

Atascadero
CALIFORNIA

MEDIA KIT





HISTORY

The city of Atascadero as we know it has a rich history dating back a couple hundred years, plus many centuries of Native American habitation before that. Current local historians keep these fascinating stories alive to inspire and educate future generations. Here's just a glimpse into the past of Atascadero.

The Salinan Native American Era, PRE-1840S

The Salinan Native American tribe lived up and down the Central Coast region of California for thousands of years, spread out in small villages primarily in San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties. Before European contact, Salinans lived by hunting and gathering. They were named by Europeans after the Salinas River, while the people's own name for themselves is the "Te'po'ta'ahl" or "People of the Oaks," according to current tribal leadership. Population estimates vary widely, but records from the 1770s note around 3,000 people split among three main groups, the Miguelino in the south, the Antoniano in the north and the Playano group on the Pacific Coast. Ancestors of the tribe are currently working toward federal recognition through the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and they gather every year west of Atascadero at Morro Bay's Morro Rock, or Lesa'mo', to celebrate the winter solstice.

The Rancho Era, 1840-1910

Atascadero as a community can trace its beginnings to 1845, when Mexican governor Pio Pico granted Pedro Estrada almost 40,000 acres of the Asuncion Rancho, a good portion of which eventually made up part of the smaller 23,000-acre Atascadero Rancho, according to the Atascadero Historical Society. Through various and natural ownership changes, the 23,000-acre Atascadero Rancho came to be owned by J.H. Henry of San Jose after California became the 31st state of the Union in 1850.

A Utopian 'Colony', 1912-1979

In 1912, Edward Gardner Lewis, a successful magazine publisher from Missouri, bought Rancho Atascadero from J.H. Henry. He planned to establish a utopian colony, his motto being, "All the advantages of country life with city conveniences." He had scouted locations for such a community all over the U.S. and decided that Atascadero's climate and water from the Salinas River made it an ideal location. Using his printing presses still in Missouri, Lewis began to tell the world about his new community. He hired experts in many different fields – agriculture, engineering, planning – to help him create the "Atascadero Colony." Initial plans included vast orchards and fields for agriculture, housing subdivisions and a town center that still stands today. Churches, social groups, newspaper printing, hospitals, a water utility and more followed as settlers began to stream to the growing colony from around the world. References to these "colony days" persist to this day around town, as do mentions of the "tent city" Lewis built for the first to arrive in Atascadero. The centerpiece of Lewis' planned community was an Italian Renaissance-style building, home to the Historic Atascadero City Hall to this day. Built between 1914 and 1918 with bricks made from local clay, this unique and beautiful building has become one of California's Historical Landmarks (No. 958).

Modern History, 1979-TODAY

In 1979, Atascadero became an incorporated city. Many of the principles that Lewis originally drafted for his utopian community, which were considered to be rather progressive at the time, appeared in the city's first general plan and constitution, such as preservation of open space, protection of trees and hillsides, the keeping of domestic animals and large lot sizes, all with the aim of creating a community that was both rural and tight-knit, creative and pristine. The Historic Atascadero City Hall and adjacent Sunken Gardens park space, available for free tours anytime, underwent renovations after a 2003 earthquake but remain largely unchanged from their original splendor. Another long-lasting attraction is the Central Coast Zoo at Atascadero Lake, which has roots in a private collection dating to the 1950s and which is now a fully accredited conservation and education zoo with hundreds of species. History buffs can also visit the Printery building (1915), the Colony House Museum (1915) and many other stops outlined along the city's custom Historical Drive Map.



STORY IDEAS

Atascadero has recently been described as “up and coming” and as a “small town with an urban feel.” Its walkable downtown is bustling with cool creators and interesting eateries, while the surrounding hillsides offer natural beauty that won’t be ignored. What will you find?



Family Fun at the Zoo & Beyond

Get an up-close look at the animal kingdom at the Central Coast Zoo, with hundreds of wild creatures from all over the world in a relaxed and intimate setting. Accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Central Coast Zoo is dedicated to the conservation of endangered species and habitats, educating the public about the natural world, and providing a safe and stimulating experience for both humans and animals. The zoo features several species not often seen in facilities of its size, including red pandas, lemurs, and meerkats, as well as many other interesting mammals, birds, reptiles and insects. The zoo is located at Atascadero Lake Park, where families can also enjoy paddle boats and surrey bike rentals. Nearby are Mr. Putters’ Putt-Putt, Hop’s Bounce House for inflatable fun, ATown Park for skaters and scooters, and more. And on the hillsides surrounding town, families can enjoy beautiful hikes and biking trails at Three Bridges, Stadium Park and other spots.



Brews, Burgers & Other Irresistible Treats

Atascadero has great cuisine from all over the world, including excellent Italian food (and rooftop views) at Cielo Ristorante, sushi at Kai Lana or Toshi 1.0, incredible sandos at Colony Market & Deli, steaks and other top-shelf fare at Guest House Grill, and so much more. But two delicious treats stand out so completely in Atascadero that they got their own trail, the Atascadero Brews & Burgers Trail! A couple of dozen excellent burger spots and local craft breweries have stops along the interactive trail map, available on VisitAtascadero.com. How many can you try?



A Historic ‘Colony’

Did you know that over a hundred years ago, Atascadero was planned out as a utopian colony? Of course, that was after thousands of years of habitation by the Salinan Native Americans, as well as the Mexican and Spanish Rancho era. Now the third-largest city in SLOCAL with more than 30,000 residents, Atascadero has a fascinating history rooted in agriculture, engineering and culture. The Historic Atascadero City Hall was built in 1914–1918, and free tours are available of its gorgeous rotunda, as well as the Atascadero Historical Society Museum housed inside. There, visitors can pick up a driving map to see places of interest around town.

STORY IDEAS

continued



A Bustling, Artsy Downtown

Atascadero takes the ideal of a walkable, charming downtown to new levels. The Historic Atascadero City Hall sits at the center of town across from a strikingly beautiful park called the Sunken Gardens, filled with old oaks, fountains, lawns and walking paths. On the surrounding streets, you'll find the true heart of the city: the businesses, restaurants and shops that give Atascadero its personality. From quirky vintage stores to wine tasting rooms, record shops to bakeries, plant stores to custom-made cowboy hats, there's something for any and all personalities. Along the way, you'll spot vivid murals from the Equality Mural Project, a nonprofit effort that is in the midst of installing nine murals around town (six are completed as of January 2023) focused on themes of equality and diversity.



A Hub for the Central Coast

Located off Highway 101, Atascadero is conveniently situated within just about 10–45 minutes of a huge variety of different Central Coast microclimates and activities, including:

- **Paso Robles wine country, 10 minutes:** Dozens of award-winning wineries and breathtaking vineyard views await.
- **Morro Bay, 20 minutes:** This old fisherman's town centers around its landmark Morro Rock, with chill vibes to enjoy, sea otters to watch in the harbor and plenty of fresh seafood on the menu.
- **San Luis Obispo, 20 minutes:** Once named the "happiest place in America," SLO has a walkable downtown with exceptional shops and restaurants, plus a great farmers market on Thursday nights.
- **Pismo and Avila Beaches, both about 30 minutes:** For classic and family-friendly Southern California-style beaches, head south to either of these cool beach towns. Bring your boogie board!
- **Oceano Dunes, 35 minutes:** See an incredible beachside dunescape at Oceano, the only state park in California where you can drive on the beach. Great for ATVs, camping, hiking and more.
- **Hearst Castle at San Simeon, 45 minutes:** The historical estate of William Randolph Hearst sits atop a scenic hilltop overlooking the rocky San Simeon coast, home to an elephant seal rookery.



Annual Events

In addition to countless local concerts, movies in the park, events at craft breweries, wineries and shops, here are just a few of the standout annual events that proudly call Atascadero home:

- **Central Coast Craft Beer Festival**, March
- **Brew at the Zoo**, April
- **Tamale Festival**, May
- **Cruisin' Weekend**, August
- **Colony Days**, October
- **The Bovine Classic**, November
- **Atascadero Fall Fest**, October
- **Winter Wonderland**, December



FAST FACTS

Location

Atascadero is halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco and close to SR 41 west which takes you through the Santa Lucia Coastal Range to meet the iconic Pacific Coast Highway in nearby Morro Bay. Next door to Paso Robles wine country and just minutes away from San Luis Obispo and the Central Coast's best beaches, the city is a convenient stop for California travelers headed in nearly any direction. Nestled in the Coastal Range foothills at an elevation of around 800–900 feet, Atascadero is surrounded by beautiful hillsides dotted with ancient coastal oaks.

Indulge in Eats & Treats

- 
60+
 Restaurants
- 
9
 Breweries/
 Distilleries/
 Cideries
- 
6
 Wineries/
 Wine Bars
- 
10
 Local Coffee
 Shops
- 
1
 Brews &
 Burgers
 Trail

Climate

Atascadero has what's known as a "hot-summer Mediterranean climate," which accounts for the area's strong agricultural history. This climate also serves well as wine country, and indeed, the city is surrounded by the popular Paso Robles American Viticultural Area, or AVA. Average high temperatures in the summer months tend to run in the low 90s, while average highs in the winter typically range in the 60s.





LODGING

Atascadero is known for its genuine hospitable style that welcomes guests to the community. Whether it's a weekend or an extended stay, you will find comfortable and friendly hotels, bed & breakfast inns and vacation rentals to fulfill your travel preference.

ATASCADERO INN					\$		
RESIDENCE INN					\$		
CARLTON HOTEL					\$		
HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS					\$		
HOME2 SUITES BY HILTON					\$		
MOTEL 6							
PORTOLA INN							
SPRINGHILL SUITES					\$		
VINO INN & SUITES							

Internet/
Wifi

Complimentary
Hot Breakfast

Nearby
Restaurants

Conference
Room

\$ Group
Rates

Bus
Parking

Small Bus
Parking

Additional Lodging: VisitAtascadero.com



WEDDINGS & EVENTS

Due to its convenient location between Los Angeles and San Francisco, Atascadero is an ideal spot to host a big event drawing visitors from all over the state and beyond. Several hotels, including the historic downtown Carlton Hotel and the expansive SpringHill Suites, have ample conference room space for corporate and professional events. The city is also home to some truly beautiful and unique venues for weddings, like the scenic Pavilion on the Lake and Zoo Garden Event Center, or the majestic Portola Inn.

GET WILD AT THE ZOO

In addition to hiking trails, a bustling downtown area, a golf course and other fun things to do, Atascadero has a truly one-of-a-kind attraction: the Central Coast Zoo. The only zoo on the Central Coast, it features several species not often seen in facilities of its size, including red pandas, lemurs, and meerkats, as well as hundreds of other interesting mammals, birds, reptiles and insects. Open daily with lots of special events, the zoo is dedicated to conservation and education. The zoo is at Atascadero Lake Park, where families can also enjoy paddle boats and surrey bike rentals, making it a real family destination.



READY TO GO?

Plan your vacation at:

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