

Santa Cruz Mountains

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The **Santa Cruz Mountains**, part of the [Pacific Coast Ranges](#), are a [mountain range](#) in [central](#) and [northern California](#), United States. They form a ridge down the [San Francisco Peninsula](#), south of [San Francisco](#). They separate the [Pacific Ocean](#) from the [San Francisco Bay](#) and the [Santa Clara Valley](#), and continue south to the [Central Coast](#), bordering [Monterey Bay](#) and ending at the [Salinas Valley](#). The range passes through the counties of [San Mateo](#), [Santa Clara](#), [Santa Cruz](#), [San Benito](#) and [Monterey](#), with the [Pajaro River](#) forming the southern boundary.

The northernmost portion of the Santa Cruz Mountains, north of Half Moon Bay Road ([SR 92](#)), is known as [Montara Mountain](#); the middle portion is the Sierra Morena, which includes a summit called Sierra Morena,^[2] and extends south to a gap at [Lexington Reservoir](#); south of the gap, the mountain range is known as the [Sierra Azul](#).^{[3][4]}

The highest point in the range is [Loma Prieta Peak](#), 11 miles west of [Morgan Hill](#), with a height of 3,786 feet (1,154 m), near which is the epicenter of the [1989 Loma Prieta earthquake](#). Other major peaks include [Mount Umunhum](#) at 3,486 feet (1,063 m), [Mount Thayer](#) at 3,479 feet (1,060 m), [Mount Bielawski](#) at 3,231 feet (985 m), [El Sombroso](#) at 2,999 feet (914 m), Eagle Rock at 2,488 feet (758 m), [Black Mountain](#) at 2,800 feet (850 m), and Sierra Morena at 2,417 feet (737 m). The [San Andreas Fault](#) runs along or near the ridge line throughout the range. The interior east side of the mountains drops abruptly towards this fault line, especially near the towns of [Woodside](#) and [Saratoga](#).

For much of the San Francisco Peninsula, [State Route 35](#) (SR 35) runs along the ridge, and is known as "Skyline Boulevard", while [Interstate 280](#) runs east of the ridges. The major routes across the mountains are (from north to south): [SR 92](#) from [Half Moon Bay](#) to [San Mateo](#), [SR 84](#) from [San Gregorio](#) to [Redwood City](#), [SR 9](#) from [Santa Cruz](#) to [Saratoga](#), [SR 17](#) from [Santa Cruz](#) to [Los Gatos](#), [SR 152](#) from [Watsonville](#) to [Gilroy](#), [SR 129](#) from [Watsonville](#) to [San Juan Bautista](#), and [US Highway 101](#) from [Salinas](#) to [Gilroy](#). Meanwhile, [SR 1](#) runs parallel to the mountains from [Daly City](#) to [Castroville](#) while [SR 85](#) runs parallel from [Cupertino](#) to [San Jose](#).

There are over 30 wineries located in this region and the Santa Cruz Mountains have been a legally defined [American Viticultural Area](#) (AVA) since 1981. Wine has been produced here since at least the 1840s. The [Santa Cruz Mountain AVA](#) emerged as a premier producer of top wines as recognized in the historic [Judgment of Paris](#) wine competition on May 26, 1976.^[5]