

Ventura County – Cuesta Grade and the Channel View





## Ventura County – Cuesta Grade and the Channel View



A detail of Font’s map shows the “Channel of Santa Barbara” with five islands, including Santa Cruz. Mission San Gabriel is labeled at “B” (camp #62) on the right side.

### Driving Directions for Auto Route

From US 101 north, after entering the area of Thousand Oaks, take the Westlake exit east to Lang Ranch Parkway and the Oakbrook Chumash Interpretive Center. Continue north on US 101 to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Traveling onward on 101 north, look for signs to the beaches as you cross the Santa Clara River and come to the coastline in Ventura. Trails within these state parks provide an experience on the historic route of the Anza expedition. Near the Ventura marina, visit the Channel Islands National Park visitor center. Continue north on US 101 towards the City of Santa Barbara.

### Hiking/Biking Ideas

Hikers can enjoy Point Mugu State Park and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. **The latter contains nearly 17 miles of trail designated for the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.** The coastal parks of San Buenaventura and Emma Wood State beaches, the Faria and Hobson County Parks and the recreation trail on the Ventura beach boardwalk all provide memorable ocean views.



Chumash descendants along the Channel Coast demonstrate their seafaring skills with a *tomol* (boat) similar to that made by their ancestors

Photo: Benjamin Elstob, 1976 Reenactment

### Tar and Oil

Tar and oil have long been known in the area, and the *Chumash* used tar to seal their boats. From the Diary of Pedro Font (Friday, February 23) “...in order to reach the long grade and finally, having descended the slope, some six [*leagues*] west to the [Santa Clara] river...At the foot of the *Cuesta Grande*, a large grade near a small village, there is a spring of water like a well; and at twelve paces from it there is a good-sized spring of asphalt there, and I learned afterward that near the mission of San Gabriel there is another one.”

Today, oil platforms decorate the Channel coast.

## About Your Visit to Ventura County

The expedition traveled northwest, and descended a steep grade (*cuesta*) where they encountered the Chumash tribe for the first time, as well as a good-sized spring of asphalt. They continued west to the the Santa Clara River and marveled at the sight of the Channel, the sea and the waterfowl nearby. Traveling along the coast, they crossed the Ventura River and camped at the northern border of Ventura at Rincon point.

### Sites of Interest

#### A. Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

The Anza trail’s recreation route within the Recreation Area is parallel to the historic route and removed from it, but provides the visitor an experience in a landscape similar to that encountered by the expedition. Headquarters for the park is near the historic corridor at 401 W. Hillcrest Drive in Thousand Oaks (34° 11.25' N, 118° 53' W).

#### B. American Indian Cultural Centers

Anza encountered people of the *Gabrieliño-Tongva* and *Chumash* tribes. The Satwiwa Native American Culture Center, located at the northwest corner of the SMMNRA, and the Oakbrook Chumash Interpretive Center (290 Lang Ranch Pkwy, Thousand Oaks) provide exhibits on the culture these American Indian groups.

#### C. The Santa Clara River Area and Expedition Camp #74

On February 23, 1776, camp was at the Santa Clara River, where Font describes the river area as having many geese, ducks, cranes, and other fowl. Near their campsite, is the McGrath State Beach Campground and Santa Clara Estuary Natural Preserve, hosting one of the best bird-watching areas in California. The Channel Island National Park Visitor Center, at the river’s outflow to the sea, provides information on Chumash culture and the pristine islands located offshore. It is located at 1901 Spinnaker Drive. A short distance inland is the Olivas Adobe (located at 4200 Olivas Park Drive). This restored adobe was the home of Don Raimundo Olivas, husband of the great granddaughter of Ramón Borjorques, an Anza expedition member. Cyclists can get to the area via the Pacific Coast Bike Route.

#### D. Mission San Buenaventura

Ventura is abbreviated from the name of the mission *San Buenaventura*. This ninth mission in California was dedicated March 31, 1782, long after Anza’s expedition, but, it provides a place to experience a part of the Spanish colonial heritage. It is located at 211 E. Main St. in the city of Ventura. Nearby is the Albinger Archaeological Museum (113 E. Main St.) offering interpretation on the Chumash, Spanish and Mexican periods.

#### E. Coastal Parks and Beaches to Expedition Camp #75

The expedition traveled along the coastline, and crossed the Ventura River. A few miles further, Camp #75 (La Rinconada) was made near a Chumash village at Rincon Creek (Rincon Point) at the border with Santa Barbara County. Its Chumash name is believed to be Shuku. Several parks along the coast are directly on the historic route. These are San Buenaventura and Emma Wood State Beaches, and Faria and Hobson County Parks.

**Learning On The Trail in Ventura County**

**Questions on the Trail**

Rangers of the Channel Islands National Park conduct live underwater video programs from Anacapa Island. Visitors may view this program from the landing dock at this Island, or from the mainland visitor center. The "Parks as Classrooms" program brings the park to local schools.

On February 24, Father Font noted, "The Island of Santa Cruz is nearly triangular, and must be some twenty leagues long, and they say that it very thickly settled and very well wooded...the fathers told me that the *Viceroy* had instructed and ordered the officials to see to it that these islands should not be depopulated..."

Visit the Channel Islands, or the visitor center for the park.

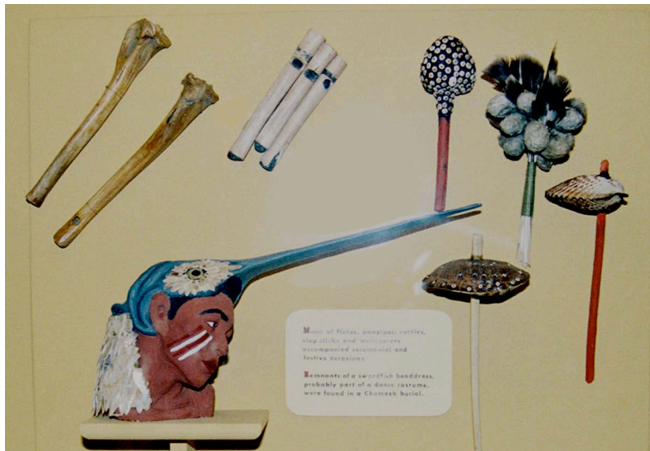
Question: If Font's league was about 2 1/2 miles, then how big did he think Santa Cruz Island was? Was his estimate off by much?

Question: Who were the people that Font was talking about?

Question: How did these people get to the Islands?

What could they eat and how could they live?

**On the CD: Chumash and the Channel**



On the audio track for *Santa Barbara County*, listen to the sounds of Chumash whistles and other musical instruments. Pitas Point (near Faria County Park) was the site of a Chumash village, and was so named by the Portolá Expedition in 1769. On February 24, 1776, Father Font writes, "...the village of Los Pitos, so called because of the whistle which the men of the first expedition of Commander Portolá heard blown there all night."

Photo: Chumash instruments at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

**Additional Resources**

Santa Monica National Recreation Area – 401 W. Hillcrest Dr., Thousand Oaks, CA 91360; tel.: 805-370-2301, web: nps.gov/samo

Oakbrook Chumash Interpretive Center – 3290 Lang Ranch Parkway, Thousand Oaks, CA 91361; tel.: 805-492-8076, web: museumsusa.org/museums/info/1641661

Olivas Adobe Historic Park – 4200 Olivas Park Dr. Ventura, CA 93001; tel.: 805-644-4346, web: olivasadobe.org

Channel Islands National Park – 1901 Spinnaker Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; tel.: 805-658-5730, web: nps.gov/chis

San Buenaventura Mission – 211 E. Main Street Ventura, CA 93001; tel.: 805-643-4318, web: sanbuenaventuramission.org

California State Parks Channel Coast District Headquarters – 911 San Pedro St., Ventura CA, 93001; tel.: 805-585-1857, web: parks.ca.gov

Ventura County Parks Department – 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009; tel.:805-654-3951, web: http://gsa.countyofventura.org