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Pismo Beach, California, Named #1 “Best Small Coastal Town” by USA TODAY 10Best — For the Second Year in a Row

[April 8, 2026 – Pismo Beach, CA] – For the second consecutive year, the votes are in, and Pismo Beach, California, has claimed the top spot in USA TODAY 10Best's Readers' Choice Award for Best Small Coastal Town. The 2026 win makes Pismo Beach the program's first-ever back-to-back champion.

The official results were publicly announced on April 8, 2026, and are published at 10best.usatoday.com. Nominations were carefully curated by a panel of subject matter experts and USA TODAY 10Best editors before being opened to a national public vote. The 2026 top ten winners are:

1. Pismo Beach, California
2. Stuart, Florida
3. Morro Bay, California
4. Avalon, California
5. Castine, Maine
6. Cape May, New Jersey
7. Gulf Shores, Alabama
8. Beaufort, North Carolina
9. Carmel-by-the-Sea, California
10. Cedar Key, Florida

Pismo Beach has been a consistent contender in this national recognition, finishing fifth in 2023, second in 2018, and claiming the top title in 2025 and again in 2026. Notably, this year's list features four California coastal towns in the top ten, with Pismo Beach leading the state's impressive showing alongside Morro Bay (#3), Avalon (#4), and Carmel-by-the-Sea (#9), underscoring the Central Coast's appeal to travelers nationwide.

“This recognition means the world to our community and winning it twice in a row tells us that what makes Pismo Beach special isn’t a trend, it’s who we are,” said Gordon Jackson, Executive Director of the Pismo Beach Conference and Visitors Bureau. "There's only one place

where you can taste the world's best clam chowder, wine taste in the afternoon, and catch the sunset over the pier, and the whole country just voted for it. Again."

About USA TODAY's 10Best Readers' Choice Awards

USA TODAY's 10Best Readers' Choice Awards celebrate outstanding travel, food, and lifestyle destinations across the U.S. Nominees are selected by a panel of travel experts and editors; winners are determined by public vote. Each category showcases beloved places and experiences that resonate with travelers, offering trusted recommendations for exploring the best the country has to offer.

About the City of Pismo Beach

Located on California's iconic Highway 1 on the Central Coast, Pismo Beach is the epitome of a California beach town. With cliffside ocean views, a lively and walkable downtown, extensive outdoor adventures, and a laid-back local vibe, visitors get the perfect balance of excitement and tranquility. Whether surfing, kayaking, watching wildlife, wine tasting, clamming, or catching a sunset over the pier, Pismo Beach provides a serene getaway for all travelers.
Follow the adventures on Instagram and Facebook: @PismoBeachCA and facebook.com/PismoBeachCa/
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