

Gonzales

The smallest city in south county is dubbed the "Wine Capital of California" and is home to a host of vineyards and wineries, including Blackstone and McIntyre wineries, and Pisoni Vineyards. The city also has a score of family parks and a skate park for teens, as well as year-round festivals such as Public Safety Day, at which law enforcement and fire-and-rescue agencies provide demonstrations and information.

Greenfield

One of the fastest-growing cities in south county also happens to be among the most culturally rich. Greenfield is nestled between the eastern Gabilan and western Santa Lucia mountain ranges and is nearly smack in the middle of south county. It is close to myriad recreational opportunities provided by nearby cities and is home to wineries and vineyards such as Scheid.

King City

In its 64th year, the highly anticipated annual Salinas Valley Fair is among the many reasons to visit this city 50 miles south of Salinas. Last year, a record-breaking 29,601 people flocked to the four-day fair. The city's San Lorenzo Park houses the Monterey County Agricultural and Rural Life Museum, a six-building compound that boasts a number of turn-of-the-century artifacts.

Marina

Marina is one of the fastest-growing communities in Monterey County. The coastal city has been revitalized since the closure of the U.S. Army's Fort Ord base in 1994 with the opening of several stores and new housing developments. Several projects are expected to continue this year, including Cypress Knolls, Marina Heights, the downtown area and The Dunes on Monterey Bay.



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Monterey

From Cannery Row to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Monterey has many famous landmarks. Steinbeck's Cannery Row is now a hub of food, music and entertainment. The city is known as the "language capital of the world," being home to the Defense Language Institute and Monterey Institute for International Studies.

Moss Landing

When it comes to fishing and eating good seafood, look no further than Moss Landing. This harbor community of about 300 residents, tucked between Monterey Bay and Highway 1, also has the state's largest power plant, one of the county's last dairy farms and a hive of antique stores.

Prunedale

Prunedale is a bit of a moving target, covering anywhere from three to 38 square miles, depending on whom you ask, between a series of oak-lined canyons with wide range of old and new homes. It has about 17,000 residents.

Monterey Bay is cold, but on certain warm days, or with the appropriate wet suit, it's a magnet for families, surfers and divers.

Pebble Beach

Many of the county's most expensive homes are in this area known for its world-class golf courses and spectacular views of the Pacific.

Sand City

The smallest city in the county boasts a formidable and growing reputation as an artist-friendly haven. With art events like the West End Celebration, friendly neighbors and small town charm, Sand City exudes an urban feel. One of the city's hotspots, Ol' Factory Café, offers a good selection of imported beer, wines and organic foods and deserts, not to mention lots of coffee for any open mic night or gathering with friends.

Seaside

Home to California State University Monterey Bay, Seaside is a fast-growing city and one of the county's most affordable. Those driving down Highway 1 near Fremont Boulevard may notice a large sand dune covered with messages. This dune is affectionately known as Message Mountain.

Monterey County is proud of its beaches and the entire community works hard to protect them from erosion and other hazards. This includes the reintroduction of native grasses and plants to the dunes such as these at Fort Ord Dunes State Park, and other areas threatened by wind and water.

features captivating caves, camping grounds and splendid views from atop the ancient volcano site. Although the city has seen a surge in development, the community has simultaneously maintained its "country charm."



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