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PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA | USA

Palo Alto is a city in California's San Francisco Bay Area. It's part of Silicon Valley and home to Stanford University. On campus, Cantor Arts Center's broad collection includes a notable group of Rodin sculptures. University Avenue runs through downtown Palo Alto and has casual and upscale restaurants, plus well-known chain stores and independent boutiques. East are the marshland trails of Baylands Nature Preserve, per Google.

DAY ONE

9 AM - Stanford guesthouse breakfast if possible; or head over to the downtown area and sit outside with your coffee at [Coupa Cafe - Ramona](#) (\$\$, Cafe)

10 AM - Walk over to see the 1925 [Stanford Theater](#); peek through the windows to see the vintage tile Work. Walk around and shop and make sure to find:

- Wahlburgers - hamburger restaurant owned by the Wahlberg brothers - hi, Marky Mark
- Bell's Book - used and rare book shop that opened in 1924
- Wall Art on Restoration Hardware - by Greg Brown, local artist

11 AM - Take a walk down Emerson street, past Heritage Park and through the cutest neighborhood and make your way to see the [Hewlett Packard Garage](#)

11:45 AM - Drive to Town & Country Village for shopping at cute boutique shops; you can skip and stay in downtown

1 PM Lunch at [Goot's Roadside](#) (\$\$, Hamburgers) and try the steak burger with a side of street corn

2 PM - Drive out to Googleplex to visit the Android Statues and shop at the official Google merchandise store

- Unless you know someone, who works at Google, you cannot be on campus. Everything is locked, and you need a pass to buy food, use the bathroom and generally walk anywhere. AKA no tours. This is a functioning business, so I get it, it's locked down but really wish there was a tour of some kind.

2:45 PM - Lounge around with the beloved donkeys of [Barron Park](#). It's 5-minute walk and the donkeys are friendly but may still bite

3:45 PM - Take a drive down Junipero Serra Freeway to gaze upon the huge Stanford dish, an iconic radio telescope

- If it's a nice day you could take a walk up to see it

Back to the hotel to freshen up and take a quick cat-nap

7 PM - Dinner at [Yum Cha Palace](#) (\$\$, Chinese) in the Menlo Park district; recommend the Peking duck rice crepe rolls

DAY TWO

8:30 AM - Stanford guesthouse breakfast if possible or stop at a Starbucks and treat yourself

9 AM - Road trip! Enjoy the drive out to Half Moon Bay, we're headed to see [Mavericks Beach](#); time spent is 45 minutes

- One of my top 10 favorite drives through the hills of California, wind through trees that you can't see the top of, white-knuckle grab the wheel as you navigate through the fog, past the mom-and-pops flower shops until you emerge into a quaint fishing town

10 AM - Park at the Tide Pools Parking Lot and stroll along the walkway, past the first beach until you around the corner to Mavericks Beach. If the weather is nice, you'll see surfers and seals. Make sure to see Pillar Point, a rock garden in the waves that serves as an ecological park.

- Sit on a boulder and watch the waves, loved finding hermit crabs cruising between rocks

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- Do you hear a horn? If the fog is dense, the horn will sound every minute

11 AM - Hike up to Pillar Point Air Force Station or take a straight/right and venture through the grass and trees to the lookout point and see the other side of the water. Can you spot Ross Cave?

12 PM - Head back into town to [Barbara's Fishtrap](#) (\$\$, Seafood), there will be a wait and its CASH only.
Start with 1/2 order of raw oysters followed by the award-winning Fish and Chips

If the wait is too long or you don't want to pay ATM prices, go to Sam's Chowder House

1 PM - Walk across the street and have a drink at the local brew house, [Half Moon Bay Brewing Company](#) (\$\$, Pub)

2 PM - Time to head back San Jose; time spent is 45 minutes

3 PM - Freshen up, change (Outfit: flats, dress and denim jacket) and then venture to Stanford University to tour the campus, self-guided

- Drive down Palm Street for the experience, then park in the Visitor Centers parking lot, should be free at this time
- First stop is the [Hoover Tower](#), observation deck on the 14th floor that closes at 4 PM; \$4 USD
- Second stop is the mosaic [Memorial Church](#) and Court
 - If you're thirsty, there are built in water fountains in the corners. Drink that smart water.
- Third Stop is the [Stanford Clock Bell Tower](#), on the 'Circle of Death' corner

6 PM - [Oren's Hummus](#) (\$\$, Israeli) in downtown Palo Alto; try the hummus lamb and the chicken skewer with a side of falafel and babaganoush eggplant

8 PM - Stroll around downtown and take in the sights. It's a fun place to be at night and then finish with a dessert at [Cream](#) (\$, Ice Cream Shop)

Head back to the hotel

DAY THREE

6:30 AM - Road trip to Big Sur! Time spent is 2.5 hours

- Venture back in time on Route 1 → [history](#)
- Breakfast and potty break at McDonald's in Monterey
- If it's a pretty day, take an hour break to see Pebble Beach and go to Pescadero Point

Make your way across [Bixby Creek Bridge](#) (or Bixby Canyon Bridge) is one of the most photographed bridges in CA dues to its aesthetic design, the open-spandrel arch. People park along the sides and clog traffic to get out a take a picture - don't be like them.

9:30 AM - First Stop: [McWay Cove & Falls](#) to see the cliff-backed beach cove and waterfall; this is one of the most popular photos and pictures taken along Big Sur

- As a state park, its \$10 cash to enter; but sneaky people park on the street and walk-in
- Great trails but may be closed because of weather and mud slides so check in advance

10:15 AM - Second Stop: Arrive at [Big Sur Lodge](#) for a potty break and snacks

- Walk around the left side, follow the path and arrive at a huge tree - you can't miss it

10:30 AM - Time to hike Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park; same entrance for Big Sur Lodge, follow the signs to the trails; time spent is 2 hours

- Bonus, the state park pass you purchased for the McWay Cove waterfall will also get you into the Big Sur Trails
- Follow the Buzzard's Roost, a 4-hour hike which starts by the restrooms of Parking Lot 2
 - When you get to the loop at the top take a right - more shade
- Before you leave, drive down to Parking Lot 4 to see the Colonial Tree, largest redwood in the park

1 PM - Lunch at the cliff-topping restaurant [Nepethe](#) (\$\$\$, American) and get ready for a wait

- The Famous Ambrosiaburger with a side a coleslaw was very yummy

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- Pro Tip: While you wait for your table, you can get full service at the bar. Skip the wait by getting a bar seat.

Pull over and change into your cleaner smelling clothes

3 PM - Back on the road to Carmel-by-the-Sea to refresh with delicious wine from [Folktale Winery & Vineyards](#) (\$\$, Winery), make a reservation; road trip time is 1 hour

- Enjoy a flight to try it all accompanied by the most scrumptious Artisan Cheese Board; time spent is 1.5 hours, flight \$20, cheese \$24
- The diptych on the bottles is lovely and classic; can you collect them all?

5:30 PM - Finish the drive to Santa Cruz, check-in to your hotel and take a nap

9:30 PM - Wake up, freshen up and head out to the [Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk](#) for some amusement

DAY FOUR

8:30 AM - Time to go back to San Jose for the afternoon flight, but one more tour before leaving

9:30 AM - Tour of [Winchester Mystery House](#); time spent is 2 hours, daily estate tours \$39 USD - get tickets in advance

- Ghost hunting, doors leading nowhere, number 13 hidden in everything - this house will give you the goosebumps

12 PM - Checked into the airport and had lunch at Tres Gringos (\$\$, Mexican), try the burrito

2 PM - Goodbye San Jose. Head home.