

The Statewide 2025 dance festival, May 2 to 4, will take place in Arroyo Grande, California, a town of about 18,000 in the middle of the California Central Coast. Rich with natural beauty and cultural significance, there is much to see and do in the area. The host dance club, BayOsos Folk Dancers from Los Osos, has compiled a list of their favorite things to do and points of interest for those who can extend their vacation before and after the festival, or for those bringing a partner less inclined to dance. Of course, the great online instant reference library known as the World Wide Web provides a plethora of information, but the festival committee thought a personally curated list from the locals would be appreciated.

Things to do on the Central Coast before and after Statewide Dance Festival May 2 to 4, 2024

These suggestions come lovingly from our Bay Osos Folk Dancers.

Shows/Exhibits

- Sensorio Light Exhibit in Paso Robles

My husband and I have taken visitors to Sensorio. It leaves a lasting impression. We've seen the original Munro exhibits both times, and they've now added a new Dimensions installation. <https://sensoriopaso.com>

- San Luis Obispo Film Festival April 24-29th (Pre-Statewide)

I have been a volunteer for this event in the past and learned it is well organized and always attracts top-quality films from a variety of genres. Slofilmfest.org.

- San Luis Obispo Museum of Art

Nestled by the San Luis Obispo Creek and adjacent to the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa in the heart of downtown, the SLO Museum of Art offers permanent and traveling exhibitions. In May, it will feature works by Esteban Cabeza de Baca: Memories of the Future, and by Independent Curators International, Notes for Tomorrow. <https://sloma.org/>

- San Luis Obispo History Center and Historical Museum

Housed in a historic Carnegie Library, the history center in the heart of downtown at 696 Monterey, features photographs and objects from the rich local history of San Luis Obispo City and County. <https://www.historycenterslo.org/>

- Arroyo Grande Historical Museums

There are five museums and a research library located in the Village of Arroyo Grande. The Heritage House Museum, Santa Manuela Schoolhouse, Patricia Loomis Research Library, Barn Museum, IOOF Historic Hall, and Paulding History House. <https://www.southcountyhistory.org/museums.html>

Hikes

- James Way Trail - Arroyo Grande

A lovely group of trails among oak trees in the hillside of Arroyo Grande. A lot of it is in shade. There is plenty of parking because the trails are never crowded. They are designated as moderate.

www.hikingproject.com/trail/7110583/james-way-trail

- Pismo Preserve, 80 Mattie Road, Pismo Beach

Pismo Preserve is a 900-acre ranch owned and operated by the Land Conservancy. It offers five trails, some multi-use, of varying difficulty with vistas overlooking the ocean for miles. Restrooms and parking are available. <https://lcslo.org/pismo-preserve/>

Vamonos Canyon Trail - Pismo Preserve This is a ¾-mile trail with some serious uphill parts. I love it because it goes back into a shady canyon filled with trees and away from the freeway noise. www.hikingproject.com/trail/7090613/vamonos-canyon-trail

- Montana de Oro

My favorite place to visit in our area is. There are lovely beaches, especially Spooner's Cove, which has tide pools to see at low tide. There is both sun and shade in the State Park. This is located on Los Osos Valley Road as you head out past the ocean cliffs. No dogs are allowed on the trails, and only on leash at Spooner's Cove. The **Bluff Trail** is my favorite among the many trails there for its panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, the wildflowers in the spring, the migrating whales and the many birds and bunnies. About 1 hour round trip.

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=592

Walks

- Biddle Regional Park - Arroyo Grande

A very large park with picnic tables and barbecues under the shade of sycamore trees and a large grass-covered open airfield with baseball diamonds where are dogs run out their zoomies. I have never been on the weekends so I don't know if it gets crowded. It is very lightly used during the week. We are often the only people there.

slocountyparks.com/day-use-parks/biddle-regional-park/

- The Beach at Shell Beach

A quiet beach with a green space on the cliff above where there is a large green space and path for walking along the cliff, bordered on one side by beautiful houses. Two staircases lead down to the beach. A tide pool area is at the bottom of one of them. This is a favorite of surfers, like Pismo Beach, but without the commercialization.

<https://visitslo.com/things-to-do/outdoor-activities/beaches-in-san-luis-obispo/shell-beach/>

- Oceano Visitor Center and Campground

There is a boardwalk and paved trail on the west side of a freshwater lagoon plus trails leading to the beach. Depending on the season, this is a favorite place for ducks and other birds. The visitor's center is small but interesting. There are walking trails on the east side of the lagoon as well, but maybe partly inaccessible, depending on the lagoon water level.

<https://www.slocal.com/listing/oceano-dunes-visitor-center/5198/>

- The beach walks at the end of Grand in Grover Beach

You have the choice of walking in the sand on the beach or walking over the sand dunes on the lengthy boardwalk. The beach is constantly changing so the walks never get old. The Beach Boardwalk is an easy walking trail that starts near the Pismo State Golf Course at the end of W. Grand Ave in Grover Beach and meanders through the dunes to a beach overlook area before continuing to the Monarch Grove Butterfly Preserve in Pismo Beach (the Monarchs have not shown up yet though). Enter the large parking lot to the right and the trail starts directly behind the restrooms in the Beach Plaza. A quick and easy way to get a beach fix. But feel free to meander down to the shore or hike the dunes for a more strenuous experience. www.wikiloc.com/trails/hiking/united-states/california/grover-beach

- Morro Coast Audubon Society Sweet Springs Nature Preserve

A 20-30-minute loop trail winds around a pond and to two birding lookouts bordering Morro Bay. <https://www.morrocoastaudubon.org/p/sweet-springs-nature-preserve.html>

- El Moro Elfin Forest

A 20-30-minute boardwalk loop through pygmy oaks and seasonal wildflowers, with two observation platforms overlooking the back bay. <https://www.elfin-forest.org>

- Morro Bay State Park Marina Point Trail

A 0.7-mile trail, part boardwalk, part decomposed granite path, bordering tidal lands and the marina with a multitude of birds. A good destination before or after a meal at the Bayside Cafe, a local favorite. https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=594

- Morro Bay Harborwalk and Waterfront Trails

A boardwalk from the northern end of the Embarcadero toward Morro Rock ending at the beach north of the rock. 20-30 minutes. One can see boats entering and leaving the harbor, all kinds of dogs walking on leashes, rafts of sea otters being cute, paddle boarders in the bay and surfers in the ocean. www.trailink.com/trail/morro-bay-harborwalk/

-The Embarcadero -Morro Bay

Shops and restaurants line the harbor with its fishing fleet and pleasure boats. About half a mile long. www.slovisitorsguide.com/take-a-stroll-along-morro-bays-embarcadero/

Points of Interest

Morro Bay Museum of Natural History

Interactive and hands-on learning exhibits that are great for kids of all ages. Gift shop. https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=31273

- Thursday Night Farmers Market- Downtown SLO (Pre-Statewide)

A happening exhilarating weekly event with a festival feel, filled with music, food, vendors, and produce. <http://downtownslo.com/farmers-market>

-Ride in the country to Lopez Lake

From the Portuguese Hall drive up Lopez Drive towards Lopez Lake for a lovely scenic route. Lopez Lake offers 22 miles of shoreline with camping, fishing, boating, picnicking, hiking, mountain biking, birdwatching, and a zipline and a water slide. <https://slocountyparks.com/camp/lopez-lake/>

-The Village of Arroyo Grande

The Village has everything one could ask for, in my humble opinion. It has an independent bookstore, a music shop specializing in guitars, an ice cream parlor, lots of restaurants, vintage and antique shops, a farmers market, a creekside park, bakeries, cafes, historical buildings from the late 1800s, a swinging bridge, and historical museums. From the 101 Freeway, take Grand Avenue exit and head west onto Branch Street. The Portuguese Hall (site of Statewide 2025) is just around the bend at the end of the Village as Branch Street turns into Huasna Road. <https://visitarroyogrande.org/thevillage/>

Golf Courses

Ranked below in order of preference and showing travel time from Arroyo Grande.

-Cypress Ridge. About ten-minute drive. A well-maintained public course. Reasonably priced. Driving range. Almost walkable. One of my favorites. www.cypressridge.com

-Monarch Dunes. The prestige course located in a Trilogy development. A links-like course with some real challenges. More expensive. Beautifully maintained. 20 minutes away. Walkable if you are in shape. Nice range. www.monarchdunes.com

-Morro Bay. A city-owned public course. Very reasonably priced. Tough to get a tee-time. Fantastic views and a fun track. Twenty minutes away. Mostly flat. www.morrobay.org/listing/morro-bay-golf-course/15453/

-Hunter Ranch. Forty-five minutes away to the north, but a beautiful course. Medium pricing. Use a power cart. www.hunteranchgolf.com

-Avila Beach. Reasonably priced, short, narrow and cute. Not always well-watered, and the fairways can show it. Twenty-five minutes away. Very walkable.

www.avilabeachresort.com

*And in case you need something from a very friendly and well-stocked golf shop, walk-in Arroyo Grande to Roger Dunn Golf on Station Way. <https://rogerdunn golfag.com>

Wine Tasting/Brewery Tour

-Timbre Winery Tasting Room

225 E. Branch Street, Arroyo Grande

-Verdad & Linduist Family Wine Tasting Room

211 E. Branch Street, Arroyo Grande

-Talley Vineyard

3031 Lopez Drive, Arroyo Grande

Taste world-class wines for \$30 a tasting. Nestled in the beautiful Talley Farm and Vineyard.

<https://talleyvineyards.com>

-There are over 400 wineries along the Central Coast.

San Luis Obispo County

<https://www.slocal.com/eat-drink/wineries/>

www.slocal.com/eat-drink/wineries/

Santa Barbara County

www.santabarbara.com/winecountry/

-Firestone Walker Brewery, Taproom, Tours in Paso Robles

1400 Ramada Drive, Paso Robles

A fascinating tour of the brewery even for a teetotaler like me! It's like being in an episode of How Things Are Made. Tours are given all through the week but do make a reservation.

Make time for good grub at the Taproom restaurant. <https://www.firestonewalker.com/pasorobles/>