

Plein Air Sites – Northern Sonoma and Southern Mendocino Coast

These are **suggestions** mostly from Bruce Jones and added to by Anne Vernon. This is only a courtesy to help artists unfamiliar with the Northern California Coast. We suggest you check out our area yourself to find your own unique favorite sites.

SONOMA COUNTY: Jenner through Gualala Point (The Paint Out is from Jenner through Elk, so both Sonoma County and Mendocino County are included.)

Timber Cove Resort

Directions: Hwy 1 and Timber Cove Rd, 14 miles north of Jenner. Mile Marker 35.65
Ease of access: Easy access, you can park at the Resort, and paint to your heart's desire.
Home of the Bufano Statue State Park (2nd smallest state park in California), the Resort boasts stunning views, public trails, and you can enjoy a meal and a wonderful ambience with friendly staff during your painting breaks. They are also a sponsor for the event.
Views: Gorgeous wherever you are.

Highpoint

Directions: Hwy 1, approximately 4 miles south of Timber Cove Resort. It's the highest point on Hwy 1 south of Fort Ross. Mile Marker 29.42
Ease of access: You might want to be dropped off, or park wherever you can, and walk to Highpoint.
Views: Sweeping views of the Coast looking South, and on a clear day, you can see Pt. Reyes. The clouds and ocean can be astounding.

Jenner Headlands

Directions: Hwy 1, just outside Jenner to its North, where the mouth of the Russian River meets the ocean.
Ease of access: Various places to park, people pull off constantly.
Views: Excellent changing conditions, occasional surfers, renowned for its stunning ocean scape, pelicans, seal "nookery."

Ocean Cove

Directions: About ½ hour south of Gualala on Hwy 1.
Ease of access: Easy access, paved parking lot, but it cost several dollars day-use fee to go in. There are porta-potties.
Views: We usually stay in the parking lot and paint the old store, built in 1860 and interesting with a nice background of eucalyptus or pine trees, depending on your angle.

Gerstle Cove -- Salt Point State Park

Directions: the park is well marked on the west side of Hwy1 at about Sonoma mile marker 40.
Ease of access: excellent with roads and trails all over and good restrooms.
Views: tremendous choice of views but all are rocks, ocean and trees.

The Goblins – Salt Point State Park

Directions: park at the call box parking area at about Sonoma mile marker 40.7 on the east side of Highway 1. Walk west on the path on the west side of Highway 1.
Ease of access: excellent, the trail is practically wheel chair accessible, but no restrooms.
Views: interesting piles of granite boulders with dwarf trees and natural succulents, like natural rock gardens. Since there are no big trees you get more panoramic views.

Stump Beach

Directions: the park is well marked on the west side of Hwy 1 at about Sonoma mile marker 41.22

Ease of access: good trails and a restroom.

Views: interesting views of rocks, ocean and trees.

Fisk Mill Cove, Sonoma Hwy 1 mile marker 42.63.

Directions: Go west into the driveway and go right to the north parking lot. Walk west on the path at the middle picnic table and you come to a nice bluff overlooking the ocean.

Ease of access: Not a long walk but definitely not wheelchair access. There are good restrooms in the next parking lot south.

Views: You can sit at the one picnic table or on rocks. Both the rocks and trees are heavily weathered and interesting shapes.

Kruse Rhododendron Park, Hwy 1 mile marker 42.79.

Directions: Go east up the road to the first parking lot, about half a mile. Park and walk from there.

Ease of access: There are lots of trails, from easy/short to difficult/long but none wheelchair accessible and no restrooms.

Views: Best April-June when rhododendrons are blooming – all are pink natives – in a nice old redwood forest with plenty of ferns.

Stewarts Point, Hwy 1 mile marker 48.10.

Directions: Park in their parking lot on the west side of Hwy 1.

Ease of access: Easy, including public restrooms.

Views: Nice view from the south end of the parking lot looking west. Another interesting scene is the old church on the west side of the highway, just south of the parking lot.

Sea Ranch Lodge and Black Point, Hwy 1 mile marker 50.59. Good indoor and outdoor.

Directions: Go in the Lodge parking area and park in the farthest north lot.

Ease of access: all wheelchair accessible, good public restroom on the second floor and good coffee.

Views: Indoor view is from the solarium on the north side of the bar, looking down on the old barn and Black Point. There are plenty of good outdoor views all around Black Point.

Annapolis Road, Hwy 1 mile marker 51.94.

Directions: Go east on Annapolis Road a couple of miles to the second bridge over the Gualala River – turn left into the gravel/dirt parking area and walk down to the river. Or continue another 6 miles and draw the old Annapolis post office or Horicon School.

Ease of access: The river is about a ¼ mile walk over dirt and gravel, not wheelchair accessible. The post office and school have excellent access.

Views: There are a number of interesting river views depending on how far you walk.

Pebble Beach Coastal Access, Hwy 1 mile marker 52.29.

Directions: From the Coastal Access point (cost \$5) walk about ¼ mile west to the ocean and ¼ mile south and you will be treated to spectacular views of ocean rocks.

Ease of access: Good paths, but not good enough for wheelchairs.

Views: Spectacular rocks and ocean.

Stengel Coastal Access, Hwy 1 mile marker 53.96.

Directions: West from Hwy 1 on Wild Iris, then right into the Coastal Access lot. Fee to Sonoma Parks is \$5.

Ease of access: Good paths, no restroom.

Views: Stengel Barn reportedly vies with the Sea Ranch Chapel as the most photographed building around. You can walk all around it and find the best view for you.

Shell Beach Coastal Access, Hwy 1 mile marker 55.24

Directions: lot is on the west side of Hwy 1.

Ease of access: It's almost ½ mile to the beach from the coastal access point (cost \$5) and not wheelchair accessible – no restrooms.

Views: Lots of nice views of cypress trees, rocks and water. It's a quieter beach than most -- shielded from big waves.

Sea Ranch Chapel, Hwy 1 mile marker 55.56.

Directions: Go east to the Chapel (it is also just north of the fire station).

Ease of access: easy – wheelchair accessible.

Views: Beautiful inside and outside, just walk around and decide on your favorite.

Sea Ranch Golf Course ponds, Hwy 1 mile marker 58.1

Directions: Turn west into the golf course parking lot and park. You must give Ron Casey a one paragraph, signed piece of paper that releases the golf course from for any damages. Ron is in the Pro Shop.

Ease of access: Walk back toward Hwy 1 but go north on the service road just before you get to Hwy 1 and you come to the ponds right away.

Views: There are plenty of places to set up. If it is rainy, you can go into the Smokehouse Grill restaurant, get a cup of something, and draw the beautiful golf course through the restaurant's full length windows.

Gualala Point and Gualala Campground, Sonoma Hwy 1 mile marker 58.2.

Directions: For Gualala Point, turn west and park in the second lot. For the campground, turn east and park in the Day Use area, just before the campground. Both charge a fee to park for day use.

Ease of access: Good trails for both. Paved trails for wheelchairs but they don't get you quite down to the best places to paint or draw. There are public restrooms in both areas.

Views: For Gualala Point there are many great views, but the benches on the northside of the second parking lot, showing the bend in the river, sandbar, town and ocean, are the most famous. For the Campground, walk upriver to the sand bar and set up a chair on it for nice river views: water, rocks and mixed trees – across, up or down river.

MENDOCINO COUNTY: Gualala through Manchester. The good news is that there are no parking fees. The bad news is that facilities generally aren't as developed as Sonoma.

Gualala Art Center

Directions: take Old State Highway east from Hwy 1 (Mendocino mile marker .60) and then take Gualala Road where it forks off to the right (less than a mile from Hwy 1) and turn right in Gualala Arts parking lot.

Ease of access: Mostly wheelchair accessible although the trails down to the river are not. There are public restrooms, drinking fountains, etc. in Gualala Arts.

Views: Nice gardens, trails through redwoods, and we can set up still life's inside if it is raining.

Gualala Bluff Trail – West of Hwy1 behind the motel and Seacliff Center.

Directions: Walk west behind Seacliff Center or the Surf Motel until you hit the bluff trail at the top of the cliff. One favorite spot is the big rock which is pretty much at the center of the bluff trail.

Ease of access: easy walk and one of the few that is wheelchair accessible. Public restrooms available at SeaCliff Center.

Views: bluffs to the north and the river mouth when it has one, river / sand bar / ocean and Robinson Reef rocks straight west, Gualala River and point to the south.

Castle Rocks and Mendocino Coast – Take Robinson Reef Drive West of Hwy1 about mile 1.7

Directions: The problem is you have to know someone who lives there because there are houses all along Robinson Reef. Come to my house at 38575 and I'll show you where to walk for a good location depending on who is home, but my house is on the wrong side of the street for this view.

Ease of access: Easy if the right people are home, difficult if they aren't because you have to walk over old logs and heavy underbrush. No public restrooms available.

Views: Beautiful views of castle rocks and the rugged coast looking north. Alternative view is looking south from the cul de sac toward Gualala Point.

Cooks Beach Land Conservancy -- West of Hwy1 at mile marker 3.14

Directions: Park on County Road 526 west of Hwy1. The entrance is on its west side by the telephone pole that has Land Conservancy signs.

Ease of access: You can walk straight ahead on the trail and point from the bluff, which is easy, or go down the trail to the north and get to the beach, which is difficult if you have any health problems or are carrying a heavy load. Not recommended for people who have

had any knee or hip operations. If you bring an easel make it the light aluminum kind. One portapotty is available.

Views: At the beach the rock formations on the left are fantastic shapes, and the cliffs on both sides present interesting rock formations.

St.Orres -- East of Hwy1 at mile marker 3.22

Directions: Park in their lot. Then you should go to the office and ask permission, which they have never denied as far as I know.

Ease of access: Easy, wheelchair accessible except if you want to go up the berms, and there are restrooms in the building.

Views: good views from the opposite side of Hwy 1 looking up, with treeline in the background, from berms above looking down on the building with ocean in the background, and from sides. You can get the onion domes in from all of them.

Anchor Bay bluff view -- West of Hwy1 about mile 4.

Directions: In the town of Anchor Bay, park in the big dirt/gravel lot just south of the row of buildings on the west side of Hwy 1. You need to get permission to walk down the driveway between the lot and the buildings and proceed northwest until you can look down at the bay, beach and cliffs.

Ease of access: good, maybe even wheelchair accessible, especially if you drive down the driveway and park on the lower level. Restrooms are available in some local shops.

Views: The north view is about the only view, but it has grandeur.

Hearn Land Conservancy -- West of Hwy1 at mile marker 10.00

Directions: There is plenty of room to park off Hwy1 on the west side – it is marked by bollards.

Ease of access: Walking is easy for the bluff views, but if you want to go down to the beach you walk north, downhill on the old road and it gets difficult during the last 20 feet, although RCLC has improved it a lot with railroad tie steps. No restrooms are available.

Views: from the bluff top there are great views north toward Iversen Point, lots of strange jagged rock formations. The north view is more regular. You can go to the point and walk down on top the cliffs and get a nice view of cliffs and the strip of beach below Hwy1.

Bowling Ball Beach and Schooner Cove – park west of Hwy1 at mile marker 11.41

Directions: you must park on the west side of highway 1 facing south, as the signs say. Then if you walk downhill (south) you will come to the trail (which is practically a road) to Schooner Cove, but if you walk uphill (north) you will come to the trail to Bowling Ball Beach.

Ease of access: Schooner Cove is easy, probably ok by wheelchair. Bowling Ball is farther from parking, steeper, involves regular stairs and irregular stairs made of railroad ties cabled together, and sometimes requires balancing on driftwood logs as you cross the initial stream. No restrooms available.

Views: Schooner cove has good views looking up the large creek coming down Schooner gulch, the white trunks of alders against heavily forested banks. The south cliff is very scenic as are the rocky cliffs and rocky point to the north. Bowling Ball Beach if one of

the most fantastically scenic places any of us has ever seen, especially in terms of shapes but also colors, with amazing rock formations in its cliffs and also the bowling ball boulders and bowling alley tidepools. For maximum impact you should visit it at low tide. This is also an excellent beach for shell collecting and tidepool life.

Moat Creek parking lot is just north of Bowling Ball on the left side of Highway 1. Good parking and you can either walk up the bluff on the south side of the parking lot – there is a good trail all the way to the north end of Bowling Ball Beach – or walk out to the ocean, but the views aren't great there. There is a portapotty restroom.

Pelican Bluffs is another mile up Highway 1, also on the left, well marked parking lot for about six cars. You can't go down to the ocean but you do get excellent trails with beautiful views of the bluffs – no portapotties but no fees.

Arena Cove – if there were a mile marker it would say about 15.00, but it isn't hard to find since the road to the cove is clearly marked, fully paved and only a mile from the Hwy 1 sign that points west and says "Fishing Pier 1 mile"

Directions: Easy, just park in the huge parking lot.

Ease of access: Also easy – walk out the pier or wherever – all wheelchair accessible. Public restrooms available.

Views: The pier itself, especially with riprap rock in the foreground, working fishing, crabbing and urchin boats in the water, boats on trailers, the interesting cliffs on both sides of the cove, and looking back up the cove through huge old cypresses towards WharfMaster Inn. It's a great place to paint.

Point Arena Lighthouse and Stornetta land Conservancy

Directions: You can either park in the Point Arena City Hall parking lot and proceed west from the trailhead on the southwest corner of the lot, or go another mile north on Hwy 1 and take Lighthouse Road west from Highway 1 at mile market 17.00.

If you take the lighthouse road west until you hit the cliffs above the ocean – this is where you park for Stornetta. Walk south through the complex fence (designed to keep cows from straying out onto the road) and be amazed by the rock formations and ocean views. Or keep going on the lighthouse road for another half mile and it dead-ends at the lighthouse. There is a fee to park at the lighthouse, but you get a tour and historical talk with it.

Ease of access: Stornetta is difficult only as you go through the fence, then becomes as hard as you want it to be but many good views are available without moving from the flat bluffs. The lighthouse area has good paths and features, mostly wheelchair accessible. Restrooms are available opposite the lighthouse. No restrooms are available at Stornetta.

Views: Stornetta presents a huge array of rocks and water views. There are plenty of good views of the lighthouse too -- I prefer the views from around the gazebo east of the lighthouse itself.

Miner Hole

Directions: Miner Hole Road is on the left side of Hwy 1 at mile marker 17.54. You can park immediately off Hwy1 and hike a mile or so, or you can drive this narrow rutted road to the end where there is plenty of parking and then walk. If you take the drive, you might worry about willow trees scratching your car.

Ease of access: You go hiking around on the hills on trails until you see views you like:.

Views: You can hike a little way and paint the Garcia River toward the hills or hike to the tops of the hills and paint a panoramic view of the lighthouse and ocean

Piper Ranch – take Mountain View road off Hwy1 at mile marker 19.24, and drive up mountain View Road for 11 miles. You will see the Piper Ranch sign on the left.

Directions: Park on the north side of the road and walk across the road.

Ease of Access: easy if you stay by the road, more difficult if you climb over the fence and take cow and deer trails. No restrooms are available.

Views: look south at the many forested mountains and ridges, some with deciduous and most with coniferous forests, hilly fields of grass, and one farm house in partial view.

The Manchester Dunes, and Thompson Heather Gardens – take Stoneboro Road west from Hwy1 at mile marker 19.64. You need permission from Ms. Thompson for the heather gardens on Duxbury Road. For the dunes just drive to the end of Stoneboro and you find the dunes parking area. Walk west and climb any tall dune for a wonderful set of views.

Directions: get the detail when you get permission.

Ease of access: good but not wheelchair accessible, all dirt/gravel trails. Restrooms may be available at the owner's house if they are home.

Views: the heather gardens present an amazing array of plants: especially heathers, heaths, hydrangeas, fuchsias, and different kinds of trees, from dwarfs to the largest cypress on the coast.

Alder Creek

Directions: Road is on the left side of Hwy 1 at mile marker 22.48. Park in the old road area to the left as you leave Hwy1, since the local people don't want parking on the road if you go farther up.

Ease of access: This is a real hike, over half a mile, although its on what was once paved road. The road is not all passable by vehicles due to washouts, but fine for hiking. Some spots have a lot of poison oak to watch out for.

Views: You can hike a little way and paint the creek and farms back toward the hills, or you can walk all the way to the ocean and paint bluffs and beaches.

The Big Curve

Directions: park by the call box on the west side of Hwy 1 at mile marker 30.82 and walk down Hwy1 for panoramic views.

Ease of access: Hwy1 has wide overlook areas on its west side.

Views: Spectacular!

Elk

Directions: basically mile marker 33-35, all on Hwy1.

Ease of access: Park on the west side of town across from the famous Elk Garage has great views and a public restroom. If you walk south on Hwy1 toward the Inn, you get other good views.

Views: Wonderful rocks, cliffs and water plus beautiful flower gardens. The famous view is from the Cuffy's Cove cemetery at the north end of town, looking south.

Harbor House Inn

8 am - 6 pm

Offering complimentary coffee or tea to Paint Out Artists

Directions: 5600 Hwy 1 in Elk, just north of the Elk Store and Greenwood Beach. 19 miles north of Point Arena.

Ease of access: Easy access, with limited parking spaces. If coming with other artists, carpooling is recommended. Can also park extra cars at Greenwood Beach. Once you arrive at the front of the property, please enter the main building through the front door and check in with the front desk. Artists will be offered one complimentary tea or coffee to enjoy while they paint. The area for painting can be accessed via the paths on either side of the main building.

Views: stunning Pacific Ocean and cove views with beautiful rock formations, and sometimes sea life!

Navarro River Mouth

Lots of places to paint and excellent views of river and river meeting ocean. FYI, the middle of the bridge is at mile marker 40.24 and there are roads on both sides of the river with nice views.

Mendocino Botanical Gardens

Directions: Left side of Hwy 1 just as you are entering Fort Bragg, mile marker 59.0.

Ease of access: There is a several dollar fee if you aren't a member. Easy walks, almost all wheelchair accessible. Public restrooms and a kiosk to buy great local ice cream in the summer.

Views: Several different kinds of gardens: mixed gardens with a lot of unusual varieties, rhododendron and azalea (these are the showcase, peaking in April/May), heather and heath (peaking in July/August), partially covered area with spectacular fuchsias and tuberous begonias in summer, roses, native coastal plants, herbs and vegetables, and the ocean bluffs.

Noyo Harbor

Directions: You can take the harbor roads on the north or south sides. We usually go to the north, and park almost anywhere.

Ease of access: easy walks and wheelchair accessible. Public restrooms available plus a lot of restaurants with excellent sea food.

Views: Boats, pilings, old buildings, 100 year old rusty iron and steel machines and implements – a lot of interesting stuff to paint.