

# Get your fun on route 101

## Landmarks catch travelers' eyes

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South County Life

Even if you're speeding through south Monterey County on Highway 101 with no plans to stop, a few landmarks may attract your eye.

### El Camino Real bells

The many mission bell replicas that line stretches of Highway 101 throughout south county offer a glimpse of California's past.

In 2004, 600 of the replicas, each on a curved pipe pole, were placed by Caltrans along the entire highway. About half of those bells are in District 5, which runs from Santa Barbara County through Monterey County to San Benito County.

Most of the bells are cast metal, while a few older ones are of copper patina. Caltrans used a \$1.4 million Federal Transportation Enhancement grant to place the bell markers every mile or so, anchored in a cement base.

"The bells help to bring back the mission history of El Camino Real (Royal Road)," said Susana Cruz, Caltrans spokeswoman.

### Gonzales water tower

Approaching Gonzales, the first thing that stands out is the white and green water tower that looks like a giant golf ball atop a green tee.

But the 85-foot-high "water" tower along Fifth Street hasn't held water for some 20 years, said Gonzales Mayor George Worthy.

Instead, it now serves as a cellular phone transmission tower for the area, Worthy said. It's also remained a navigation point for visitors to Gonzales.

"As long as you can see it, you know where you are," he said.

In the winter months, Christmas lights are placed along the tower's legs down to ground level, giving it a festive look.

### Salinas Valley State Prison/ Correctional Training Facility

Even if you wanted to pay a



SCOTT MACDONALD/SOUTH COUNTY LIFE

The entrance to the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad is pictured on March 8.



SCOTT MACDONALD/SOUTH COUNTY LIFE

The water tower has welcomed travelers to Gonzales for decades.

visit to Soledad's two state correctional facilities, it's likely they wouldn't have room for you.

A county civil grand jury report released in January found that both facilities house more

## DETAILS

### ■ EL CAMINO REAL BELLS:

The roadside decorations commemorate the path taken by Spanish missionaries in the 18th century.

### ■ GONZALES WATER TOWER:

It no longer holds water, but aids in cellular telephone transmissions.

### ■ CORRECTIONAL TRAINING FACILITY, SOLEDAD:

The medium-security state prison stretches along Highway 101 north of Soledad.

than double the number of inmates they were designed for.

The medium-security Correctional Training Facility, which stretches beside the highway on the north end of Soledad, was designed to hold 3,301 inmates but now houses 7,040.

Opened in May 1996, the adjacent, maximum-security Salinas Valley State Prison was designed to hold 2,224 inmates. In 2006, the facility had 4,994 beds.

Until the prison population pressure is lifted, prison officials said they'll have to deal with crowding well enough to prevent riots and widespread violence inside the facility.

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