

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

ROADTRIPS USA

CALIFORNIA

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SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA



SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA → SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA

188 mi/302 km

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA → YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA

123 mi/197 km

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA → SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

199 mi/320 km

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Day 1: San Francisco, California → South Lake Tahoe, California

Begin your adventure with an early departure from San Francisco, heading east on Interstate 80 toward the Sierra Nevada. Stop in Placerville, a historic Gold Rush town, for coffee and a quick stroll through its charming Main Street. Continuing on Highway 50, enjoy winding roads through the towering pines of Eldorado National Forest before reaching Echo Summit, where the first breathtaking views of Lake Tahoe unfold. Upon arrival in South Lake Tahoe, check into your lodging and take in the scenery at Emerald Bay State Park, one of the most iconic viewpoints in California. If time allows, hike the Eagle Falls Trail to Eagle Lake, a moderate 2-mile round-trip trail leading to a stunning alpine lake nestled among granite peaks.

In the afternoon, unwind on Lakeside Beach or Pope Beach, where the crystal-clear waters are perfect for a refreshing swim. For a different experience, ride the Heavenly Gondola up to a panoramic observation deck with unmatched views of the entire lake. As the sun sets, head to Riva Grill for dinner by the water, where you can sip a signature cocktail while watching the alpenglow settle over the mountains. Heavenly Village offers live music, fire pits, and a lively après-lake atmosphere if you're up for some nightlife. Alternatively, drive to Nevada Beach for a quiet evening by the water, where stargazing under Tahoe's pristine skies offers a perfect end to your first day.

Overnight Accommodation: South Lake Tahoe, California



Day 2: South Lake Tahoe, California

Start the morning with an early hike to Eagle Lake or embark on the Rubicon Trail, a stunning lakeside hike connecting D.L. Bliss State Park and Emerald Bay. For a more adventurous option, summit Mount Tallac (10 miles round-trip) for one of the most rewarding panoramic lake views. If you prefer a leisurely morning, rent a kayak or paddleboard from Baldwin Beach and explore the lake's hidden coves along the shoreline. Midday, enjoy a lakeside picnic or stop for lunch at Artemis Lakefront Café, known for its Mediterranean-inspired dishes and stunning marina views.

Spend the afternoon soaking up the sun at some of Tahoe's most scenic beaches at Baldwin Beach, Zephyr Cove, or Sand Harbor. If you're looking for a more active option, rent a powerboat or jet ski from Zephyr Cove Resort and cruise along the lake's East Shore, or take a short road trip around the lake to visit Tahoe City for a mix of shopping and craft brews. In the evening, enjoy a sunset dinner at Edgewood Tahoe, a luxurious lodge offering gourmet cuisine with sweeping lake views. Wrap up your Tahoe stay with a bonfire by the beach or relax or rest for the incredible drive to Yosemite the following day.

Overnight Accommodation: South Lake Tahoe, California

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Day 3: South Lake Tahoe, California → Yosemite National Park, California

Leave South Lake Tahoe early, heading south on Highway 89 and merging onto US-395, one of California's most scenic highways, with dramatic views of the towering Eastern Sierra. Please stop in the quaint town of Lee Vining for lunch at the Whoa Nellie Deli, a quirky gas station café famous for its gourmet fish tacos. Before ascending into Yosemite, take a short detour to Mono Lake's South Tufa Reserve, where eerie limestone spires rise from the water in a surreal landscape. Then, begin the spectacular climb up Tioga Pass (9,945 ft), the highest highway pass in California, passing alpine lakes and breathtaking overlooks.

Once inside Yosemite National Park, explore Tuolumne Meadows, a vast high-country expanse dotted with wildflowers and surrounded by granite domes. Stop at Tenaya Lake, a shimmering blue gem perfect for a quick swim or picnic. Continuing west, pull over at Olmsted Point, where you'll get a unique perspective of Half Dome from a high-altitude vantage point. By late afternoon, descend into Yosemite Valley, where towering cliffs and waterfalls greet you at every turn. Check into your lodging and head to Tunnel View at sunset, an awe-inspiring overlook showcasing El Capitan, Bridalveil Fall, and Half Dome in golden light. Finish the day with dinner at The Mountain Room at Yosemite Valley Lodge, offering hearty meals with views of Yosemite Falls.

Overnight Accommodation: Yosemite National Park, California



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Day 4: Yosemite National Park, California → San Francisco, California

Wake up early to hike the Mist Trail to Vernal Fall, a breathtaking ascent along Yosemite's cascading waterfalls. If you prefer a more relaxed morning, stroll to Lower Yosemite Fall or bike through Cook's Meadow, where Half Dome looms overhead. Mid-morning, explore Yosemite Village, stopping by the Ansel Adams Gallery and Visitor Center to glimpse the park's artistic and geological history. Grab lunch to-go from Degnan's Deli and enjoy a peaceful riverside picnic at Cathedral Beach, with a stunning backdrop of El Capitan towering above.

As the afternoon winds down, begin the journey back to San Francisco via Big Oak Flat Road (Highway 120), stopping at Tuolumne Grove to walk among ancient giant sequoias if time allows. Expect a 4–5 hour drive back to the city, with a possible dinner stop in Groveland at the historic Iron Door Saloon.

Overnight Accommodation: San Francisco, California

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