I Found the Place](#).

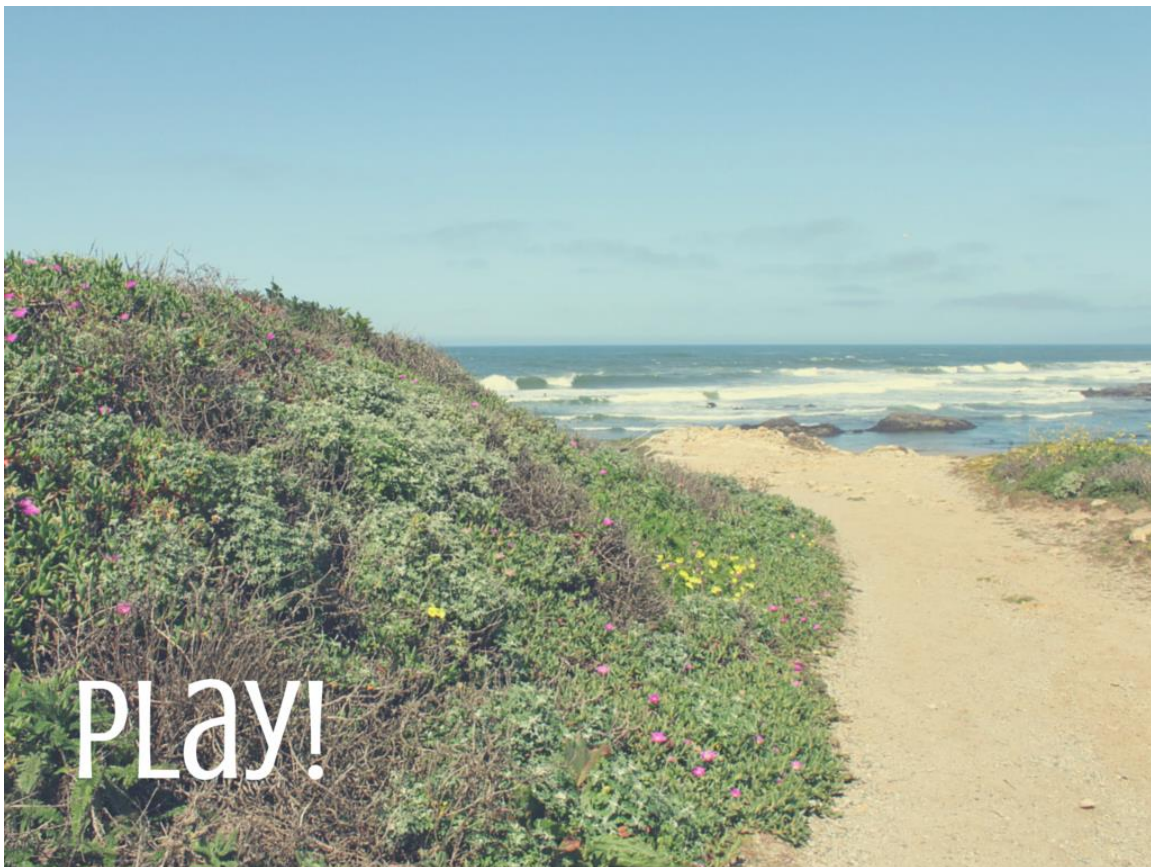
8. Try the other quirky, local eateries.

“If you are in town for only one meal it is hard to choose. [The Pescadero Country Store](#) has re-invented itself since I was last here with stylish indoor and outdoor seating, wood burning oven featuring regional products and a great looking bar. They serve beef from the local company [Leftcoast Grassfed](#).

There is also a [touted taqueria in a gas station](#)... And don't leave town without visiting the quirky [Phipps Country Store](#) a mile or two up Pescadero Creek Road. The farm-grown gigante beans are, for me, worth the drive.”

--Karen Bolla, professional chef and blogger at [A Cook's California](#).

Kid-Friendly Pescadero



Pescadero and Loma Mar offer tons of options to keep kids happy. In fact, everything we've discussed so far in this post (except the wine picnic!) is fitting

for families and kids of all ages. But here are some specifically kid-friendly activities to make the trip even more memorable for the little ones.

9. Visit the goats at Harley Farms Goat Dairy.

Stacie of [I Found the Place](#) also talks about [Harley Farms](#), where you can take tours as a family and appreciate the fresh air and friendly goats:

“[There were] plenty of adorable and well socialized goats that wanted to be petted. They were all friendly. You could literally walk up to any goat and pet it. Some come over seeking attention. They're like giant cats who love to have their heads scratched with your fingernails.”

10. Check out the “Pumpkin Capital of the World”: Half Moon Bay.

“In October, the pumpkin farms explode all over the bay. Over **3000 pounds of pumpkins** are grown here and it is a treat to go picking—note that on weekends these farms are packed with families. You can't go wrong with the farm you pick. Though my favorite is [Farmer John's pumpkins](#), as he has been an institution in town for as long as anyone can remember.”

--Michele Bigley of the travel and photography blog [Planet Playground](#).

11. Make lifetime memories (with or without “snipes”).

Not so much a tip as it is proof of the timeless qualities of Pescadero (and the way it encourages distracted kids—even city kids—to get outside to play), I can't resist sharing a story from Mike of Arcangeli's/Norm's Market about his youth here and the prank they pulled on their friends from the city:

“As a kid we would invite city friends to come to the coast and go ‘snipe hunting.’ Of course there are no snipes—we would take them to the beach at night, give them a burlap sack, and tell them to stay in a certain spot and that we would drive the snipe to them. They were to catch the ‘snipes’ in the sack. Then we'd leave them on the dark lonely beach for several hours, wondering when the snipe would show up”.

-- Mike from [Arcangeli Grocery Company/Norm's Market](#).

12. Hit the beach.

The Pacific's wild beaches aren't always suitable for kids. But Pescadero State Park Beach gets the Parent Stamp of Approval (with some caveats):

"Pescadero itself is a beautiful sandy beach with enough shells, sticks and stones to keep preschool collectors happy. There are also rocks to scramble over and a few tide pools at low tide. The surf is pretty dangerous, however. I wouldn't let small kids swim (it was too cold anyway!) and I kept a very close eye on the boys when they were paddling in the shallows. There is something quite idyllic though about the electric blue sky, the giant green surf and the empty golden sand at Pescadero."

--[The Outdoors Parent](#)

13. Explore Pigeon Point Lighthouse.

"[Pigeon Point Lighthouse](#) is a tourist destination as well as a hostel. During the afternoon, there are many couples and families exploring the property, from the ocean-side cliffs and tide pools to the seemingly private beach alcoves. We sat on a bench overlooking the water for awhile, enjoying the breezy and salty air, and watching for whales and seals. As it became early evening, we drove over to the small town of Pescadero to gather provisions for a picnic dinner on the lighthouse grounds."

--Taras and Amanda, full-time travelers and bloggers at [Tagabonds](#).

[Two more picnic advocates!]

Pescadero's Locals



And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we encourage you to talk to the people who live here in Pescadero. Ask questions, have a chat, and support Pescadero's close community of business owners whenever you can. You won't regret it!

14. **Bask in the Happy.**

[Coastal Living](#) backs us up on this, designating Pescadero one of "America's Happiest Seaside Towns." They say:

"The 643 people who live in Pescadero know it as a hometown blessed with clean air, beautiful and uncrowded beaches, and great off-road bicycling and hiking in the Santa Cruz Mountains.... Pescadero...is full of natural splendor, like those towering redwoods of Butano State Park."

15. Visit Ken at Made in Pescadero.

Ken Periat specifically told us that one of his favorite things to do is to work in his woodshop, Made and Pescadero, “and meet the interesting folks who come from all corners of the globe.”

So be sure to pay him a visit!

And I'd love for you to pay me a visit, too—[Where Water Falls](#) offers charming accommodations in a two-bedroom cottage tucked into the iconic redwood forests of Loma Mar—10 minutes from Pescadero. There's a waterfall, a hot tub, a fire pit, and a hammock waiting for you!