

8 GREAT GOLDEN STATE ITINERARIES

California

ROAD TRIPS

**JENNIFER
HUDSON**

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San Francisco

Road-Tripping: The Ultimate Way to Play

I'm pretty sure it's impossible to be in a bad mood on a California road trip. Think about it: You've got your favorite playlist loaded up. The scenery is constantly shifting and consistently beautiful. You likely have a final destination mapped out, but you can also pull over to enjoy a scenic vista or detour to explore a small town or grab a roadside treat.

Adventure, flexibility, endless variety—it's no wonder that exploring California by car is one of my top ways to play.

Our cover star, the multitalented talk show host Jennifer Hudson, feels the same way. Driving around the Golden State is "so inspiring and therapeutic to me," the EGOT (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, Tony) winner told us. "I don't care where. I even love my commute to work or driving to Santa Barbara or going to Nobu in Malibu."

If you're cut from the same cloth, this *California Road Trips* guide is the perfect

planning tool for you. The eight detailed itineraries will take you from the deserts down south to the redwood groves up north, with urban treks like the "San Diego Challenge Tour" (page 56) and rural escapes like "Discovering the Central Coast and San Joaquin Valley" (page 44) in between.

We've also upped our game with this year's guide. Because the power of play is scientifically proven, Visit California has partnered with the National Institute for Play to help travelers identify their California Play Style. Turn to page 23 to find out how you can unlock your personalized

Play Style and find a road trip that's certain to put a smile on your face.



CAROLINE BETETA
PRESIDENT AND CEO, VISIT CALIFORNIA

JOURNEY INTO SAN JOSE'S HISTORIC ALMADEN VALLEY

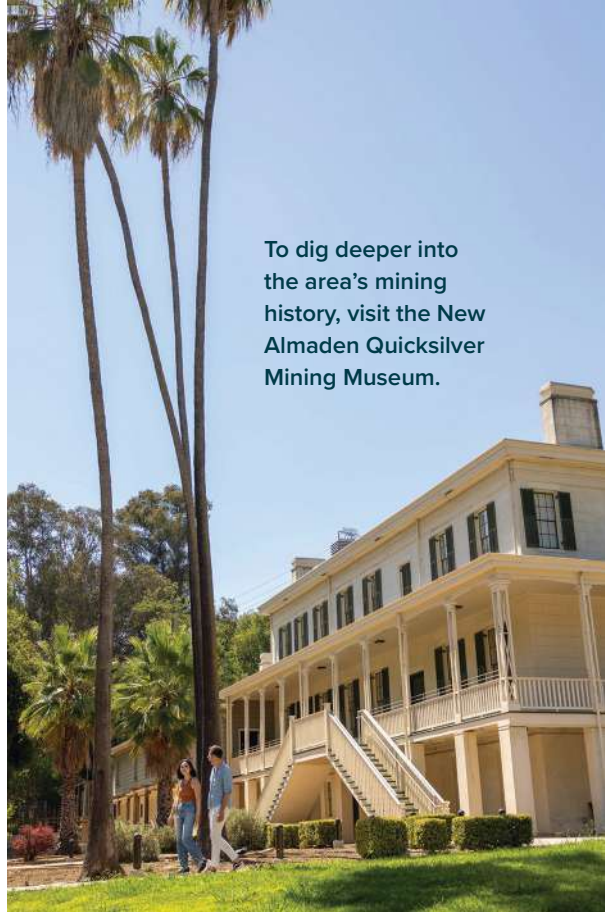
This verdant valley holds secret discoveries for those willing to explore.

Surrounded by rolling green hills dotted with native plants and shrubs, historic Almaden Valley effortlessly combines the old with the new. Located just south of downtown San Jose, Almaden promises tranquil nature, rich history, delectable global cuisine and an award-winning vineyard and winery.

Almaden's heritage stretches back to 1846 when it was established as the first official mining operation in the soon-to-be state. Remnants of the mine can be found on Almaden Quicksilver County Park's 4,000 acres, and guided walking tours expose you to these echoes of the past. History buffs can explore the area's rich heritage at other local sites and museums or head into San Jose for even more historic exploration.

For a taste of San Jose's global cuisine, at the southern end of New Almaden on Almaden Road is La Forêt—a fine French restaurant resting on the banks of Alamitos Creek. Utilizing authentic French techniques that focus on slowly building layers of flavor, these exquisitely crafted dishes are served to locals and visitors alike in a beautiful setting. This is just one of many ways travelers can explore San Jose's global dining experience.

To dig deeper into the area's mining history, visit the New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum.



Journey farther down the road to the award-winning Alamitos Vineyards. Nestled among the verdant hills of the Sierra Azul, Alamitos Vineyards grows syrah, sauvignon blanc and touriga nacional varietals, producing fine estate wines and blends that are served outdoors with stunning hillside views.

Spending time in Almaden Valley is a delight for the senses—tantalizing tastes, serene sights and intoxicating aromas are just the beginning of a cultural exploration that will entice you to discover more of what San Jose has to offer.

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California Road Trips is published by
Dotdash Meredith Travel Marketing for
Visit California. © 2024 Visit California.
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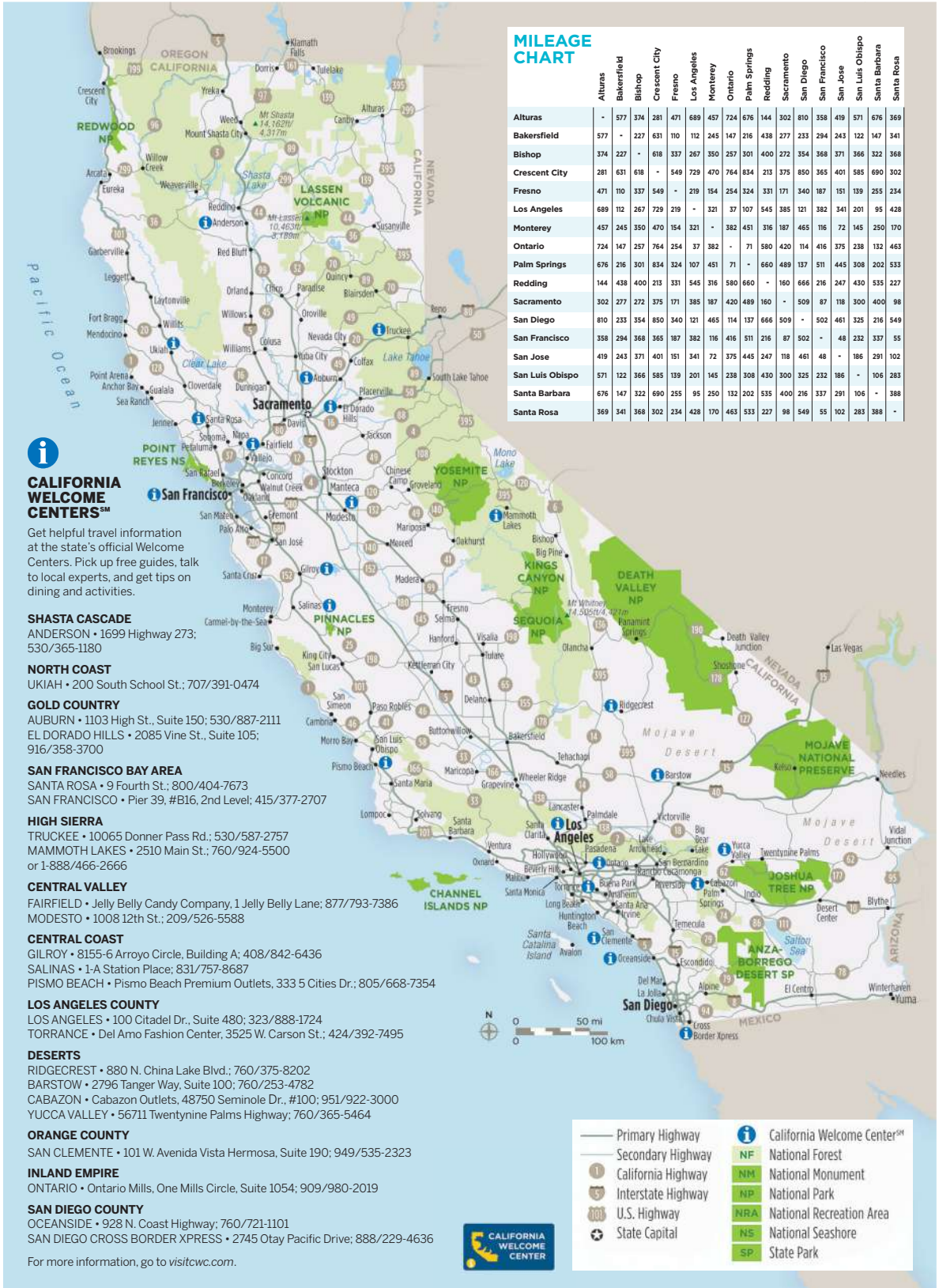
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Alturas	-	577	374	281	471	689	457	724	676	144	302	810	358	419	571	676	369
Bakersfield	577	-	227	631	110	112	245	147	216	438	277	233	294	243	122	147	341
Bishop	374	227	-	618	337	267	350	257	301	400	272	354	368	371	366	322	368
Crescent City	281	631	618	-	549	729	470	764	834	213	375	650	365	401	585	690	302
Fresno	471	110	337	549	-	219	154	254	324	331	171	340	187	151	139	255	234
Los Angeles	689	112	267	729	219	-	321	37	107	545	385	121	382	341	201	95	428
Monterey	457	245	350	470	154	321	-	382	451	316	187	465	116	72	145	250	170
Ontario	724	147	257	764	254	37	382	-	71	580	420	114	416	375	238	132	463
Palm Springs	676	216	301	834	324	107	451	71	-	660	489	137	511	445	308	202	533
Redding	144	438	400	213	331	545	316	580	660	-	160	666	216	247	430	535	227
Sacramento	302	277	272	375	171	385	187	420	489	160	-	509	87	118	300	400	98
San Diego	810	233	354	850	340	121	465	114	137	666	509	-	502	461	325	216	549
San Francisco	358	294	368	365	187	382	116	416	511	216	87	502	-	48	232	337	55
San Jose	419	243	371	401	151	341	72	375	445	247	118	461	48	-	186	291	102
San Luis Obispo	571	122	366	585	139	201	145	238	308	430	300	325	232	186	-	106	283
Santa Barbara	676	147	222	600	255	95	250	132	202	535	400	216	337	291	106	-	388
Santa Rosa	369	341	368	302	234	428	170	463	533	227	98	549	55	102	283	388	-



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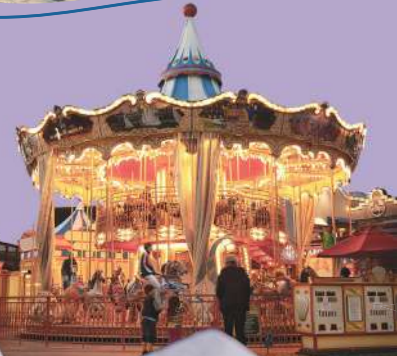
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Dream Girl

Jennifer Hudson is fully embracing the California lifestyle, cruising up and down the coast to experience everything the Golden State has to offer

Jennifer Hudson is reliving her Hollywood moments. You know the kind. The ones seemingly straight from a movie. The kind of star-in-the-making, too-good-to-be-true, fortune-telling circumstances that could only take place in Tinseltown.

“I was filming *Dreamgirls*,” Hudson remembers, mentioning the 2007 film adaptation of the Broadway musical for which she won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. “I went to dinner, up in the hills at a sushi restaurant.” That night she looked down over Los Angeles and her manager told her that her future was beginning. “And now, to see how much of Hollywood I am... Well, it just blows my mind.”

A Chicago native, Hudson first hit the pop culture radar exactly 20 years ago, when the then-cruise-ship singer earned a spot in the finals of *American Idol*'s third season. Fantasia Barrino won that year and Hudson placed seventh. “At my audition, the judges said, ‘You’re going to Hollywood!’” Hudson had never been to L.A. “That was my first trip out here. I got off the plane and was, like, wow. This is LAX. I saw the hills. The iconic sign that says, ‘Hollywood.’” Hudson sighs in reflection.

She had no idea what the next two decades would hold. But she says she felt optimistic. “The light in California. The light felt good. It was like flying right into summer.”

Today, Jennifer Hudson has EGOT status. Which is to say, she’s earned an Emmy Award

(in 2021 she won for interactive media as executive producer of the animated short *Baby Yaga*); two Grammys (best R&B album for *Jennifer Hudson* in 2009 and best musical theater album for *The Color Purple* in 2017); an Oscar in 2007 for Best Supporting Actress (she played Effie White in *Dreamgirls*); and, in 2022, she became the 17th person in history to complete the loop by winning a Tony as a producer of the Best Musical winner, *A Strange Loop*. She’s also a talk show host and—on a related note—a new California resident. *The Jennifer Hudson Show*, which premiered in September 2022, films in Burbank.

“I’m experiencing the town in a different way, like a fresh new start,” she notes. “I feel like I’m in the heart of Hollywood now. I’m feeling like a part of it even more.” Hudson says living here has provided her with a new perspective—a rearview mirror. “It’s helped me reflect on my journey that I’ve had throughout my career.”

Entertainment history surrounds Hudson on a daily basis, and the fact that she’s become a part of it is not lost on her. “Every day that I pull up to the historic Warner Bros. lot, where my show is filmed, is a blessing.” She revels in how iconic the studio is, where TV shows such as *Friends* and *ER* were shot. Movies like the first *A Star Is Born*, *American Beauty*, and *La La Land*. “It’s the center of Hollywood. And to see my poster on the side of it and to know I have a home there. It’s still a feeling I haven’t gotten used to.”

A full-body photograph of Jennifer Hudson on a stage. She is wearing a long-sleeved, high-necked, form-fitting dress with a blue and white floral pattern. She is also wearing blue-rimmed glasses and blue high-heeled shoes. Her right arm is raised, pointing towards the top left of the frame. The background is a warm, orange-red color with abstract patterns and bright stage lights. The floor is a polished, reflective surface.

*“I’m experiencing
the town in a
different way,
like a fresh new
start. I feel like
I’m in the heart of
Hollywood now.”*



Hudson is still getting used to living in Los Angeles as well. Luckily many of the guests on her talk show are longtime Californians. They've been willing to share some tips.

"To film where we are, it means we are surrounded by stars all the time. It's like they're a part of the neighborhood, you know? Sometimes they are filming on the lot!" Magic Johnson dropped by early on. "He's been my absolute favorite. He said, 'I'm right up the street. I wanted to come and show you some love and support.'" Hudson marvels at her new relationships. "That I have friendships with people like that, of that caliber, who are legends and icons in their own right. I..." She trails off. Another sigh of gratitude.

As a mom to son David, 14, her first asks of her new neighbors were about schools. "I talked to Rita Wilson, Tom Hanks' wife, and she was teaching me about the local schools." Adam Sandler was helpful, she says. "His kids grew

up here." Some neighbors have become friends. "Tyrese is a good friend. Tori Kelly," who is also an *American Idol* alum.

Being a mom is also taking her around town. To games. "My son and I love both the Clippers and the Lakers. We make a point of going to the games. And I love it because everything is pretty easy to get to. I ask him, 'We can just go up the street and go to the game. You want to go?'"

What they do most is walk around. "I created my David walk," she says, where they get out and explore and he picks something for them to do. They have both learned to layer up, because "some days you get four seasons in one day. But David always looks like a Californian." Hudson says her own style is evolving.

"My favorite part of the day is when the sun comes out and peaks, and it's nice and warm. But then the evening hits, by the time I leave the studio. That's when I may need a little coat or a jacket. So it's like teaching me to be flexible with my wardrobe throughout the day."

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Marin County



“I’ve always been a busybody. Doing a lot, coming up with big ideas. But being here, there is so much you can do. And it’s never too late to learn.”



Horseback riding at Los Padres Outfitters, Carpinteria



Whale watching on the Condor Express, Santa Barbara



Big Bear

California, Hudson has learned, is all about adventure. And Hudson, now 42, has long had an adventurous spirit. This helped her when she began performing in her church choir as a child. It helped when she left home at 19 to perform on a cruise ship. And it helped when she flew out to Atlanta for her fateful audition. “I hopped on that *American Idol* roller coaster, and it has been going ever since,” she recalls. “It has had its turns, its twirls, its ups, its downs—but that’s life.”

“I did not let the fear stop me,” she says, “or take on the discouragement when I didn’t win.” Hudson was a fan favorite that season and there was definitely a little outrage when she was eliminated. She doesn’t tend to have regrets. “It’s like I do things for the experience so I can look back and say I lived my life. I lived my youth. And in that way, I don’t mind growing older.”

She’s brought this ethos to her new gig. In a regular segment on her talk show,

“Jennifer Tries That,” Hudson has married her fearlessness with a sense of adventure.

“I’ve always been a busybody,” she says, laughing. “Doing a lot, coming up with big, bright ideas. But being here, there is so much you can do. And it’s never too late to learn.”

“There’s nothing like thinking up a thought and then watching it manifest before your eyes, you know? So that’s how I pretty much live my life, and that’s how I’ve been able to achieve so many things. Just not being afraid or just being willing to try something no matter how busy I am. No matter how scary it is.”

So far, she’s learned to swim. (Olympian Ryan Lochte was her teacher). She hit the slopes with another Olympian, Jonny Moseley, and tried her hand at skiing. “I’ve never thought about skiing, so to be able to get out there, go to Big Bear... It was intense and awesome,” she says. “Chicago’s cold, but we don’t have mountains and hills and things like that.”



American Idol
Season 3, 2004



Oscar win at the 79th
Academy Awards, 2007



Final performance in
The Color Purple, 2016

Recently, she had a big idea that took her out of town. “You know, I now love Santa Barbara! I was like, ‘Ooooh, I want to go whale watching.’ Because I love the water. Then I learned how to ice-skate. Riding horses, I got to do that too. And so now I’m like, ‘Ooh, what else can I do?’”

Hudson loves to get behind the wheel—the destination isn’t important. She loves driving up to Montecito or down to San Diego. “I don’t care where. I even love my commute to work or driving to Santa Barbara or going to Nobu in Malibu. Or shopping in Malibu. Or even driving up the hills.” She loves the autonomy she feels behind the wheel. “It’s like, oh my God, it’s so inspiring to me, so therapeutic. And we do stop for snacks, baby.”

Of course, fast food is essential California. Hudson loves a drive-thru. She starts to sing: I lo-looove In-N-Out. “That’s one of my favorites! You know, I used to work at a drive-thru. That was one of my first jobs. I worked at Burger King. When I was 16 years old. That was my start. I used that opportunity on that microphone! When that thing said, ‘Beep’ and them cars were pulling up, I used to sing to those people down in that driveway.”

As it turns out, her manager was a club promoter. “He hired me after that to sing at the clubs. And so I was like, ‘Wait a minute. I’m making more money singing at the clubs than I am working this drive-thru. So how about I go make my living singing?’ And that’s what I started doing. And then all of it led to where I am today.”

Hudson, you see, she knows how to string it all together. Another good example? When she received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2013.

“I remember being there, thinking like, ‘How did I get this? Do I deserve this?’ And then I stepped out on the balcony and saw everything out there I was attached to. I was at the Kodak Theatre. I won the Oscar there and it’s where the *American Idol* finale was. And I looked across the street, and there was a musical running at the theater. It was *Lion King*. It was kinda like spelling out my career to me because I did that on the cruise ship, and that’s what led me to *Idol*. I got off that ship and went straight to the audition. Then I saw the Ripley’s Believe It or Not! on Highland. That was the first place I took my family when they came out here.”

“Today I get to see just how big California is,” she says, sighing. “It’s even big enough for all my dreams.” ✨

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WHAT'S YOUR CALIFORNIA PLAY STYLE?

Road-tripping around the Golden State is guaranteed to reinforce one essential truth: California is The Ultimate Playground. Opportunities for fun are limitless, which is great, but they can also be overwhelming. If you simply cannot decide between a breezy jaunt to the beach or a zip-lining excursion among the redwoods, we feel you. And we're here to help. *Scan the QR code at right to take our interactive quiz and learn your personal California Play Style.* After you've unlocked it, read the road trip itinerary associated with your profile. Or just flip through the following pages and see where the road takes you.



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Avenue of the Giants

STARTS: DEL NORTE COUNTY AIRPORT
669 MILES • 8–9 DAYS

North Coast Redwoods, Seascapes, and Wine Tasting

When you fly into Del Norte County Airport, you land in the top left-hand corner of the state, where the salty Pacific crashes on rock-strewn shores and redwoods grow to enormous heights. This trip offers nature lovers and back-roads explorers the chance to find their awe in fern-festooned forests, cloud-scraping trees, and relentless surf.

Buckle into your rental car for a 10-minute drive into Crescent City, then pop into Paragon Coffeehouse for a matcha green tea or maple latte. While you caffeinate, check the schedule at Battery Point Lighthouse. If the tide has pulled back, walk across a gravelly beach to this mariner's beacon perched on an offshore rock. The tidy red-and-white structure has guided ships since 1856, and you can climb the spiral staircases to its light tower.

Cruise south on U.S. 101 to Trinidad's coastal harbor. On a guided paddling excursion with Kayak Trinidad, you'll commune with seals and other sea creatures in the protected waters of Trinidad Bay. At dinnertime, cozy up at The Larrupin' Café with tofu kabobs or filet mignon served in a forest-enveloped house decked out with twinkling lights and eclectic decor.

In the morning, push south to Eureka, a harbor city with a rich maritime heritage. Soak in Humboldt Bay's sea-salty air on an oyster farm cruise with Sebastian Elrite, owner of Aqua-Rodeo Farms. Bundle up for the boat ride, and Elrite will take you out on the bay and show you how his company grows oysters—from planting "seedlings" to the shellfish harvest, two years later. The trip culminates with plates of briny bivalves at Humboldt Bay Provisions.

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In the late afternoon, stroll past Eureka's colorful Victorian buildings, then swing into Humboldt Cider Company Tap Room to taste barrel-aged ciders made with local apples, cherries, and honey. For dinner, sample hyper-local cuisine at Tavern 1888—mushrooms from Fungaia Farms, lettuce from Little River Farm and Humboldt Hydrofarms, and seafood from Humboldt and Arcata bays. Sleep in Victorian splendor in the blush-toned Pinc Lady Mansion, an 1889 Queen Anne with stained-glass windows and a wealth of scallops, gables, and flourishes.

Begin your third day by winding south to Weott to cruise the Avenue of the Giants, a 31.5-mile route enveloped by giant redwoods. Nearly 60 percent of the world's tallest trees can be viewed along this road, so prepare to crane your neck and say "wow" on repeat. Pull over at approved

locations and take slow, reverent walks among the giants at the Drury-Chaney Grove, Rockefeller Forest, or Founders Grove. When you need food, Redwood Palace in Miranda wins for burgers, salads, and charcuterie.

The next morning, motor south on U.S. 101 for 80 miles to Willits, then veer west on Highway 20 for an hour of zigzags to the coast. After reaching the Pacific's edge at Fort Bragg, every pullout on Highway 1 will inspire you to hit the brakes (only park in designated areas). Soak up the drama of crashing surf and rocky headlands, then change up the view with a leafy stroll at Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. This 47-acre preserve offers much to see year-round, but spring is the showstopper season when more than 1,000 rhododendrons burst into bloom. Garden manager Jaime Jensen describes the spectacle as "walking through an exotic jungle under the cover of 30-foot-tall rhododendrons."



Battery Point Lighthouse

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Goldeneye Winery



Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens

A few miles south, wander the tidy streets of Mendocino, where 1800s cottages are fronted by rose-entwined picket fences, and shops beckon with coastal art, one-of-a-kind gifts, and steaming lattes. The town has dozens of delightful inns, but for a uniquely seaworthy stay, reserve the lighthouse keeper's cottages at Point Cabrillo Light Station.

South of Albion, turn inland on Highway 128 and steer through dozens of curves to the hamlet of Philo. Take a break to walk among the redwoods at Hedy Woods State Park, then roll past the Anderson Valley vineyards overflowing with leafy vines. Stop at tasting rooms that strike your fancy, perhaps Goldeneye for Pinot Noir, or Roederer Estate for sparkling wines.

When you reach sunny Boonville, poke around the Anderson Valley Historical Museum and its centerpiece one-room schoolhouse. Drop by Disco Ranch and see what owner Wendy Lamer is pouring—her favorites are usually local producers that aren't big enough to have their own tasting rooms. Hungry? Kick back with a burger at Lauren's at the Buckhorn.

South of Boonville, leave the highway behind and turn east on Boonville Road, which carves a circuitous route through the hills to U.S. 101. Spend the night in the bucolic town of Ukiah, where you can wander the meditative grounds of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas—and dine at its vegetarian restaurant Jyun Kang—or visit the Grace Hudson Museum to survey the artist's early 20th-century paintings of native Pomo people. If you have time to spare, take a drive out to Vichy Hot Springs and bliss out with a soak in naturally carbonated mineral water.

The next morning, linger over lavender lattes and breakfast burritos at Black Oak Coffee Roasters, then drive a clockwise loop around Lake County's vineyards. First-timers in this off-the-radar wine country will be impressed: In Clearlake Oaks, sip Cabernet Sauvignon at Brassfield Estate. In Kelseyville, browse the Shannon Mercantile for wines from Buck Shack, Ovis, and Clay Shannon. Stop at Chacewater for Syrah and freshly milled olive oil, and Fults Family Vineyards for sparkling wines.

Upon your return to U.S. 101, Brutocao Cellars will lure you for one more stop. Sip, swirl, and play a game of bocce ball, then check into the stylish Thatcher Hotel for a solid night's sleep. Tomorrow's drive is a 250-mile trip back to Crescent City. You could do it in less than five hours, but why rush? This is your chance to stop at the big trees and small towns you didn't see on your southward route.



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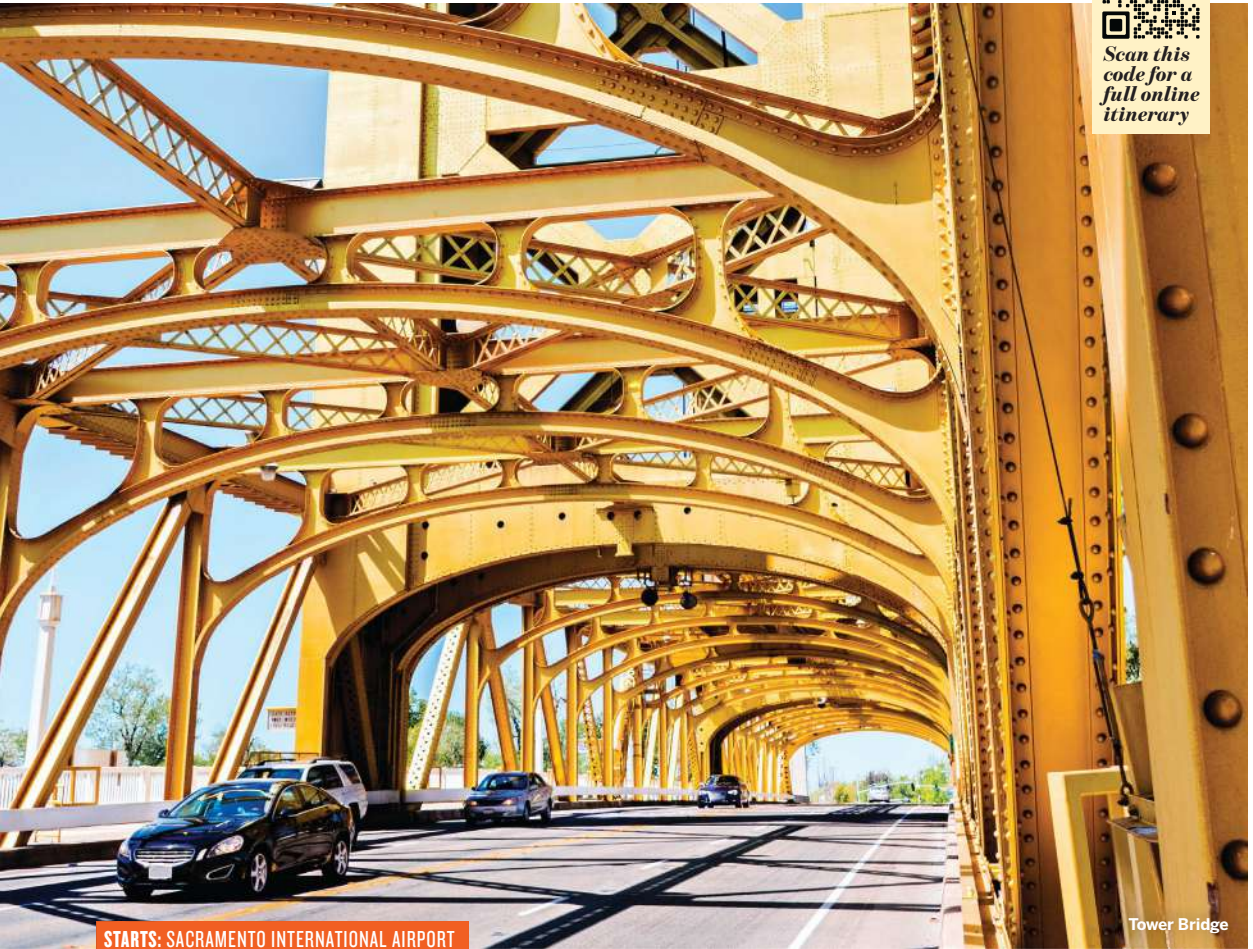


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Tower Bridge

STARTS: SACRAMENTO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
640 MILES • 6-7 DAYS

Canvassing California History

Begin this story-rich exploration with a flight into Sacramento International Airport. You'll deplane only 10 miles from the capital city, where the mighty American and Sacramento rivers converge and a rich backstory comes to life. Step into the Gold Rush era of miners, merchants, and madams by walking Old Sacramento's tidy grid of alphabetical streets and wood-planked sidewalks, or dive deeper with a ramble through Old Sac's California State Railroad Museum and Sacramento History Museum.

Plan to arrive before sunset at the Delta King riverboat hotel. The elegant sternwheeler is now permanently moored on Old Sac's waterfront, but it once plied the waterways between San Francisco and Sacramento. Sleep in an old-timey stateroom and awaken to the calls of geese, then nab a latte at Blueprint Coffee Project and hop in the car. Thirty miles northeast, Auburn is a prime spot for

epicurean carbo-loading. Choose a croissant from The Baker and the Cakemaker or a bagel sandwich from Baked and Brewed, then admire the historic Auburn Courthouse—a Classical Revival showpiece built atop the highest hill. In its first-floor museum, glittering under glass, lie 192 troy ounces of Placer County gold.

Follow Highway 49 north through the golden-grass foothills to Nevada City's picture-book Victorians filled with homey restaurants and wine bars. Have a cocktail at the Golden Era, then catch a show at the Miners Foundry Cultural Center or Nevada Theatre—the latter of which is the oldest theater west of the Mississippi. End the day in an elegant room at The National Exchange Hotel, a Gold Rush charmer overlooking downtown.

The next morning, take a two-hour ride through the dense hardwoods of Plumas National Forest to Quincy, an idyllic town along the Feather River. Brake for Quintopia

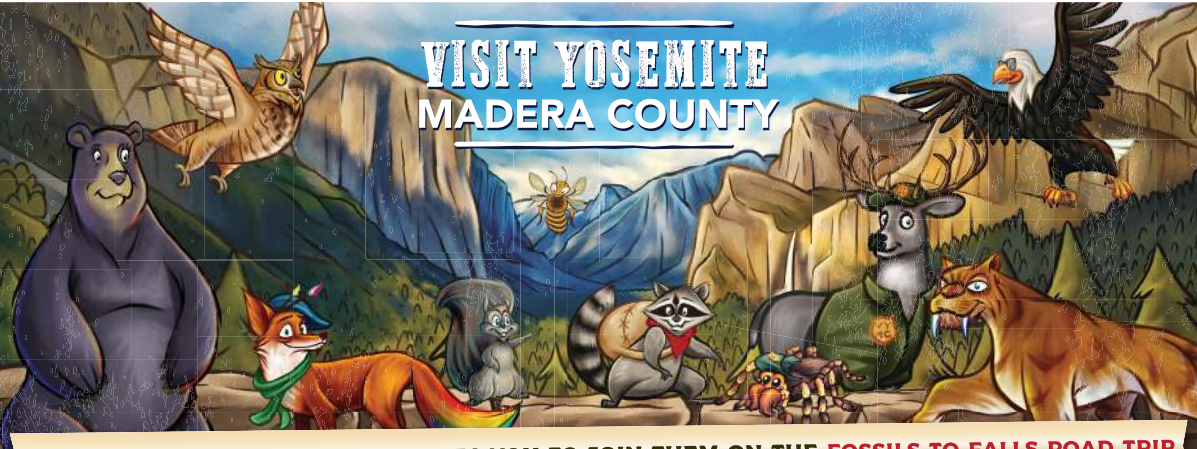


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Lassen Volcanic National Park



Nevada City

Brewing's blonde ale and a burger, or take home a vial of gold flakes from the Plumas County Museum gift shop. As you push north on Highway 70, watch for the locals' grassroots art project—historic barns gussied up with painted “quilts.”

One hour northwest, stop in Mill Creek for an overnight at St. Bernard Lodge, a 1920s ranch built by German immigrants, then rise early for a day of adventure. Lassen Volcanic National Park Highway cuts through its namesake park, showcasing gnarled mountain peaks and hydrothermal spectacles. History takes the long view here: Volcanic rumblings began about 27,000 years ago, but Lassen Peak didn't erupt until the early 20th century.

Stay the course on Highway 89, heading north to yet another, even larger volcano: the massive bulk of Mt. Shasta, a sleeping giant that soars to 14,179 feet. Take a hike from Bunny Flat to the Sierra Club Alpine Lodge, a stone structure built in 1922 as a shelter for climbers. End the day with a lamb burger at Pipeline Craft Taps & Kitchen and dreams at the Inn at Mount Shasta.

Next, leave the looming peaks behind and zoom south on Interstate 5. Plan to spend at least one day in Redding, a friendly urban hub on the Sacramento River. Don't miss the city's top hits—Turtle Bay Exploration Park's eco-museum and the graceful architecture of the Sundial Bridge—but also take time to explore downtown Redding's vintage, vinyl, book, and crystal shops, or taste some of the offerings at The Park, a food-truck hub. Plan on a brick-oven pizza dinner at Mosaic and a restful sleep at the Sheraton Redding Hotel.

In the morning, merge onto Interstate 5 for a quick trip south to Corning, where olives aren't king, but rather queen. Sevillano, or queen, olives—the firm, green fruit that tops martinis—have been grown and brined here since 1897. Taste peppery olive oil at Nash's or Corning Olive Oil Company, or order a tangy tapenade sandwich at the Olive Pit.

From Corning, a half-hour jog southeast on Highway 99 brings you to Chico, home of elm-dotted streets and arcadian Bidwell Park. Pay a visit to the grand Bidwell Mansion, bounded by fragrant roses and towering ornamental trees planted by Chico's founder, General John Bidwell. His three-story home, a marvel of 1860s ingenuity, was one of California's first with indoor plumbing.

In your final 90-mile trek back to Sacramento, don't miss a much-loved I-5 landmark: Granzella's in Williams. More than 400,000 drivers each year pull over to shop for pickled preserves and fruity jams, or just to marvel at the 10-foot-tall stuffed polar bear.



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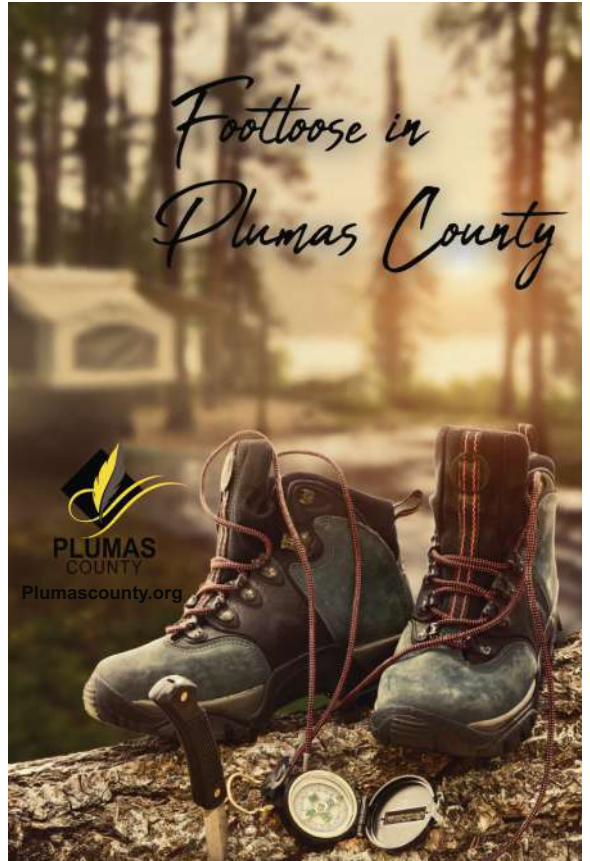
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322 MILES • 5-6 DAYS

San Francisco Bay Area Tour

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An hour after your plane lands, you'll check in your bags at the storied Hotel Spero, two blocks from Union Square. Board a cable car to Chinatown and meet your guide from All About Chinatown Tours, then walk under the Dragon Gate to explore lantern-lined streets, a Chinese medicine pharmacy, fortune-cookie factory, and dim sum dining room.

A few blocks north, switch cultures with a leisurely self-guided stroll around Italian-accented North Beach. Taste the tiramisu at Caffe Greco, sip espresso at Caffe Trieste, and browse three stories of tomes at City Lights Booksellers, the seat of 1950s beatnik culture.

Next, head over to Pier 33 and bundle up for the Alcatraz Island Night Tour. Your ferry cruise to the island offers an ideal vantage point to watch the sun set behind the Golden Gate Bridge (as long as the infamous fog takes a holiday). Tour "The Rock" and its fascinating prison, then sail back to the city for Nikkei cuisine at Chotto Matte's dazzling rooftop terrace. Afterward, sleep at the restored Lodge at the Presidio, once a military barracks, now a boutique hotel set within a 1,500-acre park.

The next morning, pick up Asian-French fusion pastries at Rolling-Out Café. (Chemist-turned-baker Bruno Tse invented the recipe for mochissants, mochi-infused croissants.) Then put the city in your rearview mirror and zoom south on I-280. Split up the 50-mile drive to San Jose with a redwood-studded detour on Highway 84 to hike at Woodside's Wunderlich Park and lunch at Alice's Restaurant, a hideaway serving burgers, nachos, and fish tacos.

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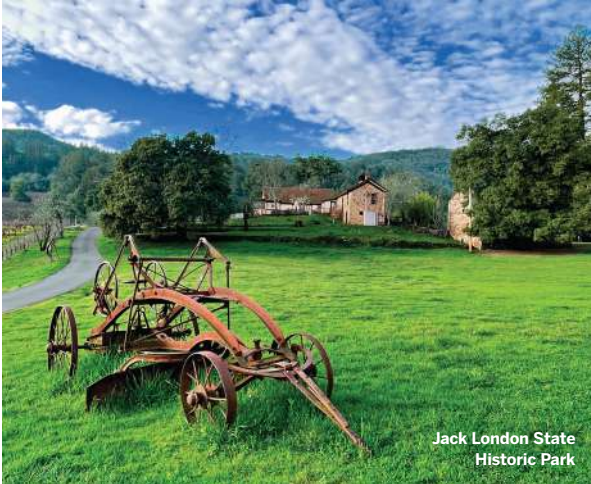
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Sea Trek

In San Jose, pull into the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum to be dazzled by the West's largest collection of Egyptian artifacts. Drop into downtown's Nomikai for sake tasting before dinner at Orchard City Kitchen, a cozy and creative eatery serving udon, pork belly, and lamb riblets. Sleep in historic opulence at the Hayes Mansion, a 1905 Mediterranean Revival charmer.

On day three, swing north on U.S. 101 and cross the magnificent Golden Gate Bridge, then take the Rodeo Avenue exit and wind downhill to Sea Trek in Sausalito. Trade your steering wheel for a kayak paddle and admire the bayside city's houseboats and yachts from a harbor seal's perspective. Lunch is at Fish's picnic tables—the counter staff will steer you toward the day's fresh catch.



An hour's drive north brings you to Healdsburg, the heart of Russian River wine country in Sonoma County. Taste wines at Lioco and Hirsch Vineyards, then arrive for your dinner reservation at Roof 106, an open-air, farm-to-table gathering spot swarming with locals. Spend the night in Harmon Guest House's modern digs, a striking contrast to Healdsburg's historic town plaza.

In the morning, follow Highway 128 east

up and over the Mayacamas Mountains, the rugged range that separates Sonoma and Napa counties. A soothing day awaits in Calistoga, a laid-back town famous for its hot springs. Wind down with deep relaxation—mud bath, massage, or both?—at Indian Springs Calistoga. Backstroke your cares away in the Olympic-sized mineral pool, then find your reserved seat at Michelin-starred Auro, lauded for its intimate, contemporary American cuisine.

Motor south on Highway 29 through sun-kissed vineyards. More than 400 wineries dot the Napa Valley, so do your homework in advance and tailor your tastings to your palate. Wherever you visit, plan to end the day at the Hotel Yountville. Check in and saunter over to Regiis Ova Caviar & Champagne Lounge, cofounded by acclaimed chef Thomas Keller. Raise a bubbly toast to your amazing trip (and the brilliant planning that went into it). In the morning, a 75-minute drive brings you back to San Francisco for your return flight.



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629 MILES • 6-7 DAYS

Adventures from the East Bay to the Sierra Crest

As your plane descends into Oakland International Airport, the vast blue of San Francisco Bay spreads out below, its shoreline hugging a line of hills marching east, south, and north. Your first inclination will be to get outside and roam, and this city-to-Sierra journey offers a wealth of places to stretch your legs.

But first, brunch. Tacos Oscar serves breakfast burritos and fried-egg tacos from a colorful shipping container in Oakland's Temescal neighborhood. Get your fill, then drive 10 minutes north to the University of California Botanical Garden at Berkeley. Walk up to five miles of paths bordered by 10,000 species of plants and punctuated by long-distance peeks at the Golden Gate Bridge. Want more fresh air and exercise? Nearby, a 20-mile

string of East Bay parklands is crowned by 2,000-acre Tilden Park.

For dinner, drive downhill to The Rendez-Vous, a French bistro run by husband-and-wife team Johnelle Mancha and Brian Hill. Artist and vintage expert Mancha designed the intimate dining room with its timeworn chandeliers, Jazz Age frescoes, and artfully mismatched tableware. Her handwritten menus list the day's specials: poulet liver flan, seafood stew, or beet-cured halibut.

After dinner, check into your room at Berkeley City Club. Plan on an early wake-up for a backstroke session in the Julia Morgan-designed pool, its aquamarine tiles shimmering beneath a vaulted ceiling.

In the morning, head to bustling Fourth Street for chicken pesto crepes at Cafe M, then



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Lake Mary



Tilden Park

hop back in the car for a zigzagging drive up the western shoulder of 3,849-foot Mount Diablo. Walk the half-mile Mary Bowerman Trail around the summit—with every step, your perspective changes: You'll see San Francisco, Suisun Bay, the Delta, the Altamont Pass windmills, even the far-off Sierra Nevada range.

Roll along Mount Diablo's southern road and wind downhill to Danville, where a 350-year-old oak anchors the town center. Stop in to Danville Harvest for a sustainably

sourced, farm-to-table dinner and zero-proof cocktails, then head two hours east to the Sierra foothills. You'll find a comfy bed in the historic—but tastefully modernized—Groveland Hotel.

The next day, swoop down into Yosemite Valley for rock climbing lessons with guides from the Yosemite Mountaineering School. Josh Helling, who has completed more than two dozen ascents of El Capitan, helms a staff of pros who will show you how to stretch your limits on California's most celebrated granite walls.

Sleep deeply at Yosemite Valley Lodge, then motor out of the valley on Big Oak Flat Road and Tioga Pass Road. A one-hour cruise past fir forests, peaks, and domes brings you to Tuolumne Meadows, a two-mile-long expanse

of subalpine serenity. The meadows are the starting point for more trails than you could hike in a whole summer.

Next, roll across the Sierra's rooftop at 9,943-foot Tioga Pass, then descend more than 3,000 feet to Lee Vining at U.S. 395. Head south 30 miles to Mammoth Lakes and test your mountain biking skills on Mammoth Bike Park's world-class trails, or paddle a kayak on the cobalt waters of Lake Mary, the largest lake in the Mammoth Lakes Basin. Spend the night at Snowcreek Resort so you can play an early morning round of high-altitude golf, then replace depleted calories with omelets and French toast at The Stove.

It's time to boomerang north on U.S. 395, but your first stop is only 20 miles north at June Lake. Rent a paddleboard at the large sandy beach near Oh Ridge Campground, or take a brisk swim in the 320-acre lake. Then swing into tiny Bridgeport for a road-food stop: Burger Barn's bison burgers and sweet-potato fries. A few miles north, turn west on Highway 108 for another snaking mountain-crest drive, this time over 9,624-foot Sonora Pass. The high-alpine scenery is equally as sublime as Tioga Pass, but the curves are tighter and grades steeper.

Push west on Highway 108 and spend your last night in Sonora, soaking in the Gold Rush vibes and noshing on birria ramen at Escondite De La Torre. Plop into a cozy bed at rustic-modern Hotel Lumberjack and dream about the amazing journey you've taken. In the morning, you'll zip back to Oakland, only 2.5 hours away, for your flight home.



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CALIFORNIA'S *Central Valley*



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60 mi / 100 km

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Ontario

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California

Yosemite National Park

Kings Canyon National Park

Sequoia National Park

Death Valley National Park

Central Valley Region

Yolo County

San Jose

Mariposa County

Madera County

Fresno County

Sacramento

SFO

Yosemite National Park

Kings Canyon National Park

Sequoia National Park

Death Valley National Park

Yolo County

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Modesto

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Sequoia Tourism Council

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STARTS: MONTEREY REGIONAL AIRPORT
570 MILES • 6 - 7 DAYS

Discovering the Central Coast and San Joaquin Valley

As your plane begins its final approach into Monterey Regional Airport, peer out at the untamed Big Sur coast and rugged Santa Lucia Range, a landscape that looks much like it did a century ago. That timeless quality is mirrored in Old Monterey's historic quarter, just a 10-minute drive from the terminal. Among a cluster of 19th-century adobe buildings, skip back to California's past with coffee at Alta Bakery. Sip a cappuccino while you consider that this seafaring city was the capital of Mexican Alta California from 1776 to 1848. Two years later, California joined the Union as the 31st state.

One mile north lies Cannery Row, a former sardine-canning hub that buzzes with family-friendly attractions. But history's patina is here too, in names and places that every


high-schooler knows from John Steinbeck's novels. Connoisseurs with discerning eyes can wade through Cannery Row Antique Mall's shelves of vintage glassware, 1920s embroidery kits, and time-warp knickknacks housed in a 21,000-square-foot former cannery building.

There's more to discover: A few blocks away, Talavera Memories is brimming with colorful Mexican ceramics. Pierce Ranch Vineyards' tasting room entices wine lovers to expand their collections. And of course, the world-famous Monterey Bay Aquarium calls to the sea-curious with its 200-plus exhibits. No matter how you spend the day, let the ocean's rhythm lull you to sleep at the bayside InterContinental The Clement Monterey.

The next morning, ramble east on the sun-drenched rolling hills of Highway 68 to sip

 Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa



 Spindrift Inn



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Cannery Row

Natural wonders abound in Monterey, and there simply is no better place to experience it all than with a stay on Cannery Row. Known for its picturesque charm and colorful history, guests to this fabled street can enjoy a unique combination of luxurious waterfront hotels, enticing restaurants and captivating boutiques. Come, slow down and enjoy the best of Monterey on Cannery Row.



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River Road Scenic Drive



Geneseo Inn at Cass Winery

wines from River Road vineyards like Rustique Wines and Odonata Wines. Follow U.S. 101 north through Salinas and Gilroy, then turn east on Highway 152 and brake for Casa de Fruta, a bustling commercial hub that started

as a cherry stand in the 1940s. The crowd-pleasing complex has a carousel, kiddie train, restaurant, hotel, RV park, wine-tasting room, and shelves stacked with fresh and dried fruit, jams, nuts, candies, garlic braids, and fruit wines.

Next, sample more of the Central Valley's bounty in Escalon and Modesto: Stuyt Dairy produces squeaky cheese curds and Spanish raw-milk cheeses. Fiscalini

Farmstead's fourth-generation cheesemakers make Syrah-soaked Purple Moon cheddar and Italian-style San Joaquin Gold. Order a case, then zip over to Wildfire Public House for indulgent servings of short ribs or Cobb salad.

Follow lunch with a tour of Fresno's 1903 Kearney Mansion. The opulent structure was built for an agriculture pioneer who made his fortune in raisins.

Your next day starts with a two-hour drive southwest from Fresno to Paso Robles, a wine-centric town with 200-plus tasting rooms. Make Cass Winery your base—not just for sipping Syrah but also for sleeping. Perched on a hilltop, chic shipping containers feature floor-to-ceiling windows and private decks.

While in Paso, sample cult-status reds at Top Winery's industrial-style tasting room, or sign up for a wine-and-spice pairing at LXV Wine. Nondrinkers will find plenty to do: Admire the sculpture garden at Sculpterra Winery. Taste olive oils and vinegars at Kiler Ridge. Stroll through *Sensorio*, an immersive outdoor light installation by acclaimed British artist Bruce Munro. As the sun sets, more than 100,000 solar-powered spheres light up, and visitors' faces glow with a shared sense of wonder.

Your trip's next leg bends west to the coast, following curvy Highway 46 to Cambria. This seaside village overflows with galleries, eateries, and trails lacing the shoreline. At Moonstone Beach, hunt for smoothly polished jadeite and moonstones, a perfect nature-made souvenir.

Your trip's final leg sticks to corkscrewing Highway 1, passing the craggy cliffs and high-drama shoreline of the Big Sur coast. Remember to slow way down to savor this sublime 150-mile stretch along the Pacific Ocean back to Monterey. Note: Check potential Highway 1 road closures before traveling.



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Pasadena City Hall

**STARTS: HOLLYWOOD BURBANK AIRPORT, BURBANK
368 MILES • 5-6 DAYS**

From Hollywood to the Desert

At easygoing Hollywood Burbank Airport, you can exit the plane and start exploring. This art-centric pilgrimage travels from Los Angeles to the desert, filling your creative well at every stop.

Head south on Interstate 5 to Republik Coffee, a 10-minute drive from the airport. You're still in Burbank, one of 88 unique cities that make up Los Angeles. Steer south three miles to neighboring Glendale. The hometown of DreamWorks Animation studio—creators of *Shrek*, *Kung Fu Panda*, and *Madagascar*—honors an older, more stylized art form in the Museum of Neon Art. Step inside to peruse 20th-century neon signs from motels, gas stations, and dive bars. You can even join a workshop: Bend a neon-filled glass tube, electrify it, and watch it glow.

Move on to neighboring Pasadena, a city that appreciates the arts. Eye-catching City Hall sets a sophisticated tone: The ornate structure and its dome-shaped, six-story bell tower make it look like a treasure from the Italian Renaissance, but it was constructed in 1927.

If you'd rather view nature's art, stroll through one of Pasadena's amazing gardens. Savor the zen of the lily-covered koi ponds at Storrier Stearns Japanese Garden. Catch the camellias or lilacs in bloom at Descanso Gardens. Or visit water-wise, climate-friendly Arlington Garden, which was planted on a barren lot earmarked to become a freeway lane. Garden director Michelle Matthews says the green space is "beautiful because it has wabi-sabi—it's a little bit messy and imperfect. We're trying to achieve something that is livable and habitable for humans, birds, and pollinators."

The next morning, head 30 miles east to the college town of Claremont. Stroll along oak- and sycamore-dotted Harvard and Yale avenues, pausing for pastries at Some Crust Bakery or Crème Bakery. Swing into the Folk Music Center to see—or strum—guitars, mandolins, banjos, ukuleles, and rarer instruments. You might see the owner, singer-songwriter Ben Harper, tuning a guitar. He's the Grammy-winning grandson of the center's founders.

Drive two hours east on Interstate 10 and



Hidden Valley,
Joshua Tree National Park



Universal Studios Hollywood



Palm Springs Art Museum

Highway 62 to the creosote-dotted hills of Joshua Tree. Stimulate your creativity by surveying 10 acres of room-sized sculptures at the Noah Purifoy Desert Art Museum of Assemblage Art. Purifoy spent 15 years at this sandy site making art from civilization's junk: old televisions, bowling balls, tires, and

mannequins. View more traditional desert works in the rustic adobe that houses 29 Palms Art Gallery. For dinner, Kitchen in the Desert in Twentynine Palms serves jerk



chicken and dan dan noodles on its patio. Sleep to the call of coyotes in one of 29 Palms Inn's bungalows.

Joshua Tree National Park lies at your feet, so take a day to explore its spindly Joshua trees, massive granite boulders, and fuzzy-looking cholla cacti. "J-Tree" offers a broad canvas for the imagination, so head to the Wonderland of Rocks or Keys View to meditate, photograph, and marvel at the landscape. Take a walk at Hidden Valley. Gaze at the graceful curve of Arch Rock. Then steer along Pinto Basin Road through smoke tree-dotted washes to Cottonwood Spring Oasis, where you exit the park and veer west 45 miles on Interstate 10. Soon you'll be sipping an Aperol spritz at Palm Desert's Porto Via and descending into dreamland at desert-chic Hotel Paseo, a

midcentury-styled property with 150 rooms.

Rise late and brunch like a local. On El Paseo, Wilma and Frieda elevates comfort food to an art form with its blackberry custard French toast and short-rib scrambles. Thirty minutes north, the *Meditations in Glass* exhibit at Palm Springs Art Museum makes you rethink what you know about the stuff of windows and eyeglasses. Spend the night at Talavera, where 11 suites—each with a hot tub—are decked out with antiques and original artwork.

For your trek back to L.A., backtrack 25 miles west on Interstate 10, then veer off on Highway 60. Halfway through the two-hour drive, take a break in Riverside to view vibrant recycled art at Tio's Tacos. Owner Martin Sanchez is both chef and sculptor, and he's created an astounding array of works made from discarded beer cans, glass bottles, license plates, and toys.

When you arrive in downtown Los Angeles, take your pick from imaginative destinations: At The Broad, step into Yayoi Kusama's kaleidoscopic "infinity mirrored room." Learn how to make gnocchi at Eatz cooking school, or eat the pros' cooking at Smorgasburg, an open-air market with nearly 100 vendors. Tour the studios or shop the gallery store at the crafter's dream space, The Makery.

Zip over to Universal Studios Hollywood for a glimpse at how movie magic is made. Take the back-lot tram tour, which snakes past sets and sound stages. You'll see actual sets from *Jaws*, *Psycho*, and other films, and experience special effects and animatronics. Best of all, you'll come away with a fresh appreciation for the ways movies invite us into new and imagined worlds.



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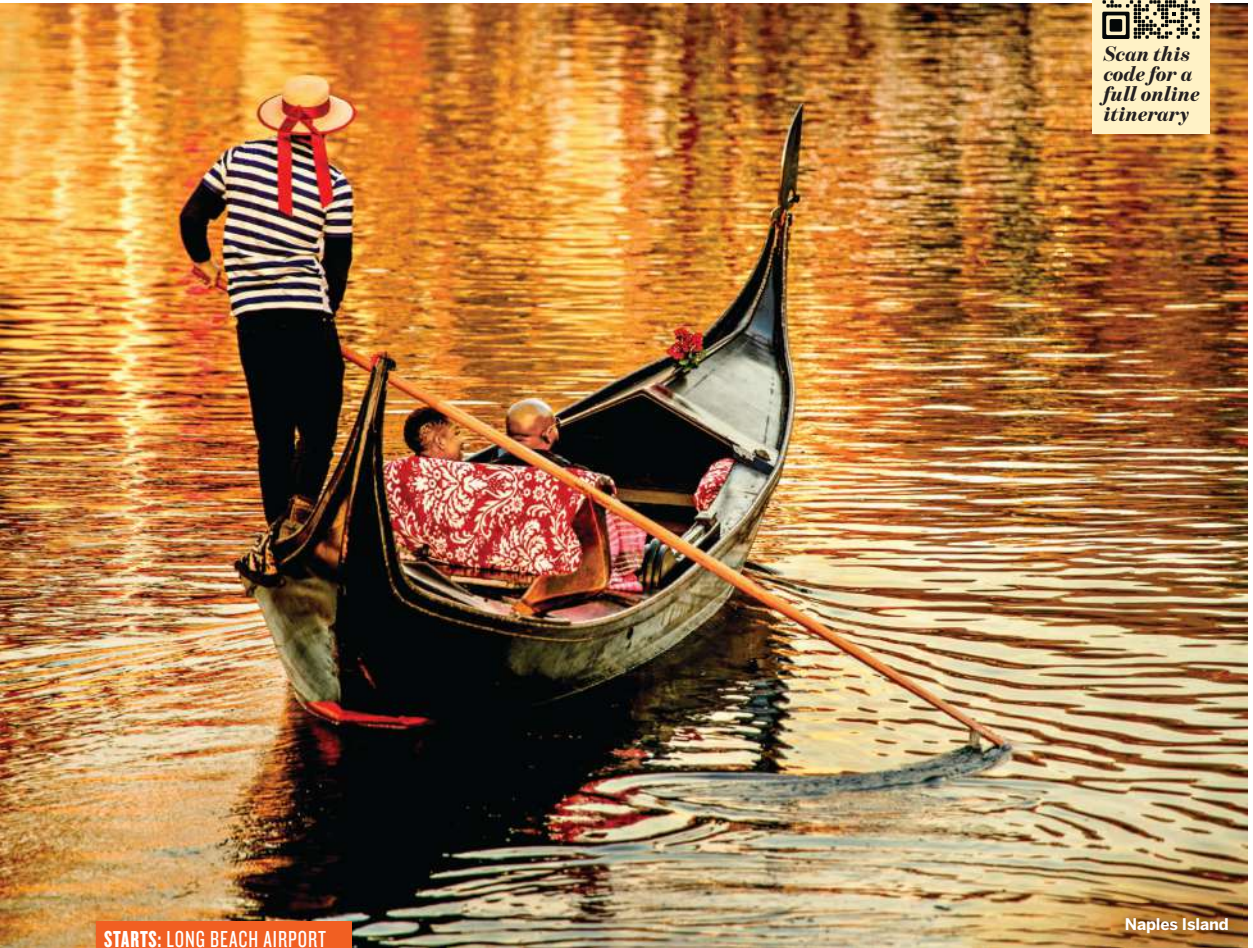
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Naples Island

STARTS: LONG BEACH AIRPORT
268 MILES • 4 - 5 DAYS

The Fun Zone: Los Angeles, Disneyland, and Mountains

Sometimes we design our vacations to broaden our horizons or gain deep insights; other times it's all about having fun. This trip is packed with devil-may-care destinations like theme parks, comedy shows, karaoke bars, and kitschy-cool tours.

Breeze into your rental car at laid-back Long Beach Airport, then start the frolic with a Spanish latte at Rad Coffee, a Long Beach café with pinball machines and skate-culture vibes. Twenty minutes south, tranquil Alamitos Bay circles the island of Naples. Pile your friends into a gondola and float along meandering canals, under five bridges, and past multi-million-dollar homes. Gondola Getaway's gondoliers steer their long, narrow flatboats with a single oar; you enjoy the scenery and an onboard pizza party.

Once you're back on dry land, drive a few blocks to the tip of Alamitos Peninsula. Join the discerning crowd at Ballast Point Brewing and soak in blue-water vistas and Grapefruit Sculpin IPAs. After the sun sets, hustle over to the comedy show at The Rec Room in Huntington Beach, a 20-minute drive. Laugh until your stomach hurts, then check into the Kimpton Shorebreak by the city's famous pier. Take advantage of the hotel's firepits, s'mores kits, and loaner surfboards and bikes.

The next morning, you're off to Disneyland. Take Highway 55 inland from Newport Beach, then merge onto I-5 at Santa Ana. In less than an hour, you'll walk through the park gates to begin your day at the happiest place on earth. Ride all the rides, eat only-at-Disney food (like Mickey-shaped beignets and a turkey leg as big

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WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT PASADENA? IF YOU HAVE TO ASK, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN.



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DISCOVER PASADENA



Disneyland Resort



SkyPark

as your head), and party with Pluto, Peter Pan, and the Pixar gang. When the last fireworks fade out over Sleeping Beauty Castle, retreat to your room at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel and Spa.

On day three, steer northeast to the San Bernardino Mountains, a two-hour jaunt by way of Highway 91. Stop to graze at Riverside Food Lab's 13 eateries—they're cooking up

Cajun seafood, Lebanese fare, fried chicken, and more.

Then ease your car uphill through long, switchbacking curves to Big Bear's mountain playground: There's the Mineshaft Coaster, a bobsled-style ride with hairpin turns and 360-degree corkscrews; and the

Time Bandit pirate ship, a miniature Spanish galleon that sails across the lake. Belt out a few yo-ho-hos and let the crew amuse you with corny pirate jokes.

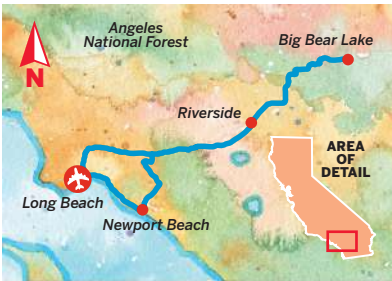
Keep the kitsch going at Castle Wood Cottages' themed lodgings. Spook yourself to sleep in the Haunted Manor or drift into dreamland in King Arthur's palace. Owner Shannon Schonland has always loved theater, so managing this imaginative lodging was a natural fit.

The next morning, wind west along Highway 18's snaking turns, reveling in the views of the valley 5,000 feet below. In 22

miles, you'll reach SkyPark at Santa's Village, a year-round playground with ice-skating and holiday activities in winter and zip-lining, rock climbing, and mountain biking the rest of the year. On warm days, head straight to Lake Arrowhead for wakeboard lessons at McKenzie Water Ski School, where the fun lies in getting wet and wild on this sparkling mountain lake. Spend the night in a chalet at UCLA Lake Arrowhead Lodge, which offers comfy beds and more ways to play: tennis, volleyball, basketball, pickleball, plus a rock wall and a ropes course.

Your fifth day closes out your loop with a trek west to Los Angeles. Zigzag downhill to San Bernardino and pop in to the First Original McDonald's Museum. Reunite with your favorite Happy Meal toy, then ignore the freeway onramps and drive old Route 66 west (Foothill Boulevard). Snap a selfie by the teepees at Rialto's Wigwam Motel and shop for "Mother Road" souvenirs at the Cucamonga Service Station.

At San Dimas, hop back on Interstate 210 and zoom west 45 miles to downtown L.A. At L.A. Live, check out the larger-than-life statues of Kobe Bryant and Wayne Gretzky outside Crypto.com Arena. Take a drum lesson from Ringo at the Grammy Museum. Sip a martini at Fleming's Steakhouse. Listen to edgy music at The Novo or belt out karaoke at the Shrine Room. Raise a toast to the City of Angels amid the glittering views at Broken Shaker, the rooftop pool bar atop Freehand Los Angeles. When your adrenaline finally wanes, drift off to sleep in this stylish hotel/hostel hybrid and dream about your next fun-filled trip.



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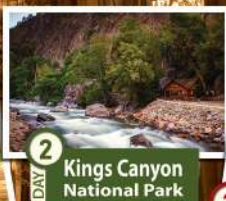


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Petco Park

San Diego Challenge Tour

San Diego has served as the training ground for top-tier athletes like Shaun White, Tony Hawk, Kawhi Leonard, and Tony Gwynn. With balmy weather and unlimited ways to play, the city inspires peak performance. Prove yourself at surfing, best your buddies at arcade games, and show off your swagger at pickleball, golf, mechanical bull-riding, and even pie-eating.

Start your trip at the San Diego Zoo in Balboa Park. First, visit the apex predators—polar bears, crocodiles, and big cats—but go see the gentle giants too, like the crowd-pleasing giraffes and elephants. Then check out Balboa’s museums: The Air and Space Museum holds artifacts from aviation superstars like Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, and Neil Armstrong. The San Diego Automotive Museum exhibits a tricked-out Cadillac that crushed the 1952 cross-country-and-back driving record. Inventor Louie Mattar

customized it with a toilet, refrigerator, and automatic oil-changer and completed the 6,320-mile trip without stopping.

Motor over to Stone Brewing World Bistro in Liberty Station for craft beer and a game of grass-court bocce, then check in to the Manchester Grand Hyatt (the 40th-floor rooms offer blue-water views). It’s a 15-minute walk to Petco Park, so arrive in time for first pitch at a Padres game. For late-night fun, spin over to the Aero Club Bar, an aviation-themed watering hole serving 1,000-plus whiskeys.

The next morning, get your thrills on the Arctic Rescue roller coaster or meet dolphins and penguins up close at SeaWorld San Diego. Then work your way north 22 miles to Encinitas, where top pickleball pros hang out at Bobby Riggs Racket and Paddle Club. Sign up for a lesson or drop in for open play, and check out the exhibits devoted to the club’s tennis star and “Battle of the Sexes” legacy.

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SCAN HERE

*to see how Opportunity
Plays in San Bernardino
County*



Mojave Narrows Regional Park



San Bernardino County Museum



Big Bear Alpine Zoo



Lake Gregory Regional Park



Calico Ghost Town

Yucaipa Regional Park



ITINERARY FOR THE COMPETITOR



LEGOLAND California



Murrieta Hot Springs

Continue 10 miles north to Carlsbad and take your kids to LEGOLAND California to build a Ferrari out of bricks, then cheer them on as their car clocks in the track's fastest time. No kids? Go find your favorite city in miniature block form in MINILAND USA. In the afternoon, challenge yourself to a session with SoCal Surf Lessons. If you can master the popup, cutback, and

bottom turn, pat yourself on the back and give your instructor a big tip. If you're more into land activities, swing your golf clubs at Carlsbad's Park Hyatt Aviara Resort, then sleep in luxury at this lush, 200-acre oasis.

On day three, drive 40 minutes north to Old Town Temecula for strolling, shopping, and old-school arcade games at Coin-Op Game Room. When evening falls, don your cattleman hat and strut your two-step on

Temecula Stampede's 4,000-square-foot dance floor, then go for broke with a wild ride on the mechanical bull. Afterward, soak sore muscles at Murrieta Hot Springs Resort, six miles north. Reopened in 2024 after a 30-year closure, the resort has 50 geothermally heated mineral-water pools and a 174-room hotel.

In the morning, wind 70 miles southeast to the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Stop along the rural Highway 79 to test your bravery with a glider flight in Warner Springs. Request the

"aerobic" tour, and Sky Sailing's trained pilots will flip your world upside-down.

Get reacquainted with gravity in Borrego Springs. Drive around to view Ricardo Breceda's menagerie of life-sized metal sculptures hidden in plain sight across three square miles of desert. Give yourself bonus points if you find all 130 of the whimsical pieces.

In the afternoon, ascend Banner Grade's snaking asphalt ribbon to Julian for some competitive apple-pie eating. Purchase a slice at each of this mountain town's three bakeries—Moms Pie House, Apple Alley, Julian Pie Company—then crown the winner. Sleep at the Julian Gold Rush Hotel, an 1890s historic landmark on the main drag.

Rise early on your fifth day to hike up Cuyamaca Peak, San Diego County's second-highest summit at 6,515 feet. Push yourself to beat your companions to the top, then hop back in the car and roll to El Cajon, less than an hour away. Pull in to Sky Combat Ace for a high-stakes aerial competition—you'll fly a plane in a simulated dogfight. Battle against your friends or an instructor, and the loser's plane will finish in a trail of "smoke."

Your final stop is at Coin Haus in La Mesa. You get to choose from 50 taps at this pour-your-own brew pub, so salute all of your San Diego adventures with a round of beer pong, or settle in with Mario Kart, NBA Jam, and other 1990s arcade favorites. You're now only 30 minutes from San Diego's airport, so add up this trip's scorecard. No matter how you look at it, you won.



AREA OF DETAIL

Temecula

Carlsbad

Julian

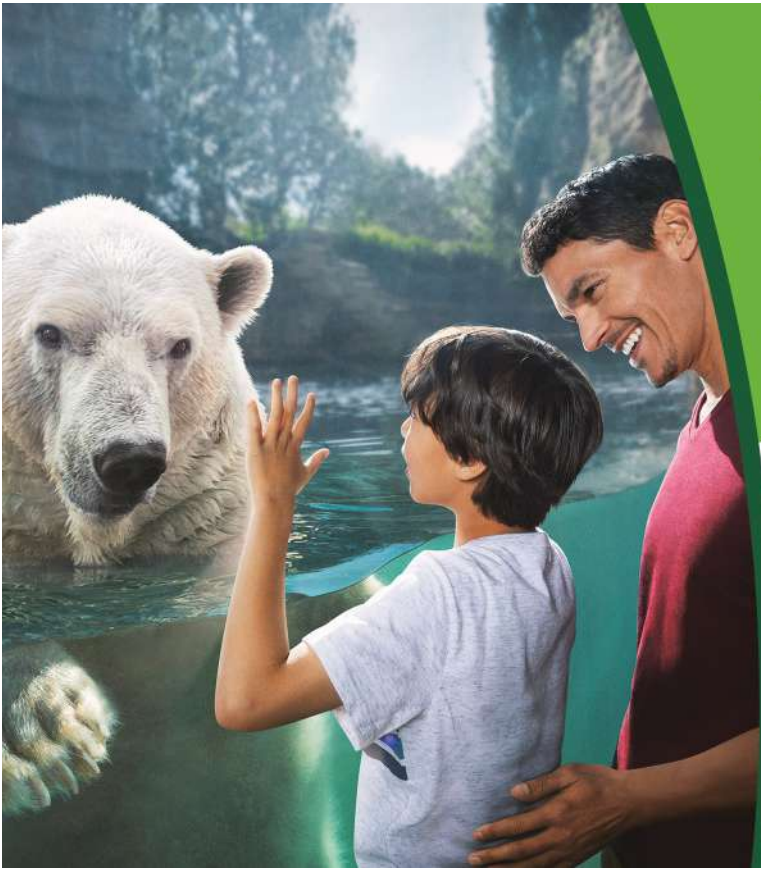
San Diego

N

Borrego Springs



SCORE A SCULPTURE COMMISSION YOUR OWN RICARDO BRECEDA SCULPTURE—OR SHOP HIS LATEST WORKS—AT THE ARTIST'S STUDIO IN AGUANGA. **WESTERN WEAR** DIDN'T PACK COWBOY BOOTS FOR LINE DANCING? TEMECULA'S BOOT BARN HAS THEM, PLUS COOL WESTERN DUDS LIKE HATS AND BELT BUCKLES.



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Hollywood Bowl

Where do you live?

Los Angeles.

Why there?

It's where *The Jennifer Hudson Show* is filmed.

Who or what is your greatest California love?

The Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. That venue is the greatest venue ever. And my teams: I've adopted the Lakers and the Clippers as my home teams. But it's kind of hard when they play the Bulls because I'm from Chicago, so then I've got to cheer for both.

What is the biggest misperception about Californians?

People tend to think that all Californians are all the same. There is such diversity here.

What is the stereotype that most holds true?

The weather is very consistent. The sun loves California.

What is your favorite Golden State splurge?

I'd say it's a shopping spree. Jennifer is going to shop down.

Time for a road trip—where are you going?

San Diego! Driving is freedom. I like to drive in the daytime so you can see. You need to see how beautiful California is. That alone is part of the trip. I also like snacks. I love El Pollo Loco. Then I like to eat at Eddie V's steakhouse in La Jolla.

If you could decree an official state culinary experience, what would it be?

I love tacos and so does my son. He went through this taco kick where he has had 20 tacos a day. We love Frida Mexican Cuisine in Beverly Hills.

What is your favorite way to play in California?

I've gone whale watching and skiing. Next, I want to go, like, rock climbing. That's something on my list because I love *looking* at the mountains, but I want to become a part of it.

Where would you go for the ultimate shopping spree in California?

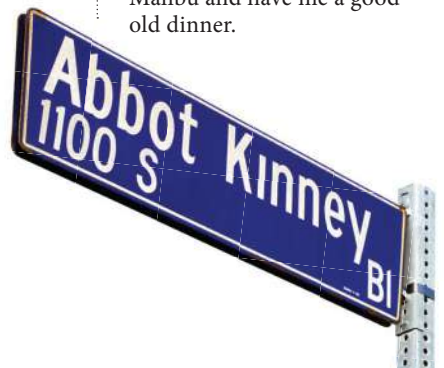
Rodeo Drive, The Grove, Malibu, and Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Venice.

Best California song?

Sheryl Crow, "Soak Up the Sun." Everything to me has a song and that is the song of what California makes me feel like, what California is.

How would your California dream day unfold?

I could wake up at home—or at one my favorite hotels in San Diego or Santa Barbara—to the beautiful sun shining. I love seeing the hummingbirds and the water. That's what made me fall in love even more with California. Maybe a bike ride. I'd probably get a massage, do some shopping, and then go to Nobu in Malibu and have me a good old dinner.



FROM TOP: COURTESY JENNIFER HUDSON; KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT LANDAU/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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