

Need an escape? Don't have a lot of time? Living in Silicon Valley provides you with all kinds of options for a short getaway. From the beach to the mountains, wineries to windsurfing, the South Bay is one of the best hubs for launching into world-class scenery and activities. So why not take a day trip?



## Capitola, Ca.

Written by JOHANNA HICKLE Photography by DANIEL GARCIA

If you haven't yet been introduced to Capitola, it's time you two got acquainted. Legend has it the name of this coastal town came from the tomboyish heroine of an 1800s adventure series by popular novelist of her day E.D.E.N. Southworth. Each place has its own personality, and the only adequate way of describing Capitola is "whimsical"—as in straight from the colorful and idealistic illustrations of a picture book.

Christen your trip with a visit to **Gayle's Bakery & Rosticceria**, destination of 1,500 customers daily. As you walk in, take time to appreciate the mismatched china plates lined along the walls before moving on to the main attraction—glass cases brimming with baked goods. Whether you're looking for an American classic like apple pie or French sweets like chocolate soufflé or crème brûlée, Gayle's has you covered.

Afterwards, stretch your legs along the footpath simply known as the Duck Walk. It begins at the intersection of Riverview and Blue Gum Avenues, weaves between summer houses and Soquel Creek, and passes beneath an old wooden train trestle, its surface changing from sand to brick to cobblestone with quilt-like versatility.

Emerge from the other side into the heart of Capitola Village. Nearby, you'll discover **Mr. Toots**, a café that excels in coffee and community. If you're lucky, you'll find an older gentleman tickling the keys of the Yamaha piano or a father teaching his daughter chess

at the counter, taking advantage of the set stocked there along with other games. Lofted on the second floor, the café also provides a view of Soquel Cove and the wharf.

Now that you've caught sight of the shoreline, you'll want to experience it firsthand. Its distinctive feature is a row of beachfront cottages painted to emulate the ones of Cinque Terre in Italy, with vivid hues of saffron, coral, and aquamarine. If a stroll is too slow-paced, rent surfboards, paddleboards, or bodyboards at **Capitola Beach Company**. Need to brush up on using them? Not to worry. The rental shop offers lessons too.

After your morning recreation, it's time for lunch. **Esplanade Park** is the paradigm of picnicking spots. A contradiction to its name, it's really just a small lawn, but it provides an elevated roost right beside the coast where you can enjoy your sandwich with a view of the bluffs above and the waves below.

If you'd rather lunch inside, but don't want to forfeit the seascape, try **Sotola Bar & Grill**. The clean white walls and driftwood decor make this place as cool and airy as the ocean breeze pouring through their open windows.

Revitalized by your meal, surf Capitola's boutiques. Find all your summer staples like swimsuits, sunglasses, and flip flops along with year-round retail like clothing, jewelry, and art. If that last item catches your attention, visiting **Gallery One** should be a top priority. Here, they create art out of license plates: individual letters have been arranged in word

collages on reclaimed wooden plaques, and an entire guitar has been created of whole plates.

Interested in learning on your excursion? Check out the **Capitola Historical Museum**. Their new exhibit, *The Nature of Capitola*, opening in early March, is set to explore "Capitola's natural features from both a historical and contemporary perspective." Displays will cover topics like Capitola's beach, native trees, and monarch butterflies. Outside the main museum, you'll find a fully furnished cottage showcasing how vacationers spent the holidays here in 1912.

For dinner, you might try **East End Gastropub**, a stylish brewery, or **Bella Roma Ristorante**, an Italian restaurant reminiscent of Ancient Rome. But the crowning glory is **Shadowbrook**—a 1920s summer-home-turned-restaurant with seven dining rooms, including a converted wine cellar and a greenhouse. The natural beauty of the surrounding garden creeps inside the building itself: vines, along with strings of white lights, spiral around wooden ceiling beams, and a Cyprus tree shoots through the floor and exits out the ceiling like a natural pillar. There's no question that this restaurant has earned its place in the Top 100 Most Romantic Restaurants in America.

Capitola's manifest personality makes it hard not to humanize her. And once you've become acquainted, you'll be drawn back repeatedly until it feels as though you're visiting an old friend.



Sotola Bar & Grill

**GAYLE'S BAKERY & ROSTICCERIA**

504 Bay Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.462.1200

**MR. TOOTS COFFEEHOUSE**

231 Esplanade #100  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.475.3679

**CAPITOLA BEACH COMPANY**

131 Monterey Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.462.5222

**ESPLANADE PARK**

110 Monterey Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010

**SOTOLA BAR & GRILL**

231 Esplanade #102  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.854.2800

**GALLERY ONE**

111 Capitola Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.854.2394

**CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

410 Capitola Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.464.0322

**EAST END GASTROPUB**

1501 41st Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.475.8010

**BELLA ROMA RISTORANTE**

316 Capitola Ave  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.464.2608

**SHADOWBROOK RESTAURANT**

1750 Wharf Rd  
Capitola, CA 95010  
831.475.1511



East End Gastropub



Capitola Beach Company



Capitola Historical Museum



Gayle's Bakery & Rosticceria

Welcome to Capitola, CA  
*Population: 10,093*

Capitola is the oldest seaside resort on the Pacific Coast. Its annual events include the Wharf to Wharf Race, the Art and Wine Festival, and a sand castle competition. Its most well-known celebration is the Begonia Festival, in which flower floats cruise down Soquel Creek to the lagoon.



Gallery One