

Vinyl Side Quests

Record Stores Along the SoCal Route

Colin + Nicole | March 29 - April 5, 2026

Day 1: Central Coast

Oakland → San Simeon | Sun 3/29

TOP PICK

Boo Boo Records

Mon-Sat 10am-6pm | Sun 11am-6pm | (805) 541-0657

Detour: 0 min → SLO is a natural lunch/stretch stop on Hwy 101 between Oakland and San Simeon

Open since 1974, Boo Boo's is the best record store on the Central Coast and one of the most beloved independents in California. Two rooms: the main floor stocks new vinyl (largest LP selection on the coast) plus turntables and gear, while the back room is a deep used section with dollar bins and collectibles.

Collection: Massive. New + used across all genres. Largest new LP selection on the Central Coast.

Dig for: New audiophile pressings, rare indie, out-of-print vinyl, local Central Coast artists

Your match: This is the Amoeba of the 101 corridor. If you only hit one store on Day 1, this is it.

Tip: Park on Monterey St. Grab lunch at Firestone Grill (tri-tip sandwich, 2 blocks away) before or after.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Vinyl Isle

Daily 11am-5pm (hours vary)

286 Morro Bay Blvd, Morro Bay, CA 93442

Detour: 10 min off Hwy 1, on the way from SLO to San Simeon

Tiny, heavily decorated cottage shop in downtown Morro Bay. Records and vintage light fixtures hang from the ceiling. Eclectic used selection with a personal, curated feel. Worth a quick stop if you're passing through Morro Bay.

Collection: Small but curated. Used vinyl, mostly classic rock, soul, folk.

Dig for: Hidden gems in the used bins, vintage 7-inches

Tip: Morro Bay is a good fuel/coffee stop between SLO and San Simeon anyway.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Days 2-3: Orange County

Newport Beach / Huntington Beach | Mon 3/30 - Tue 3/31

TOP PICK

Dr. Freecloud's Record Store

Mon-Sat 11am-7pm | Sun 12-5pm | (657) 888-4695

Detour: 10 min from Huntington Beach, 15 min from Lido House

An OC institution since 1994. Started as an all-electronic/dance music shop in Costa Mesa, now in a cavernous Fountain Valley space packed floor to ceiling. If you ever DJ'd, collected house/techno/breaks, or just love the culture, this is a pilgrimage. They specialize in buying entire DJ collections.

Collection: 100,000+ records. One of the largest vinyl inventories in Southern California.

Dig for: Techno, house, drum & bass, breaks, electro, acid, progressive, dubstep, hardstyle. Also rock, funk, soul, jazz, hip-hop in the used stacks.

Your match: 100K+ records, deep electronic section, and they buy DJ collections → this is where Orange County's music community lives. As someone in audio production, you'll be home.

Tip: Between Newport and HB → perfect Tue 3/31 side quest. Pair with Blind Dog HiFi in Costa Mesa for a full audio morning.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Factory Records

Mon-Sat 11am-7pm | Sun 12-5pm

440 E 17th St, Costa Mesa, CA 92627

Detour: 10 min from Lido House

Thousands of records, 12-inch singles, and 45s packed into a Costa Mesa storefront. All genres represented. They buy, sell, and trade daily with new stock constantly rotating. Strong in rock, punk, soul, and rare collector pressings.

Collection: Large. Constantly rotating stock → new finds every visit.

Dig for: Rock, punk, soul, rare pressings, 12-inch singles, 45s

Tip: Same Costa Mesa strip as Port of Sound and Blind Dog HiFi. Do all three in one run.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Port of Sound Record Shoppe

Mon-Sat 11am-2pm (limited hours)

1500 Adams Ave #102, Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Detour: 10 min from Lido House

One of OC's most respected independents. Audiophile pressings, classic rock, jazz, and rare imports. Listening stations let you preview before buying. Near The Lab and The Camp anti-malls.

Collection: Curated, medium. Quality over quantity.

Dig for: Audiophile pressings, Japanese imports, classic jazz, rare rock

Tip: Very limited hours (11am-2pm). Plan accordingly.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Sound Spectrum

Daily 10am-6pm (varies)

1264 S Coast Hwy, Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Detour: 15 min south of Newport on PCH → scenic drive

Operating since the late 1960s, one of OC's oldest record stores. Eclectic mix in a Laguna Beach surf-town setting. Walk the art galleries on the same strip.

Collection: Medium. Eclectic used vinyl leaning classic rock, folk, jazz.

Dig for: Vintage pressings, surf rock, folk, classic rock

Tip: Combine with a Laguna Beach walk. It's on PCH right in town.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Days 4-6: San Diego

Wed 4/1 - Fri 4/3

TOP PICK

Vinyl Junkies Record Shack

Mon-Wed 10am-8pm | Thu-Sat 10am-10pm | Sun 10am-8pm | (619) 794-2399

Detour: 0 min → South Park is a great walkable neighborhood. Across from Whistle Stop Bar.

San Diego's best all-around record shop, open since 2012. Highly curated main floor plus a 'Digger's Den' in the back with \$3-5 bins where the real finds live. Outdoor patio crates for digging in the sun. All genres represented: classic rock, funk/soul, jazz, psych, hip-hop, international, Afro, Latin, library music, soundtracks.

Collection: Large, deep. Strong across all genres. Digger's Den in back for cheap finds.

Dig for: Funk/soul, jazz, psych, international (Latin, African, Indian), library music, soundtracks, hip-hop

Your match: The breadth here matches your taste profile perfectly → international, library music, soundtracks, jazz. The Digger's Den is where you'll lose an hour.

Tip: Open until 10pm Thu-Sat → post-dinner crate dig. Whistle Stop Bar across the street for a drink after.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

TOP PICK

Folk Arts Rare Records

Daily 10am-6pm (often stays open til 7) | (619) 282-7833

Detour: 5 min from Part Time Lover listening bar (same neighborhood orbit)

One of the oldest record stores in California. Female-owned, beautifully quirky. Known for folk and rock, but deep across genres. The famous 'smoking section' features artists pictured holding or smoking cigarettes on their album covers. Partners with Part Time Lover listening bar for vinyl supply.

Collection: Deep. Especially strong in folk, rock, and rare pressings.

Dig for: Folk, rock, rare pressings, vintage country, blues, the 'smoking section' oddities

Your match: This supplies Part Time Lover's vinyl wall → if you love what they're spinning at PTL, buy the records here.

Tip: Pair with Part Time Lover (3 blocks away) for a North Park vinyl + listening bar afternoon.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

M-Theory Music

Mon-Sat 11am-7pm | Sun 12-5pm | (619) 220-0485
827 W Washington St, San Diego (Mission Hills), CA 92103

Detour: 10 min from downtown SD hotels

San Diego's premier family-owned record shop on the Goldfinch + Washington corner in Mission Hills. Clean, well-organized, strong new release section. Good for picking up current pressings and local SD artists.

Collection: Medium-large. Well-organized new + used.

Dig for: New releases, indie rock, local SD artists, limited pressings

→ [Apple Maps](#)

TAANG! Records

Daily 12-6pm
3996 30th St, San Diego (North Park), CA 92104

Detour: Same strip as Part Time Lover and Folk Arts

Not just a shop → TAANG! is a legendary independent record label turned museum and retail space. Specializes in rare KBD punk, hardcore, and ska vinyl. Wall of framed rare records. If punk/hardcore is your thing, this is a museum visit.

Collection: Niche but deep. Punk, hardcore, ska.

Dig for: Rare KBD punk, first-press hardcore, ska vinyl, label history

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Day 7: Ojai + Ventura

Sat 4/4 heading home

TOP PICK

Grady's Record Refuge

Mon-Sat 12-5pm | Sun closed | (805) 648-5565

Detour: 0 min → Ventura is on your route between SD/Ojai and the 101 north

Ventura County's top record shop. Classic dig spot → used vinyl, CDs, cassettes, even 8-tracks and 78s. Grady also does turntable repairs, sells used stereo gear, and offers a digital transfer service for ripping your vinyl to disc. No frills, all substance.

Collection: Large used selection. All formats including 78s and 8-tracks.

Dig for: Classic rock, jazz, soul, vintage pressings, used stereo gear, turntable parts

Your match: The turntable repair + used stereo gear angle makes this more than a record shop. Worth a 30-min stop on the drive through Ventura.

Tip: Hit it on the way out of Ojai before getting on the 101 north. Opens at noon.

→ [Apple Maps](#)

Quick Reference

Store	Location	Detour	Collection	Best For
Boo Boo Records	SLO	0 min (lunch stop)	Massive new + used	Day 1 lunch break
Dr. Freecloud's	Fountain Valley	10-15 min from HB/Newport	100K+ records electronic focus	Tue 3/31 audio crawl
Factory Records	Costa Mesa	10 min from Newport	Large rotating stock	Tue 3/31 same run
Vinyl Junkies	South Park, SD	0 min great 'hood	Large all genres	Any SD evening
Folk Arts Rare	North Park, SD	0 min near PTL bar	Deep folk + rock	Thu or Fri + PTL bar
Grady's Refuge	Ventura	0 min on route home	Large used + gear	Sat 4/4 noon stop

Suggested Side Quests

Day	Store(s)	When	Detour
Sun 3/29	Boo Boo Records, SLO	12-1pm (lunch stop)	0 min
Tue 3/31	Dr. Freecloud's + Factory + Port of Sound	11am-2pm	10-15 min from Newport
Thu 4/2	Folk Arts Rare + Part Time Lover bar	3-6pm + 9pm bar	0 min (walkable)
Fri 4/3	Vinyl Junkies, South Park	7-9pm (post-dinner)	0 min
Sat 4/4	Grady's Record Refuge, Ventura	12-1pm (drive home)	0 min

Colin + Nicole SoCal Road Trip 2026 | skincheese.com/socal