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## Experience the SLO Life in San Luis Obispo!

**SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif.** — On California's fabled Highway 1, halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, lies a town whose name spells tranquility. Steep, velvety-green hills shelter the coastal city, which year-round basks in a perfect Mediterranean marine climate of balmy days and cool nights. The streets of downtown are lined with shops and restaurants tucked into turn-of-the-20th-century mercantile buildings, and its neighborhoods are chock-a-block with classic California bungalows. A gleaming white Spanish mission rises in the center of it all, above a sparkling creek. South of town, gently rolling vineyards give way to the beach and the sea.

This is San Luis Obispo, and it's no wonder the people here call it SLO. No one is in any hurry in the cafés or on the sidewalks, and certainly no one is in any rush to leave. The vibe is relaxed but not sleepy in the two-college town of 44,000, which has four surf shops but also a resident symphony. Strangers are genuinely friendly, always ready to talk about their favorite hiking trail or barbecue joint, or to point the way to the winery with the best Pinot Noir. It's all part of the SLO life, that combination of good stuff that makes visiting here so nourishing to the soul. There's plenty to go around, so come: Experience the SLO Life!

San Luis Obispo's unusual natural beauty, along with its gentle climate, first attracted the Spanish padres to the area in the 1700's. In 1772 they built the fifth of California's 21 missions here, on the banks of San Luis Creek, and named it Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa. Today, many consider this the most beautiful of the Spanish missions.

Some things around SLO haven't changed a lot. The scenery and weather are still gorgeous, the air is still clean and San Luis Creek still runs through the heart of downtown. Agriculture still plays a vital role in the local economy; weathered barns and herds of cattle are everywhere in the surrounding farm and ranch lands. At the Thursday Night Farmers' Market, held year-round, growers bring the freshest produce and flowers to town and a multi-block party ensues, complete with street food, crafts vendors and live entertainment.

SLO's once-dusty streets are now tree-lined and flanked by meticulously restored Victorian "painted ladies." Old West buildings have been converted to bustling shops and restaurants, and Art Deco civic architecture stands downtown. A university and a college have brought cultural excitement in the form of numerous musical and performing arts groups; major touring shows regularly stop in SLO. A children's museum, an art center and a history museum add to SLO's cultural appeal, as do its many art galleries. Festivals and special events of all kinds take place on the plaza in front of the Mission year-round. Forty-five minute north, the art-and-architecture extravaganza known as Hearst Castle awaits.

South of town, a booming wine country has emerged. Some two dozen wineries produce critically acclaimed vintages in the Edna Valley and Arroyo Grande Valley. Visitors can head out along the gorgeous country roads to sip their way through the vineyards, then return to town to savor everything from Santa Maria barbeque to Italian fritti.

In and around SLO, extensive hiking and biking trails thread through the city's open spaces. State parks, national forest and some of the most beautiful lakes in California open up myriad other outdoor adventure opportunities. Ten minutes from downtown lie miles of uncrowded beaches, pristine coastline and the glory of the Pacific Ocean. All this combined with 315 days of sunshine a year makes SLO a paradise for the outdoor enthusiast.

SLO's location halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco make it a strategic stopover for drivers heading up or down California's magnificent Central Coast. Once they check in at one of the city's European-style B&Bs, tidy motels or full-service hotels, they can spend a few days enjoying the laid-back pace and scenic beauty of the city. Those lucky enough to discover San Luis Obispo have the great good fortune to experience the SLO Life.

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For more information about events, attractions and visitor services in San Luis Obispo, phone the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce at 805-781-2777 or visit the Chamber's website at [www.VisitSLO.com](http://www.VisitSLO.com).