

Santa Barbara Mission Exterior Walk



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Tour Summary

Mission Santa Barbara is one of the most photographed sites in the United States, but few know its secrets. Walk through history with an experienced guide to learn some surprising information about the Queen of the Missions. This magnificent structure is not the first chapel to be built on this site. The first was an adobe structure destroyed by earthquake in 1812. Find out how the city of Santa Barbara received its name and what technology brought by the Spanish changed California's landscape. This tour will enhance your experience as you stroll the exterior grounds of Old Mission Santa Barbara. The Franciscans who have occupied this site since 1786 manage the 13 most important acres in Santa Barbara.

Cover Photo: Carol M Highsmith 1946.
Library of Congress

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Introduction



Please join me, Lisa Knox Burns, for a tour of Mission Santa Barbara. A docent since 2013, I try to capture the attention of my tour groups, especially 4th graders, with

fascinating facts and engaging stories about the 65-year Mission period in Alta California, from 1769 with the founding of Mission San Diego, to 1834 with the Mexican Secularization Act. Approximately 7000 4th graders with chaperones visit the Old Mission each year. Santa Barbara Mission is the number one civic attraction in Santa Barbara. The Old Mission is so much more than a pretty facade. People who stop for a photo are missing many sites hidden in plain view. Understanding what you are seeing will enhance your experience. Just ask a 4th grader who's taken my tour.

Photo credit: Betsy J. Green

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Tips

- This tour is of the exterior grounds of Old Mission Santa Barbara, a National Historic Landmark.
- The Old Mission is located at 2201 Laguna Street, corner of Los Olivos and Laguna streets, Santa Barbara, California. It is on the Santa Barbara Trolley route. MTD no longer serves the site. The nearest public bus stop is at State and Pueblo streets, a pleasant walk of 5 blocks through a beautiful residential neighborhood which takes you to the Mission. The downtown shuttle stop at Sola and State Street is approximately 1.1 miles, or 10 blocks from the Mission.
- The tour will provide background historical information about why Spain built missions, why the Franciscans chose this site, and how the orientation of the mission was designed to send a powerful spiritual message.

- How the mission system affected the indigenous people is also addressed.
- The tour does not include access to Mission which is a separately paid admission.
- Check before you go, but as of this writing public tours with tickets are available Tuesday through Friday at 11 AM and Saturday at 10:30 AM. The gift shop is open from 9-5 every day. Visitors are given limited access to the chapel, mainly to pray, when its doors are open to the public, usually weekdays 10 AM to Noon depending on availability of volunteer docents, who welcome your questions.

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Welcome to Old Mission Santa Barbara



Access at grade:



Stop 1 We begin at the Moorish Fountain

Welcome - Bienvenidos! - to Old Mission Santa Barbara. This, the tenth of 21 missions established by the Franciscans in Alta California, was unsurpassed in its design by the eleven that were later constructed. And its location, within view of the Pacific, with the islands visible in the Channel on a clear day, adds to its beauty.

Fr. Engelhardt Zephyrin, (1851-1934) was the first to call it the "Queen of the Missions" because of its size, classical design, imposing twin towers, and feminine namesake.

Photo: Library of Congress