



DREAM TOWNS

Go for the perfect vacation. Or for the perfect rest of your life. We guarantee that you'll fall in love with these 10 great towns

San Luis Obispo, CA, residents have plenty of opportunities to breathe deeply outdoors, from city and park trails to the nearby Pacific.





SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA Pure California

For your consideration: San Luis Obispo is the most Californian place in all of California.

A historic mission town set among rolling hills halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, SLO buzzes with undergraduate energy, thanks to **CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY**. The **EDNA VALLEY WINE COUNTRY** is a few minutes south, and the coast is 10 minutes west by car or, as many in this relentlessly fit community prefer, 30 minutes by bike.

And the climate? Well, let's see, how do you describe a place that's as ideal for people as it is for wine grapes? Where the annual average monthly highs range all

the way from 62° to 74°?

Oh, that's right: Perfect.

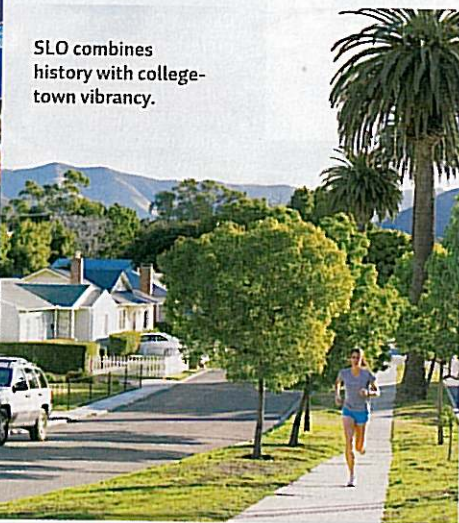
SLO is a town of 44,359 people who live outdoors, whether on the trail that winds through the oak forests and meadows on **BISHOP PEAK** or along the shaded downtown banks of its restored creek.

Some of its best neighborhoods—where the streets are lined by a mix of Queen Annes and Spanish bungalows—sit within a few blocks of the back patio at the local coffee-house classic, **LINNAEA'S CAFE**, or the eclectic offerings of the **PALM THEATRE**, the only solar-powered picture show in the country.

And all year long, **THURSDAY'S EVENING FARMERS' MARKET** sends the scent of barbecued tri-tip (and a soundtrack of live blues) across the tidy urban landscape.

People often talk about California as a state of mind. Well, in San Luis Obispo it's also a way of life. —MATTHEW JAFFE

SLO combines history with college-town vibrancy.



MAKE A VISIT

San Luis Obispo is 12 miles inland from the coast on U.S. 101, 190 miles north of Los Angeles and 230 miles south of San Francisco. Amtrak's Coast Starlight and Pacific Surfliner (amtrak.com or 800/872-7245) both stop here. The local airport is served by American Eagle, Delta Connection, United Express, and U.S. Airways, with direct connections to and from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Phoenix, and Salt Lake City. Staying the night? Consider Petit Soleil Bed et Breakfast (from \$159; petitsoleilslo.com or 805/549-0321); it's charming and near downtown. More visitor info: visitslo.com

MAKE A MOVE

If you're thinking about living the SLO life, figure on a median home price of \$655,323 (2007). As for jobs, Cal Poly is the city's biggest employer—but the county is the third-largest wine-grape producer in California. For local news, try the free weekly, *New Times* (newtimeslo.com), or the city's daily newspaper, *The Tribune* (sanluisobispo.com).

"YOU HAVE A LOT OF CULTURED AND EDUCATED PEOPLE HERE, BUT IT'S NOT A STUCK-UP TOWN—I'M NOT SURE IT COULD BE WITH ALL THE SURF SHOPS AROUND"

—MERILEE WILHELM, ACCOUNTANT WITH THE COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

SISTERS, OR POP. 1,700 \$415,000

Just 22 miles up the road from its big brother, Bend, sleepy little Sisters combines a jaw-dropping natural setting in the high-desert of central Oregon's eastern Cascades with quaint Old West style and one of the state's most highly touted school districts.

TRUCKEE, CA POP. 16,000 \$539,000

The laid-back Sierra Nevada mountain town is just three hours from San Francisco but worlds away in real estate prices. It's a tight-knit, outdoorsy community, with good restaurants and year-round recreational fun—some of California's best ski resorts are minutes away, as is Lake Tahoe.