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A San Francisco Great Drive



The new Aston Martin V8 Vantage hugs the curves of Highway 1.

Photo: Craig Pusey

by [Brook Wilkinson](#)

I've always loved a good road trip, and one major reason I moved to San Francisco was the ease with which I could flee the city. I did just that a few days ago, in a brand-new [Aston Martin V8 Vantage](#). The folks from Aston Martin set up a drive through Marin and Sonoma counties so that we journos could test out the updated 2009 Vantage. But you don't need a \$120,000 supercar to enjoy the winding roads of northern California. This route takes in redwoods, ocean vistas, quaint towns, fabulous food, and city views. If you want to retrace my steps, here's how:

- * Head over the Golden Gate Bridge and go north on Highway 101.
- * Take the Lucas Valley Road exit and make a left at the light.
- * Drive 10 miles on Lucas Valley Road, then make a right at the next T onto Nicasio Valley Road.
- * About 4 miles later, make a right at the next T onto Point Reyes-Petaluma Road.
- * In another 4 miles, make a left onto Hicks Valley Road.
- * At your next T, turn right onto Wilson Hill Road.
- * After 2.5 miles, turn left onto Chileno Valley Road.
- * Go left at the next T, toward Tomales, then right at the following T, onto the Shoreline Highway.
- * Make a quick left onto Dillon Beach Road, then in 2.5 miles, continue straight where the main road curves to the left.
- * Turn left at the next T onto Highway 1, and follow this through Jenner and into Bodega Bay.
- * In Bodega, turn left onto Eastshore Road and stop in for a bite at the just-opened [Terrapin Creek Cafe](#), which makes the most of the region's agricultural bounty. If you're into oysters, though, hold out for a few more miles.

Read on for driving directions back to San Francisco, and a review of the Aston Martin.

* Head back south on Highway 1, through the towns of Valley Ford and Tomales. Soon after the road rejoins the coast, you'll pass [Nick's Cove](#), the newest of restaurateur [Pat Kuleto's](#) establishments. The restored 1930s cabins and old-fashioned diner counter give a sense of the

area's rich history, and the barbecued oysters are fresh as can be.

* Continue south on Highway 1 another 10 miles or so and make a left onto Point Reyes-Petaluma Road.

* Make a left at the next T, just after the purple bridge, then a right a few miles later onto Nicasio Valley Road.

* A few miles later, turn left back onto Lucas Valley Road, which will take you back to 101 and the Golden Gate Bridge.

The whole trip is about 140 miles, and takes about six hours. As for the V8 Vantage, few cars could negotiate these roads with as much authority, and certainly not with as much style. The 2009 model comes equipped with extra horsepower and torque to glue your back to the seat on acceleration. Never driven a manual? The Sportshift transmission makes shifting as easy as a flick of a paddle near the steering wheel--the same technology found in Formula One race cars. At 19 miles per gallon (a 13 percent improvement from the previous model), the V8 Vantage is too thirsty to be a daily driver, but it sure is fun for the occasional weekend jaunt.