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Venice Beach



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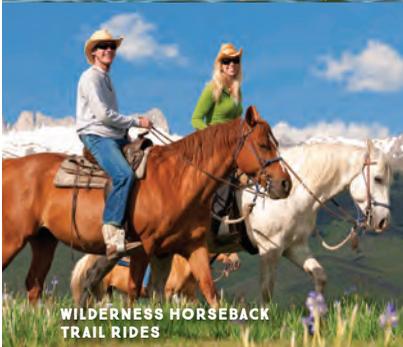
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GHOST TOWN



MINARET LAKE,
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ALONG JUNE LAKE LOOP

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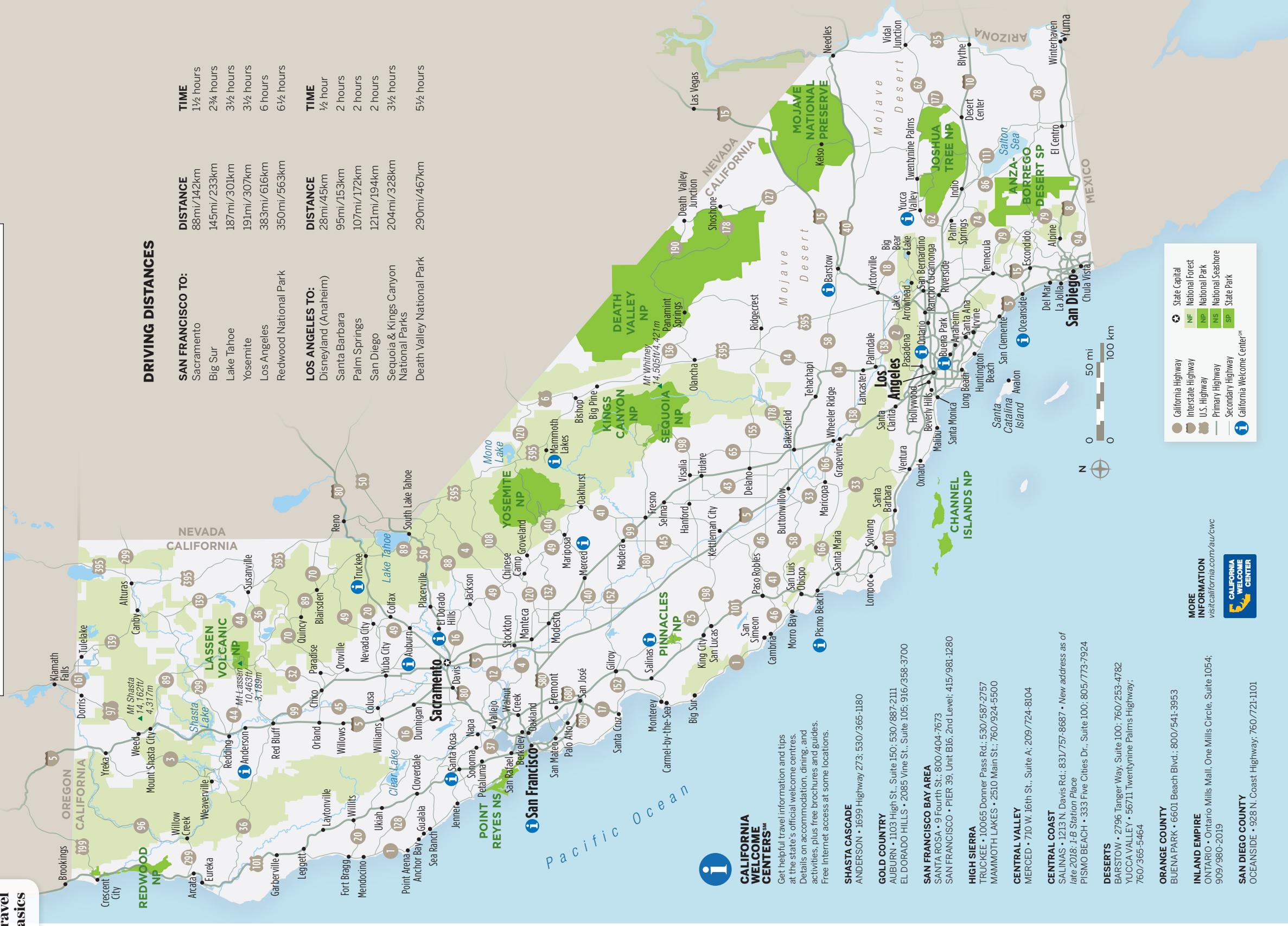


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VISIT EASTERN SIERRA

CALIFORNIA STATE MAP



DRIVING DISTANCES

SAN FRANCISCO TO:	DISTANCE	TIME
Sacramento	88mi/142km	1½ hours
Big Sur	145mi/233km	2¾ hours
Lake Tahoe	187mi/301km	3½ hours
Yosemite	191mi/307km	3½ hours
Los Angeles	383mi/616km	6 hours
Redwood National Park	350mi/563km	6½ hours

LOS ANGELES TO:	DISTANCE	TIME
Disneyland (Anaheim)	28mi/45km	½ hour
Santa Barbara	95mi/153km	2 hours
Palm Springs	107mi/172km	2 hours
San Diego	121mi/194km	2 hours
Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks	204mi/328km	3½ hours
Death Valley National Park	290mi/467km	5½ hours



CALIFORNIA WELCOME CENTERS™

Get helpful travel information and tips at the state's official welcome centres. Details on accommodation, dining, and activities, plus free brochures and guides. Free internet access at some locations.

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State Capital
 National Forest
 National Park
 National Seashore
 State Park

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Find out what's required for travel to the U.S. from your country before you make travel plans. In general, each visitor (including infants) must have a passport valid for at least six months past the expected return date. The Visa Waiver Program allows visitors from some countries to enter the U.S. without a visa; for details and an online application, visit the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta). If you live in a country that is not covered by the waiver programme, get details on what is required from the U.S. consulate or embassy in your home country (locations at usembassy.gov).

GETTING AROUND

California, the third largest state in the U.S., takes time to explore. Driving from California's northern end to where it meets Mexico—a distance of roughly 800 miles (1,287 kilometres)—takes nearly 12 hours without traffic. Even so, it can be remarkably easy to get around California via its excellent network of interstate and state roads and highways. Petrol stations are generally easy to find along major routes.

HIRING CARS & DRIVING TIPS Reputable car hire agencies usually have offices at airports, major hotels, and other central locations in major cities. In most cases, the person hiring a vehicle must be at least 25 years old. Drivers ages 21 to 24 may be able to hire a car for a higher fee; check with individual companies. Drivers must have a valid driver's licence, a passport, and a major credit card. A valid international driver's licence, issued by your country, may also be required; check with the car agency when you reserve your car. Extras, such as GPS devices and child safety seats, required for children under age 8 or under 4 feet 9 inches (1.45 metres), are generally available from reputable companies and should be reserved in advance. Remember: Driving is on the right, passing on the left. Download a free California Driver Handbook (dmv.ca.gov) to review all the rules. For current road conditions on major routes, visit the Caltrans website (dot.ca.gov/cgi-bin/roads.cgi).

RECREATIONAL VEHICLES Hiring an RV or caravan can be a fun way to explore. RVs are welcome at many state parks, beaches, and recreation areas (check parks.ca.gov) and at national parks (details at nps.gov). Also try private campgrounds, like KOA (koa.com/rv-sites); more locations at camp-california.com. Find reputable vehicles at Cruise America (cruiseamerica.com) and El Monte RV (elmonterv.com).

AIRPORTS & TRANSPORT Given California's size, air travel between gateway cities can be a good way to get around. Look for affordable airfares on Alaska Airlines (alaskaair.com), Delta (delta.com), JetBlue (jetblue.com), Southwest (southwest.com), United (united.com), and Virgin America (virginamerica.com). Also consider travelling by Amtrak train (amtrak.com); the Pacific Surfliner, Capitol Corridor, and Coast Starlight routes are particularly scenic. Gateway airports include **San Francisco**: San Francisco International (SFO), Oakland International (OAK), and Mineta San José International (SJC). **Los Angeles**: Los Angeles International (LAX), John Wayne Airport, Orange County (SNA), Ontario International (ONT). **San Diego**: San Diego International (SAN). Mass transport (rail, subway, bus) essentials: Los Angeles (metro.net) and San Francisco (sfmta.org) both have subway networks and commuter light-rail. Metrolink serves much of

Southern California (metrolinktrains.com); BART (bart.gov) and Caltrain (caltrain.com) connect San Francisco-area towns. San José, Sacramento, and San Diego also have light-rail and/or commuter rail lines. For bus travel around the state, try Greyhound Lines (greyhound.com).

WEATHER

Much of California enjoys a Mediterranean climate, with long, warm summers and short, wet winters. In general, temperatures range from 8° C to 21° C (46° F to 70° F) in San Francisco and roughly 10° C to 27° C (50° F to 80° F) in Los Angeles and San Diego, though temperatures can vary widely. Southern California enjoys hot, dry summers, while San Francisco gets a trademark blanket of cool marine fog, usually from June through August. Many Californians think September and October are the best months, with warm, calm days across the whole state. Ocean water tends to be warmest then, too, though it's never really warm. Southern California ocean temperatures range from about 13° C to 20° C (55° F to 68° F), while Northern California ranges from 10° C to 14° C (50° F to 57° F).

MONEY & TIPPING

The easiest way to convert money is via automated teller machines (ATMs), which are widely available. Some financial institutions in your home country may have relationships with California banks, offering reduced or no exchange rates or other fees, so check in advance for the best options. Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) are accepted at most locations—except at farmers markets and other special events, where it's best to bring cash. Tipping is expected, with 15 to 20 percent of the total for meals and spa services, and a few extra dollars for cab drivers, porters, and maids. If you have an excellent tour guide, a generous tip is customary and always appreciated.

SMOKING RULES

Smoking is prohibited indoors in public buildings—including restaurants, bars, and many casinos—and at national and state beaches and parks. If you're not sure, ask, as violators can be fined. Accommodations that allow smoking usually have designated smoking/nonsmoking rooms; request them when you make your booking.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

On the following public holidays, state and local government services and offices, banks, schools, and workplaces generally close. Shops, restaurants, and attractions are often open, but museums may close (check in advance).

1 January	New Year's Day
January on the 3rd Monday	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February on the 3rd Monday	U.S. Presidents' Day
May on the last Monday	Memorial Day
4 July	Independence Day
September on the 1st Monday	Labour Day
October on the 2nd Monday	Columbus Day
11 November	Veterans Day
November on the 4th Thursday	Thanksgiving
25 December	Christmas Day



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State Map

Karen Minot Illustration

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San Francisco

California's Gateways

Here's what you need to know about the state's urban hubs

While California is celebrated for its amazing range of natural environments, the state's vibrant urban centres are every bit as varied as the landscape itself. From the sophisticated and romantic San Francisco to the laid-back, beachy San Diego, learn what makes each of these hubs unique.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

Set on a peninsula between its namesake bay and the Pacific Ocean, San Francisco is famous for its hills, Victorian mansions, and the iconic Golden Gate Bridge.

From the Summer of Love to today's technology boom, San Francisco has long attracted dreamers—giving the city its creative spirit. Though compact in size, it's a city of distinctive

neighbourhoods. North Beach, the historic Italian district, bumps up against bustling Chinatown—the largest outside Asia. Traditionally the heart of the city's Latino community, the Mission District has emerged as a top dining neighbourhood, while the Castro District is the epicentre of the LGBTQ scene.

Thanks to its ethnic diversity and acclaimed chefs, San Francisco is also a terrific eating town, whether you're looking for Michelin-starred restaurants or family-run spots. The Ferry Building Marketplace along the Embarcadero is packed with local favourites and merchants selling artisanal products. If you've indulged a bit, walk it off along the Embarcadero to two popular spots: Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 39.

San Francisco is also a city of museums and parks. Gorgeous Golden Gate Park is home to such

San Francisco's Ferry Building Marketplace is packed with local favourites.

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Los Angeles combines glamour and culture with a remarkable natural setting.

➔ **MORE INFORMATION**
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Santa Monica Pier



Los Angeles

architectural landmarks as the California Academy of Sciences, famous for its landscaped "living roof."

You could stay busy without leaving San Francisco, but the East Bay cities beckon with their own urban styles and more outstanding restaurants. Berkeley is home to Chez Panisse, famous for launching the farm-to-table movement, while Oakland offers an emerging culinary scene with an artsy edge. South of the city is San Jose, the urban centre of Silicon Valley's tech world.

Cross the Golden Gate Bridge north into Marin County to stroll through cathedral-like stands of redwoods in Muir Woods National Monument and hike along the unspoiled coastline of Point Reyes National Seashore. Or drive south on Highway 1 to reach the classic beach town of Santa Cruz, a surfing hotspot (despite the chilly water).

San Francisco is an ideal starting point for destinations in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, including Yosemite National Park and Lake Tahoe. And wine lovers have endless destinations to discover, from the fabled grape-growing regions of Napa Valley and Sonoma County north of the city to the Livermore Valley less than an hour to the east.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Stretching from the edge of the Pacific to the desert, Los Angeles combines glamour and culture with a remarkable natural setting to create one of the world's most

unforgettable metropolitan areas.

The film industry helped put Los Angeles on the map, and no visit here is complete without a trip to Hollywood to see landmarks like the TCL Chinese Theatre, which features foot- and hand-prints of screen legends. Or go behind the scenes to see how movies are made at Universal Studios Hollywood and on the VIP tour at Warner Brothers. While there are no guarantees that you'll spot a celeb, you might just get lucky on shopping streets such as luxe Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills and mellow Montana Avenue in Santa Monica.

Come to Downtown L.A. for performances in the shimmering Walt Disney Concert Hall, designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry, and to see the prominent collection of contemporary art at the Broad—its landmark building is notable for a graceful, perforated facade.

The region's coastline has many moods, from the beach volleyball and surfing in Manhattan Beach to the eccentric scene at Venice Beach and the amusement park fun on the Santa Monica Pier. Continue up the coast to celebrity hotspot Malibu to find wilder beaches—as well as outstanding hiking in the canyons of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the world's largest urban national park.

From L.A., it's also easy to experience the diversity of California. Head north to immerse yourself in the romance of Mediterranean-style Santa Barbara

Orange County is a prime destination for anyone who loves the ocean.

and to taste your way through the wine regions of the Central Coast. Or go east to explore the rugged mountains of the Inland Empire and the surreal desert landscapes of Joshua Tree National Park—one of three desert national parks within a half-day drive of Los Angeles.

ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County, nicknamed the O.C., has evolved from a suburban frontier into an exciting metropolitan area distinct in character from neighbouring Los Angeles and San Diego counties. Most travellers come to the O.C. to visit Disneyland Resort in Anaheim—only to discover that there’s more to the county than the famous Mickey Mouse. Snack your way through the Packing House, a multistorey food hall, or experience a true American pastime by watching a baseball game at Angel Stadium.

Twenty-five minutes away from Disneyland, in Costa Mesa, South Coast Plaza is a world-class shopping destination adjacent to the renowned Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

With 42 miles (68km) of exquisite coastline, Orange County is a prime destination for anyone who loves the ocean. For a taste of the surfing life, browse Huntington Beach’s surf shops—and consider catching a wave yourself in this town dubbed “Surf City U.S.A.” Take a walk around posh Newport Beach to see ocean-going yachts, or visit the galleries of Laguna Beach, one of California’s leading artist communities.

Elegant yet relaxed oceanfront resorts pamper guests with sumptuous spa treatments and fine dining. The O.C. is also a haven for golfers: The county earned a place on *Golf Digest*’s list of the world’s 50 greatest golf destinations.

You’ll also want to explore the county’s inland cities. Buena Park is home to the famous Knott’s Berry Farm theme park and the jousting matches at Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament. Visit diverse Santa Ana for authentic Mexican cuisine and the Bowers Museum, which celebrates cultures from around the globe.

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Disneyland Resort

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Balboa Park

San Diego has built a reputation as the country's leading craft beer city.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Although most famous for 70 miles (113km) of beaches, near-perfect weather, and an incomparable collection of major attractions, San Diego is much more than a tourist town.

Lushly landscaped with historic gardens, Balboa Park—North America's largest urban cultural park—is the city's heart and soul. Built for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, the ornate Spanish Revival buildings house various museums. Also in Balboa, the San Diego Zoo ranks with the world's best, thanks to the opportunity to see such rare animals as giant pandas.

Several of San Diego's most intriguing neighbourhoods surround the park. Filled with restaurants and bars, Hillcrest is the centre of the city's LGBTQ community. San Diego has built a reputation as a leading craft beer city, and you'll find outstanding brews in the hip North Park neighbourhood as well as along the Hops Highway connecting Escondido to Oceanside.

Closer to the bay, the Gaslamp Quarter is home to the city's dynamic nightlife, while Little Italy features not only classic pizza and pasta joints, but also contemporary spots helmed by celebrity chefs.

Given San Diego's beaches, plus two bays, inevitably you'll spend

time along the water. Take the ferry or bridge to Coronado, home to the region's grandest lodging landmark, Hotel del Coronado. Or on the bayfront, discover San Diego's rich naval history as you tour the USS Midway Museum or the Maritime Museum of San Diego. The calm Mission Bay is a recreational haven and home to SeaWorld San Diego.

You'll also want to explore the coastal towns north of the city. Wander the galleries and oceanfront dining options of upscale La Jolla, or relax on the gorgeous stretch of beach in Del Mar, another posh enclave. Carlsbad draws families to the imagination-fuelling LEGOLAND California.

Head inland to Escondido for the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, which offers up-close encounters with such majestic animals as cheetahs. In the mountains, the gold-mining town of Julian is renowned for its apple pie. Farther east but still less than two hours from the coast, the starkly beautiful Anza-Borrego Desert State Park comes alive in the spring with colourful wildflowers. And from Anza-Borrego, it's easy to reach the Coachella Valley and the stylish desert resorts of Palm Springs. □

➔ **MORE INFORMATION**
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National and State Parks

Discover the magic of California's parks, including everything from iconic sights to hidden gems

California's nine national parks boast an astonishing variety of scenery—from Yosemite's granite domes to Redwood's record-breaking trees and Death Valley's vast desert. It would take a lifetime to see it all, so narrow your options by choosing your favourite terrains. Sun-drenched desert? Wild coast? Alpine summits? The national parks have all that. But don't limit yourself to just the big names—California's 270-plus state parks offer even more diversity and just as much beauty.

ICONIC NATIONAL PARKS

Starting at California's northern tip, here's what to see:

The trees at **Redwood National Park** are some of the tallest on the planet, as high as 35-storey buildings. Wander through Tall Trees Grove or drive Howland Hill Road to see the 300-foot (91 metres tall) behemoths. At **Lassen Volcanic National Park**, hike to the summit of Lassen Peak's dormant volcano or explore Bumpass Hell's otherworldly volcanic features—including steaming sulphur vents, mudpots, and boiling thermal pools.

Near San Francisco, **Point Reyes National Seashore** protects more than 1,500 animal and plant species in a watery maze of beaches, lagoons, estuaries, and ponds. Watch grey whales fluke near Chimney Rock and waves crash at Point Reyes Lighthouse. Further south and east, you'll find an iconic view around nearly every corner at **Yosemite National Park**. Tour Yosemite Valley's spectacular canyon, watch rock climbers scale El Capitan's sheer cliffs, and feel the awe at Glacier Point's postcard-perfect vista.

Yosemite is known for its granite cliffs, towering waterfalls, and giant sequoias.

PER BREHAGEN/GETTY IMAGES

MATE STENDILO/GETTY IMAGES

Stop and see the General Sherman, the largest tree in the world, at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks.

ranges, below-sea-level salt flats, and colourful sandstone canyons. Climb the Mesquite Flat sand dunes at dawn, play a round of golf at the world's lowest-elevation golf course, then watch the sun set over Zabriskie Point's badlands. For more unique desert landscapes, check out **Joshua Tree National Park**, home to a whimsical mosaic of boulders and buttresses, gold mining ruins, and desert plains dotted with quirky Joshua trees. Wander trails through the Wonderland of Rocks and marvel at cactus and other high-desert flora.

Check each park's website for information about free public transportation options.

MUST-SEE STATE PARKS

Some of California's greatest wonders are found in its state parks: In Southern California, beachcomb

on miles of golden sand or hike the coastal hills of **Crystal Cove State Park** in Laguna Beach. Squeeze your way through a slot canyon or visit a leafy palm oasis at **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**. Along the central coast, take in Big Sur's craggy coastline and Caribbean-blue waters at **Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park**, and watch more than 3,000 elephant seals crowd the beaches at **Año Nuevo State Park**.

In California's northern reaches, immerse yourself in Lake Tahoe's blue expanse at **D.L. Bliss State Park** and watch massive Roosevelt elk graze at **Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park**. Take it back to the Gold Rush era at **Columbia State Historic Park** near Sonora, where you can pan for gold, ride in a century-old stagecoach, and visit shops and saloons. 📍





Boutique finds



South Coast Plaza

Shopping Spree

Visit these standout destinations for posh apparel, eclectic gifts, and bargain finds

W

ith famous luxury-shopping destinations such as Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills,

boutique-filled neighbourhoods like Fillmore Street in San Francisco, and outlet malls spanning the state, California is known for some of the best shopping in the country. From a private suite to a world-famous flea market, here's where to buy your personal souvenirs in the Golden State.

LUXURY FINDS

Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills has long been the backdrop for films, including *Pretty Woman* and *Clueless*. The beloved shopping

destination, featuring a European-style alley on a cobblestone street, includes notable brands like Versace and Tiffany & Co. Drive west to browse Santa Monica's outdoor **Third Street Promenade**, lined with designer stores, street performers, and an expansive dining deck. Nearby, at the recently refreshed **Westfield Century City**, go for the ultimate shopping experience in the Private Suite: A secret entrance grants you your own fitting-room lounge with back-door access to your favourite stores.

Further south, in Costa Mesa, head to **South Coast Plaza**—the largest mall on the West Coast—for a plethora of shopping and dining options and visitor-friendly

amenities, including translation services. In Northern California, wander the designer boutiques and artisanal shops of **Santana Row** in San Jose. Shop with city views at San Francisco's **Union Square**, which includes upscale department stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus. Here, don't miss afternoon tea at the Rotunda, an atrium-like restaurant with stained-glass ceilings. Walk a few blocks to **Westfield San Francisco Centre**, where a concierge can offer gift suggestions from merchants such as Aritzia and Atelier Cologne. Play then stay in downtown Napa at **First Street Napa**, which features more than 45 upscale stores and a luxury boutique property, Archer Hotel.

South Coast Plaza offers stylists to personalise your shopping experience.

MINT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

COURTESY OF SOUTH COAST PLAZA

NOTABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

In Palm Springs, take a stroll along the tree-lined main drag, **Palm Canyon Drive**, for a slew of mid-century modern furniture shops, antique stores, and colourful clothing boutiques such as Trina Turk. Go west to Los Angeles and cruise Venice Beach's thoroughfare, **Abbot Kinney Boulevard**, for an array of merchants spanning stationery studios, art galleries, and bohemian chic vintage troves.

In the Bay Area, check out idyllic **Fillmore Street**, in San Francisco's Pacific Heights neighbourhood, for specialty shoe stores, day spas, and apothecary items; or cross the Golden Gate Bridge and venture to Mill Valley's woody **Throckmorton Avenue** for one-of-a-kind hostess gifts and culinary stores.

Three hours north, in the quiet seaside town of Mendocino, go to **North Main Street** to browse

bookstores, clothing boutiques, and floral ateliers. Further east near Lake Tahoe, in **historic downtown Truckee**, find mountain-inspired clothing and gear and handmade gift items by local artists.

BARGAIN BUYS

For factory prices on designer duds—including Theory, Ted Baker London, and Polo Ralph Lauren—head to the **Camarillo Premium Outlets** in Ventura County. Off Highway 10 on the way to Palm Springs, go bargain hunting at the outdoor, Mediterranean-style **Cabazon Outlets**, or find more than 200 big-name stores at **Ontario Mills** in San Bernardino County. For an eclectic mix of goods, take a trip to Pasadena's **Rose Bowl Flea Market and Market Place**—one of the most famous of its kind, featuring more than 2,500 vendors inside the 90,000-seat stadium (held the second Sunday of every month). 📍

Culinary Paradise

Taste your way through California's diverse flavours and specialties

California has long been lauded as an epicurean wonderland. Impeccable produce, ingenious chefs, and incredible diversity make the Golden State one of the world's premier culinary destinations. Clusters of Michelin-starred restaurants surround the urban centres of San Francisco

just offshore. Look for Dungeness crab and spot prawns when they're in season and Pacific rockfish, sturgeon, and freshly caught oysters year-round. Your daily catch is best enjoyed with an ocean view. Halfway between Santa Barbara and Monterey, **Windows on the Water** serves sustainable seafood with the stunning backdrop of Morro Bay. Try **Santa Barbara Shellfish Company** on the tip of the 2,000-foot (610m) Stearns Wharf or modern Mexican fare at **Coasterra** on San Diego's Harbor Island. For a get-your-sleeves-wet experience, head 60 miles (97km) north of San Francisco to **Hog Island Oyster Co.** in Marshall, where you can shoot briny mollusks straight from the surf.

DESTINATION RESTAURANTS

Some dinners are a good way to cap off a day of sightseeing—and other dinners are worth building an entire vacation around. California has an ever-increasing number of establishments serving multicourse meals that just might change your life. Part restaurant, part full-body experience, **Vespertine** in Los Angeles encourages diners to rethink the meaning of the word "meal," thanks to carefully curated scents, service, and ambiance. Across town, celebrity chef David Chang recently opened his first West Coast venture, **Majordomo**, which is firmly in the running as the best new restaurant in the country. San Francisco is home to a number of over-the-top delights. For outstanding sushi, try the chef's tasting at either **Hashiri** or **Omakase** (both fly in fresh fish

and Los Angeles—both deserving of a culinary voyage on their own—but every region in the state serves up unique delights. From the oaky heat of Santa Maria-style barbecue to the tangy crunch of San Diego's fish tacos, here's a sampling of California's signature culinary experiences.

WATERFRONT WONDERS

California boasts more than 3,400 miles (5,472km) of coastline, and it's rife with delicious treasures



Taco Maria

Vespertine in Los Angeles encourages diners to rethink the meaning of the word "meal".



Lazy Bear

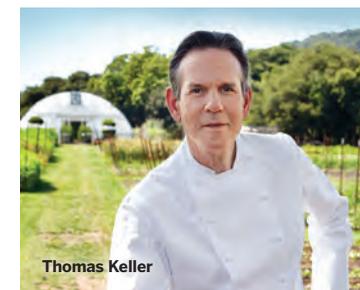
from Tokyo each day). Architectural plating, hyper-seasonal ingredients, and creative pairings mark the menus at **Saison** and **Atelier Crenn**. At former pop-up **Lazy Bear**, dining feels like an intimate luxury dinner party. In Napa Valley, the **French Laundry** by Thomas Keller holds the gold standard for seasonal cuisine and impeccable service. Looking for something more personalised? The nearby **Restaurant at Meadowood** creates a custom tasting menu based on your unique desires.

FARM-TO-FORK

A vibrant agricultural industry creates an unparalleled palette for California's chefs. **Chez Panisse** in Berkeley—across the bay from San Francisco—is often credited as the initiator of the farm-to-table movement thanks to its pioneer chef Alice Waters. Diners looking to go one step further can enjoy a meal served on a farm: **Campovida** in Hopland (40 miles [64km] north of Santa Rosa), **Full Belly Farm** in Capay Valley (35 miles [56km] northwest of Sacramento), and **Outstanding in the Field** (multiple locations across the state) offer intimate, fresh-air experiences.

GLOBAL CUISINE, REIMAGINED

Cultural diversity is a cornerstone of California life—and one that's reflected in its food. Creative culinary minds continue to put Cali spins on international cuisine. Fortune cookies, mai tais, sushi burritos, and churro ice cream sandwiches all originated in the Golden State. For elevated fusion, try the pork dumpling served with Monterey squid at **Mister Jiu's** in San Francisco, or the black cod and kumquat taco at **Taco María** in Costa Mesa. Keep an eye out for Mexican, Korean, Japanese, French, and Chinese influences across the entire state—no matter where you go in California, you're sure to enjoy unforgettable meals. 🍴



Thomas Keller

A vibrant agricultural industry creates an unparalleled palate for chefs.

Snow Adventures

Experience big snow and big fun at these inviting mountain resorts

bluebird skies, mountains dusted with fresh powder, fir trees crowned in white—these are the hallmarks of a California snow vacation. Embrace winter's bounty at dozens of California ski and snowboard parks, from the epic slopes of Squaw Valley and Heavenly to more intimate alpine wonderlands like June Mountain, Yosemite, and Snow Summit. California's got a hill for everybody—luxury destination resorts, under-the-radar gems, and everything in between—so wax your sticks, buckle up your boots, and go.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Destination skiers can't resist the lure of North Lake Tahoe's **Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows**, a massive resort that hosted the 1960 Winter Olympics. Steep, fast chutes challenge advanced skiers while a swanky base village, open-air skating rink, snow-tubing course, and kid-size snowmobiles offer non-vertical alternatives. There's even a

3.2-mile (5.1km) lit-up run for night skiing. A ticket to Squaw includes access to its sister resort Alpine Meadows, so you can get all the terrain you crave, plus easy access to hot toddies in multiple lodges.

On top of nearby Donner Summit, charming **Sugar Bowl** has long and broad runs, top-notch grooming, and the European-style Hotel at Sugar Bowl, a 1930s-era inn accessed by gondola. At **Northstar California**, intermediates own the mountain with 60 percent of the runs marked with blue squares. Add a chic village, luxury resort The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe, plus an ice-skating rink and cross-country trails, and you have everything you need for a well-rounded snow day.

Tahoe's south shore also has serious credentials: **Kirkwood** typically gets California's deepest snowpack, with annual snowfall of more than 500 inches (1,270cm), while **Heavenly Ski Resort** is crowned by the highest mountain of any Tahoe ski resort (10,067 feet [3,068m]), plus a vibrant village and plush lodgings. If skiing on high-

altitude powder isn't your thing, ride Heavenly's gondola 2.4 miles (3.9km) to the top—the Lake Tahoe views will take your breath away.

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Yosemite Ski & Snowboard Area is California's oldest ski resort, with gentle slopes for beginners and a snow-tubing hill for the kids. It's also the starting point for cross-country ski and snowshoe treks along Glacier Point Road. On the Sierras' steep eastern side, **Mammoth Mountain Ski Area** has bragging rights: an average 400 inches (1,016cm) of snow, 300 days of sunshine per year, and a ski season that usually lasts well into summer. Ride the glass-panelled gondola to Mammoth's 11,053-foot (3,369m) summit, then ski, do some sightseeing, or have lunch at the Eleven53 Café. For a laid-back ski day, go to **June Mountain Ski Area**, a family-friendly resort with

a quaint ski village and plenty of deep snow. Cross-country skiers and snowshoers head to **Tamarack Lodge** in Mammoth Lakes Basin for groomed tracks, clinics, races, and ski tours, plus the chance to stay in a cosy cabin on Twin Lakes' shore.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

East of Los Angeles, palm trees give way to pine trees at Big Bear Lake. **Bear Mountain** offers freestyle tricksters more than 150 jumps, multiple terrain parks, and a massive in-ground superpipe. More traditional **Snow Summit** attracts Southern Californians to its long groomer runs and weekend nighttime skiing. Wrightwood's **Mountain High Ski Resort** is one of the oldest in the country, welcoming skiers since 1937, and Running Springs' **Snow Valley Mountain Resort** offers an economical choice for family skiing, sledding, and snow play. 

California ski resorts are known for big snow and sunny days.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort

COURTESY OF KIRKWOOD MOUNTAIN RESORT



Knott's Berry Farm



Universal Studios Hollywood

Theme Park Fun

Get ready for the ultimate family adventure at these best-in-class parks

theme parks have dotted the California landscape since the late 1800s, and it's no surprise that they remain so popular today. From Disneyland Resort in Anaheim to Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo, here's what to explore at some of the Golden State's most popular theme parks.

CLASSIC AMUSEMENT

Opened in 1920, **Knott's Berry Farm** is known as the oldest theme park in California. In 2018, the park



LEGOLAND California

launched HangTime, the first and only dive coaster in the state, with a steep, 96-degree vertical drop. Other highlights include the Old West-inspired Timber Mountain Log Ride, set along a twisty waterway, with a designated area for learning to pan for gold.

The iconic **Disneyland Resort** in Anaheim is divided into eight themed lands, including Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, and Frontierland. Take in the scenery aboard the original Disneyland Railroad, or go "around the world" on a boat ride choreographed to music on the attraction

It's a Small World. At night, marvel at light projections and a fireworks show, or follow your favourite characters from *The Incredibles* and *Finding Nemo* at Pixar Pier (formerly Paradise Pier). Across from Disneyland Park, daredevils can explore seven diverse lands at **Disney California Adventure Park**. In Hollywood Land, join Rocket Raccoon on the thrilling Guardians of the Galaxy—Mission: BREAKOUT!

STARS AND THRILLS

At **Universal Studios Hollywood**, don't miss the magical fun at The Wizarding World of Harry Potter. Explore the Hello Kitty Animation Studio Store for themed stationery and freshly baked cupcakes, then check out Kung Fu Panda: The Emperor's Quest attraction at the DreamWorks Theatre, replete with

swivelling seats for 180-degree views of surging rapids and river pirates.

For thrill-seekers, **Six Flags Magic Mountain** in Valencia now boasts the world's tallest pendulum ride, CraZanity, soaring 17 storeys in the air at up to 75 miles (121km) per hour. In Santa Clara (about 55 miles [89km] south of San Francisco), don't miss RailBlazer—an eight-passenger train with steep turns, three inversions, and a zero-gravity roll—at **California's Great America**.

ANIMALS AND MORE

At **LEGOLAND California**, in Carlsbad, about 35 miles (56km) north of San Diego, choose from more than 50 rides, shows, and attractions. Don't miss the aquarium, Sea Life (next door to LEGOLAND), with blacktip reef sharks, octopi, and seahorses, plus 16 interactive zones, including a tide-pool touch. Or embark on a real-life submarine on the LEGO City: Deep Sea Adventure ride—you'll explore a shipwreck and search for gems and lost LEGO treasure, with the help of an onboard touchscreen.

Nearby in Escondido, guests can go on a safari tour through the natural habitats of the expansive

San Diego Zoo Safari Park. For an up-close look at elephants, giant pandas, and rare pangolins, venture further south to the world-class **San Diego Zoo**. In 2017, the park unveiled a new, eight-acre (3.2ha) Africa Rocks exhibit, including nesting caves for penguins and a massive swimming pool for critters that's designed to mimic the ocean. At **SeaWorld San Diego**, dare to brave the tallest, fastest ride in town—the Electric Eel Roller Coaster. On the loopy attraction with upside-down views of Mission Bay, expect to soar 150 feet (46m) at speeds of more than 60 miles (97km) per hour. If a relaxing afternoon in the water sounds more appealing, float on an inner tube down a river lined with flamingos—or splash in one of the largest wave pools in SoCal at SeaWorld's water park, **Aquatica**. 📍

Six Flags Magic Mountain now boasts the world's tallest pendulum ride, CraZanity.

4

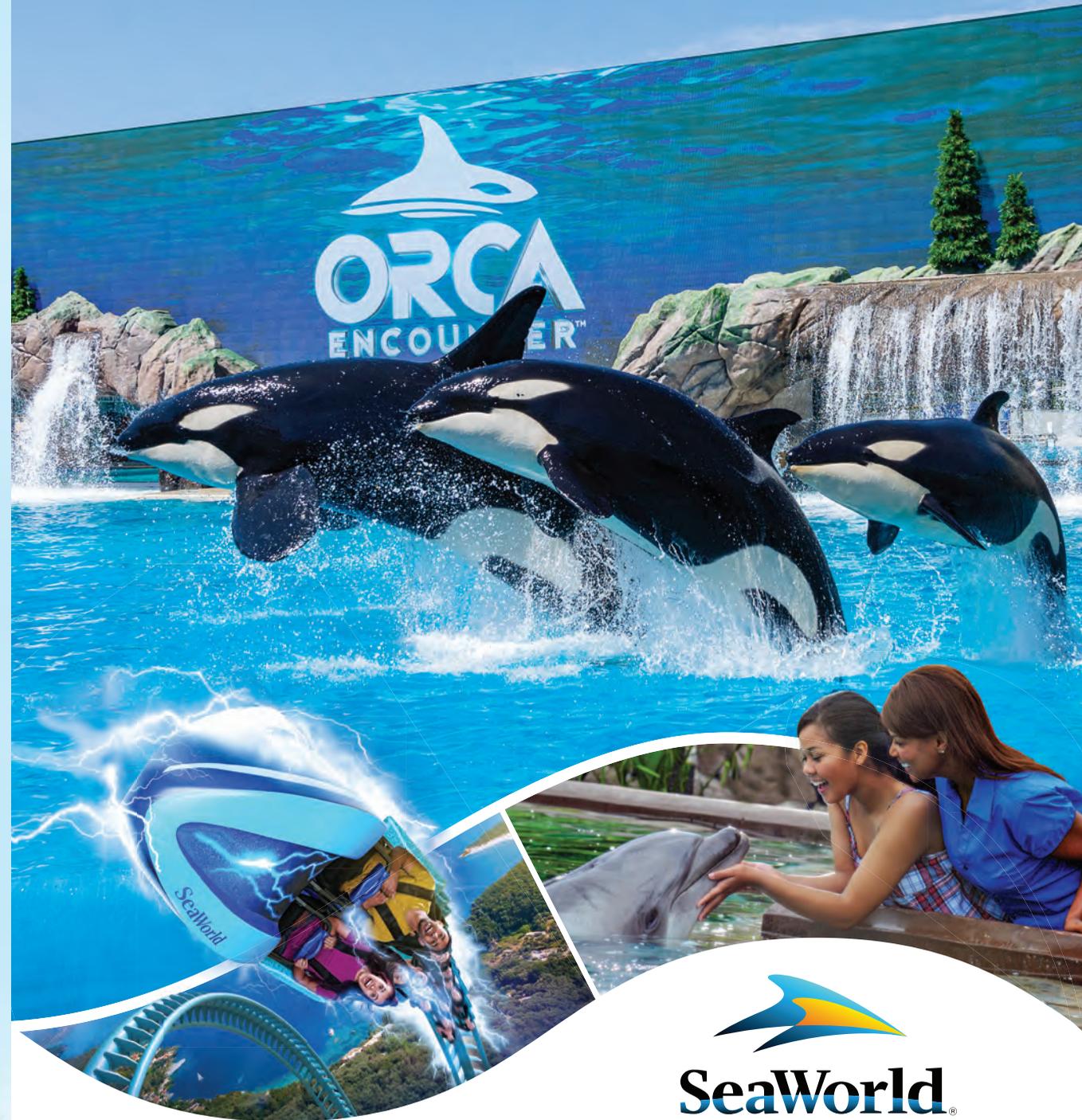
AMAZING ROAD TRIPS

One of the best ways to see California's iconic destinations is from behind the wheel. Whether you're searching for expansive mountain views or undiscovered wine regions, we have an itinerary for you. These four trips take you to bucket-list landmarks, hidden beaches, and much more. Start exploring. →



Joshua Tree

DANIEL HAN/ISTOCK



Get Closer to the World Beneath the Waves

At SeaWorld® San Diego you can experience up-close animal interactions, the awe-inspiring **Orca Encounter™** presentation, amazing shows and one-of-a-kind attractions. Plus, ride the all-new **Electric Eel™**, San Diego's tallest and fastest roller coaster, featuring a triple-launch, speeds of more than 60 mph and a height of 150 feet.

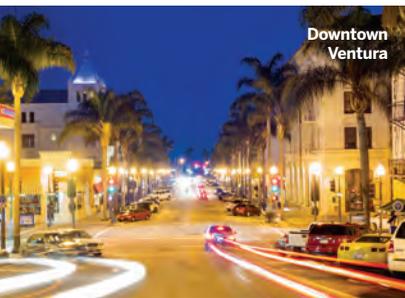
Immerse yourself in the natural world we share — every visit helps support animal rescue programs and conservation projects around the planet.

SeaWorldSanDiego.com

1

Cruise up the Coast

This journey ranges from lively urban scenes to natural beauty along the Pacific. Start your trip in **Santa Monica** with a ride on the solar-powered Ferris wheel at the historic Pacific Park. Continue north to **Malibu**, where you can watch locals riding waves at Surfrider Beach. It's less than an hour to reach **Ventura**, where you can wander the boutiques



and restored 1920s buildings. Head north to **Santa Barbara's** Funk Zone. Shop for vintage accessories or stroll the galleries before continuing to **Nipomo** for a free tour at family-owned The Luffa Farm. Finish your day wine tasting at Kelsey See Canyon Vineyards in charming **Avila Beach**.



Pull over for cliff views at Carpinteria Bluffs Nature Preserve.



2 **Family Learning Adventure**

Ask the kids whether they'd rather go to a museum or a theme park, and you might get a predictable response. But nothing about this collection of attractions is conventional. Start in San Francisco with a hands-on educational museum, then drive down the coast to explore two wildlife institutions, and visit a theme park that will blow your mind with its creative flourishes.

Exploratorium

Start your educational odyssey at San Francisco's Pier 15 in the Embarcadero, where this beloved museum invites visitors inside scientific discovery—like standing in a fog cloud, or walking into the totally dark Tactile Dome.

Computer History Museum

Head south of the city on U.S. 101 toward tech haven Silicon Valley. At this Mountain View museum, learn about the birth of the com-

puter, driverless cars, and tech heroes like Ada Lovelace.

The Tech Museum of Innovation

Before you leave Silicon Valley, stop in San Jose at The Tech to build your own robots or play cyber detective. For some outdoor-style learning, go to the nearby interactive Children's Discovery Museum, where kids can blow giant bubbles, climb trees, and learn about rain catchment systems.

Gilroy Gardens

Head down U.S. 101 to the garlic-loving town of Gilroy. Zoom and twirl on agriculture-themed rides like the Artichoke Dip, splash in the water park, and check out more than 20 incredible Circus Trees, grown in whimsical shapes.

Monterey Bay Aquarium

Continue south on U.S. 101 to Monterey and this world-class bayside aquarium (book tickets online to avoid a wait).

Check out tours, like the one where kids can try SCUBA, and the family overnight option.

Fresno Chaffee Zoo

Take Highways 152 and 99 through farm country to Fresno. This recently revamped zoo has a seriously global community of wildlife, with red kangaroos and wildebeest, and kids can feed giraffes by hand.

COURTESY OF FRESNO CHAFFEE ZOO, BENEDEK/GETTY IMAGES

➔ MORE INFORMATION visitcalifornia.com/au/familylearning

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LIFE OPENS UP



Lake Tahoe

3 Venture to California's Best Views

Drive just outside the gateway cities on this supersize trip where every sight is Instagram-worthy. Among the jaw-dropping vistas, snowcapped volcanoes, and towering waterfalls, find your awe in the land of superlatives. This big-thrills driving circuit starts 200 miles (322km) from Los Angeles in Sequoia National Park and cruises through California's greatest hits—Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, Mount Lassen, Mount Shasta, and the Redwood Coast.

Giant Forest

Be awed and humbled by giant sequoias, the world's biggest trees. At Sequoia National Park, walk among the titans on the Congress Trail, then pay homage to the General Sherman, the world's largest tree, with a 102-foot (31m) circumference.

Glacier Point

Known as "the grandest view in the West," this drive-up vista takes in all of Yosemite's major granite landmarks, including Half

Dome's iconic profile and shimmering Vernal and Nevada falls. Sunsets are unforgettable.

Yosemite Falls

Drive into Yosemite Valley in spring and you'll see a bounty of waterfalls flowing. The undisputed king is the 2,425-foot (739m) Yosemite Falls, North America's tallest waterfall. Take on the challenging trek to its tippy top, or walk an easy one-mile (1.6km) loop to its base.

Mono Lake

Just east of U.S. 395 near Lee Vining, an ancient saline lake looms so large that it seems like an inland ocean. Get a closer look with a shoreline walk at Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, where you can see the unusual rock formations known as tufa towers.



Stop at Tunnel View, one of Yosemite's most famous viewpoints.

Lake Tahoe

Tahoe's got bragging rights, as one of the world's largest alpine lakes and America's second deepest (1,645 feet [501m] at its lowest depth). On its west shore (Highway 89), stop at Inspiration Point for a world-class view of Emerald Bay and Tahoe's only island, Fannette.

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Hike to the summit of Lassen Peak for vista views. Or snap sizzling images of the hydrothermal marvels of Sulphur Works—boiling mudpots and steaming vents, one mile (1.6km) from the Kohm Yah-mah-nee Visitor Center.

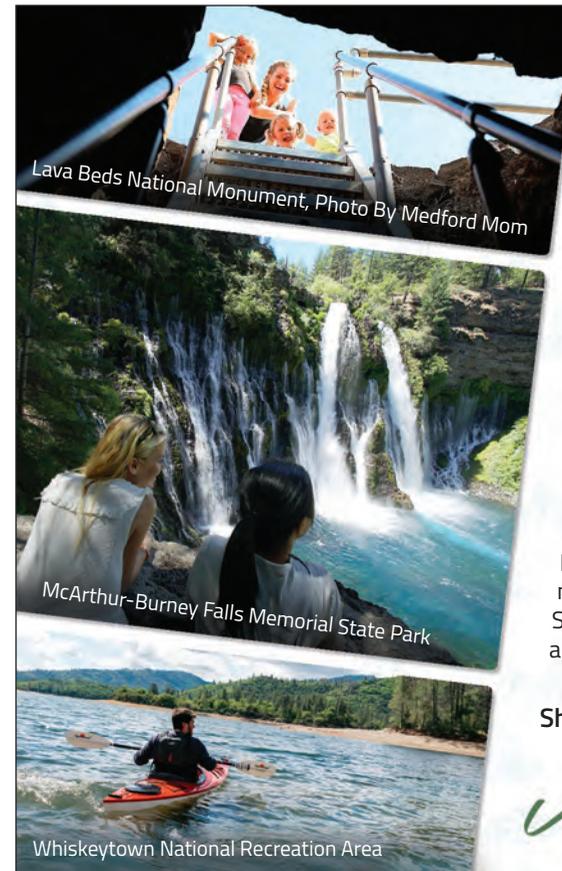
Mount Shasta

The hulking grande dame of Northern California peaks, this 14,179-foot (4322m) volcanic cone dominates, its massive girth even more daunting than its height. Take the 14-mile (23km) Everitt Memorial Scenic Drive from the city of Mt. Shasta for photo ops and hiking trails.

Founders Grove

In Humboldt Redwoods State Park, leave U.S. 101 and drive through ancient old-growth forest on the Avenue of the Giants, where 300-foot-plus (91m+) redwood trees blot out the sky. Break up the drive with a half-mile (0.8km) walk through Founders Grove.

SCOTT SADVALAMY



Lava Beds National Monument, Photo By Medford Mom

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area

WHERE FUN MEETS ADVENTURE

Three hours north of San Francisco is UpState California, designated by San Francisco Chronicle as "California's Last Frontier". UpState California is comprised of the eight northeastern counties of California and covers an area roughly the size of Ireland but with only 12 percent of Ireland's population. For fans of America's national parks, UpState California is full of natural attractions. Even though the region is vast and wondrous, the seven national forests and eight national & state parks, including Lassen Volcanic National Park, are all within a short drive of one another, making them easy to enjoy. Redding, the largest city north of Sacramento, is a great home base for this vast area of beauty, and itself is home to 225+ miles of hiking and biking trails.

ShastaCascade.com | VisitRedding.com | (530) 365-7500



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4 Taste Wine in Undiscovered Regions

From its wineries on the edge of Southern California suburbs to vineyards in the Gold Country foothills, California offers growing conditions uniquely suited to a wide assortment of grape varieties. Get off the beaten path and sample superior wine in some surprising locations. At many of these destinations you'll get to meet winemakers who will no doubt introduce you to their favourites.

Hungry Hawk Vineyards & Winery

Thirty miles (48km) north of San Diego in Escondido, this award-winning winery carries on San Diego County's proud winemaking tradition, which dates back to the 18th century.

Robert Renzoni Vineyards

Along Temecula Valley's De Portola Wine Trail, this winery brings the flavours of Italy to the region, thanks to its trattoria and acclaimed Montepulciano.

Joseph Filippi Winery & Vineyards

Learn about winemaking while touring this Rancho Cucamonga facility, a fifth-generation family operation. The wine here inspired the Grateful Dead's "Pride of Cucamonga."

Triassic Vineyards

In spring, enjoy views of poppies blooming in the Cummings Valley, 45 minutes from Bakersfield in Tehachapi. Triassic is celebrated for its Zinfandel and Syrah.

Ramos Torres Winery

With Rhône varieties produced from its foothills estate vineyard south of Fresno, this is a surprising destination for wine lovers in Kingsburg.

Idle Hour Winery

Follow the Madera Wine Trail as it climbs to such foothills winemakers as Idle Hour, the first in Oakhurst, located 14 miles (23km) from Yosemite's south entrance.

Murphys Tasting Rooms

Wind into the Gold Country to visit this historic mining town. With more than 20 tasting rooms, Murphys is the hub of Calaveras County's thriving wine scene.

Scott Harvey Wines

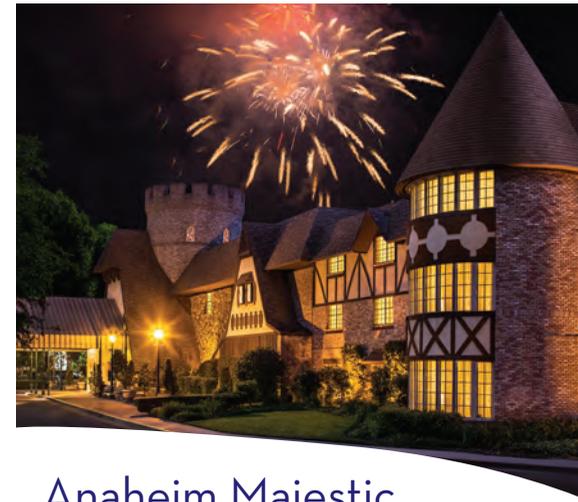
Sutter Creek is a classic town one hour southeast of Sacramento, famous for its 19th-century buildings with balconies overlooking Main Street. The Zinfandels at Scott Harvey Wines embody the Amador County style.

→ FIND MORE ROAD TRIPS
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Temecula Valley Wine Country

RON THOMAS/GETTY IMAGES



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For information, go to
VisitPalmSprings.com



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SeeMonterey.com



MORRO BAY

Charming fishing village on Hwy 1, bustling waterfront, boutique shops, restaurants, sea otters frolic in the bay, people kayak, paddleboard, bike and stroll on miles of beautiful beaches.
MorroBay.org

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

Just two hours north of LA and a four-hour drive from San Francisco, discover over 100 wineries, incredible food, special events and an authentic, relaxed vibe in the Santa Ynez Valley.
VisitSYV.com



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Located on California's iconic Highway 1, Santa Cruz County—the crowning jewel of the Golden State—is home to a classic beach town, redwood forests, boutique wineries and a farm-to-table foodie scene where you can just be yourself. Come on Let's Cruz.
VisitSantaCruz.org



CAMARILLO

Camarillo delights those seeking outdoor adventures, shopping and more while enjoying picturesque vistas and cool ocean breezes as the backdrop for this charming town.
VisitCamarillo.com

ROARING CAMP RAILROADS

See California's towering redwoods from two historic railroads. Visit Roaring Camp, an 1880s Western town, ride Steam Trains to Bear Mountain or Beach Trains to Santa Cruz. Located 1 ½ hour's drive south of San Francisco. Trains depart year-round.
RoaringCamp.com



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MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM

A global leader in ocean conservation, the Monterey Bay Aquarium showcases the stunningly biodiverse marine habitats of the Monterey Bay and Pacific Ocean.
MontereyBayAquarium.org



VENTURA COUNTY COAST

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VenturaCountyCoast.com



Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival

Events

Plan your holiday at the right time of the year, and get more ideas at visitcalifornia.com/au/events

JANUARY

The new year brings parades, pageantry, and American football, plus awards for Hollywood stars. It's also a brilliant time to find special deals at California's best restaurants.

California Restaurant Month. Kick off the year with a month of reasons to eat out, like specially priced chef's menus and wine-and-food pairings. visitcalifornia.com/restaurant-month

Palm Springs International Film Festival. This dazzling event, with galas, movie screenings, and talks with top filmmakers, is well attended by big-name stars. psfilmfest.org

Tournament of Roses Parade and Rose Bowl. Celebrate the American football season and the start of the year at this combo event, usually held on Jan. 1 (or Jan. 2, if Jan. 1 falls on a Sunday). tournamentofroses.com

FEBRUARY

Though it's still technically winter, there's an early hint of spring. Pro golfers gather at one of the year's premier events, and lion dancers snake through the streets of San Francisco.

AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. Top golfers like Rory McIlroy swing clubs with celebrities at this multiday event on the edge of Monterey Bay, along the Central Coast. attpgolf.com

Riverside County Fair and Date Festival. High season in the desert is also peak time for local dates, which are showcased in creamy shakes and other treats at this annual county fair. Also featured are camel and ostrich races and an Arabian Nights-themed show. datefest.org

Southwest Airlines Chinese New Year Parade. Enjoy the largest celebration outside Asia to mark

the Lunar New Year. Crowds pack the streets of San Francisco to watch dragons and lion dancers clear out evil spirits. chineseparade.com

MARCH

Along the North Coast, festivals commemorate the start of the California grey whale's annual migration north to Alaskan waters.

Autoclub 400. Big, loud, and exciting, this race, at Fontana Speedway in the Inland Empire, ranks as one of the biggest events in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series. Splurge on pit passes to hang with drivers and crew. autoclubspeedway.com

California Artisan Cheese Festival. Sample blue cheese, Camembert, and other handcrafted cheeses at this three-day event in Santa Rosa, north of San Francisco. Join farm tours and wine-and-cheese pairings. artisancheesefestival.com

Mendocino Coast Whale Festivals. Join special whale-watching cruises, kayak tours, and guided walks in the North Coast region. Enjoy good food, beer, wine, and music throughout the area. mendowhale.com

North Lake Tahoe City SnowFest. At this 10-day "Mountain Mardi Gras," watch a quirky parade, cheer on the dogs in the "I Did-a-Run," or consider trying the Polar Bear Swim in Lake Tahoe. tahoesnowfest.org

APRIL

It's wild flower season, turning the state into one big flower show. Migratory birds return in big numbers, and there are festivals to match. It's also the start of baseball season, with fans cheering on minor and major league teams.

California Poppy Festival. Bright orange California poppies tend to hit peak bloom now (Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve is nearby). Visit the reserve and then enjoy this homespun event, including rides, food, and music. poppyfestival.com

Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. Huge names like Guns 'n' Roses and Beyoncé perform at this massive, multiday event near Palm Springs. Enjoy art installations, amazing food, and celebrity spotting. live.coachella.com

Passport to Dry Creek Valley. Taste the best of Sonoma County at this weekend festival, filled with wine tastings from 40-plus wineries, cuisine from the top local chefs, and vineyard tours. drycreekvalley.org

Santa Barbara Kite Festival. Watch the air fill with colorful kites at this family favourite along the Central Coast, with awards for most beautiful, funniest, and most unflyable kite. sbkitefest.net

Stagecoach. Country music's answer to Coachella brings top acts like Keith Urban and Garth Brooks to the desert, along with the festival's Honkytonk Dance Hall, barbeque, and plenty of cold beer. stagecoachfestival.com

MAY

Spring slides into summer with hills turning golden brown, fruit stands popping up in farm country, and beaches filling with happy locals—especially on Memorial Day, the unofficial start of summer.

Amgen Tour of California. This premiere cycling event takes top riders on an epic, eight-stage race that loops around the state. The course, which changes annually, also has festivals and special events. amgentourofcalifornia.com

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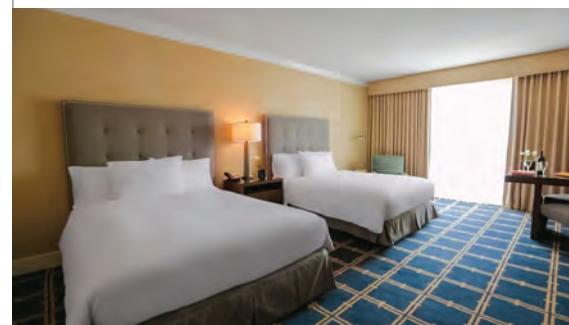


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BottleRock Napa Valley. The city of Napa becomes music central for this three-day event, with great music (Red Hot Chili Peppers, No Doubt) and food, local wines, and craft beers. bottlerocknapavalley.com

California Strawberry Festival. In the heart of the Central Coast's berry-growing region around Oxnard, enjoy chef cook-offs for the best recipe with strawberries, pie-eating contests, and even strawberry beer. strawberry-fest.org

Castroville Artichoke Food & Wine Festival. Enjoy one of California's signature foods with countless preparations at this popular Central Coast event. Watch chef demonstrations, see artichoke-themed art, and cheer for the annual Artichoke Queen. artichokefestival.org

Kinetic Grand Championship. This race in the North Coast towns of Arcata and Ferndale is one of California's wackiest, with costumed contestants steering handmade people-powered vehicles. kineticgrandchampionship.com

JUNE

It's officially summer, with kids out of school, campgrounds filling, and festivals celebrating music, food, and fun in full swing.

Farmers markets. Like mini festivals every weekend (and sometimes during the week), these low-key events pop up statewide. Look for freshly-picked produce as well as artisanal crafts and foods. cafarmersmkt.com

Mariachi USA. Hear mariachi bands and see folkloric dances from the U.S. and Mexico in Los Angeles's iconic Hollywood Bowl. The event ends with huge fireworks. mariachiusa.com

San Diego International Beer Festival. Sample the region's outstanding craft beers, along with hundreds of beers from around the globe. sandiegobeerfestival.com

Temecula Valley Balloon & Wine Festival. Dozens of colourful hot air balloons soar above the Inland Empire's lush vineyards during this multiday event, with wine and beer tastings, music, and balloon rides. tvbwf.com

JULY

America celebrates the 4th of July and everybody heads outside—surfing, barbecuing, and, of course, going to festivals.

California State Fair. Enjoy rides, ranch animals, and horse races, plus bluegrass and other types of music, in the state capital of Sacramento, in the Gold Country. castatefair.org

Comic-Con International. What started as a small festival for comic book fans has become a global event in downtown San Diego, with movie stars, exhibits, cosplay, and good people-watching. comic-con.org

Festival of Arts/Pageant of the Masters. This multi-week extravaganza in the Orange County

city of Laguna Beach features classic works of art re-created with costumed actors and lavish sets. Tickets sell out months in advance. foapom.com

Gilroy Garlic Festival. Love garlic? Don't miss this wildly popular event, with chefs making garlic the star in everything from french fries to ice cream. gilroygarlicfestival.com

Vans U.S. Open of Surfing. Top amateur and pro surfers carve it up on the legendary waves of Huntington Beach, along the Orange County coast. vansusopenofsurfing.com

AUGUST

It's peak season at California's farms, with celebrations focusing on the state's incredible bounty.

Outside Lands. This music festival in Golden Gate Park attracts big-name headliners like Janet Jackson and Radiohead. It also offers a microcosm of San Francisco's culinary scene. sfoutsidelands.com

Tomato Festival. Surrounded by the Central Valley's tomato fields, historic Woodland hosts tomato tastings, chef cook-offs, and salsa competitions. woodlandtomatofestival.com

SEPTEMBER

Locals know this is California's secret summer, featuring warm days and a fog-free coast.

California Craft Beer Summit. This three-day summit is the largest California craft beer festival, with unlimited tastings and educational talks and demos. californiacraftbeer.com

California Wine Month. Harvest time in California wine country brings plenty of reasons to celebrate. Enjoy special tastings, wine-pairing dinners, and more at a host of vineyards. discovercaliforniawines.com/californiawinmonth

Monterey Jazz Festival. Big-name musicians like Pat Metheny and Quincy Jones take the stage at this major Central Coast music event—the largest jazz event in the world, featuring some 500 performers. montereyjazzfestival.org

Farm-to-Fork Festival. Sacramento's fresh food party stretches a half-mile (0.8km) on Capitol Mall, filled with food, wine, and beer plus cooking demos and live music. farmtofork.com

OCTOBER

Fall brings a snap to the air, but there are still blue skies. Halloween (October 31) is a seasonal charmer, with kids dressing up in costumes.

The Big Fresno Fair. Experience California's heartland during harvest season at the biggest event in the Central Valley, with livestock, a huge farmers market, rides, and classic fair food. fresnofair.com

Corning Olive Festival. Celebrate California's olive orchards, which produce 95 percent of America's olives. This event in the Shasta Cascade region features a parade, orchard tours, and kid-friendly contests—like who can spit an olive pit farthest. corningolivefestival.org

Half Moon Bay Art and Pumpkin Festival. Embrace the season in this Central Coast town with carving contests, giant pumpkin weigh-offs, music, and pumpkin-flavoured food and drink. pumpkinfest.miramarevents.com

Hoes Down Harvest Festival. Mark the end of harvest season at Full Belly Farm, in the Central Valley region's Capay Valley. Kid-friendly activities include sheep-shearing and making ice cream, while grown-ups enjoy guided bike tours to area farms. hoesdown.org

NOVEMBER

Winter starts to roll in; snow in the mountains bring revving things up at alpine resorts. It's also time for family, capped by Thanksgiving at the end of the month.

Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival. In the desert region, join a tour to see Native American rock art dating back thousands of years. Also enjoy an authentic intertribal powwow, plus a street fair, wild burros, and music. rpfestival.com

Ski and snowboard season begins. Even if early-season storms are slim, snowmaking efforts at mountain resorts in the High Sierra and Inland Empire regions get underway as soon as temperatures drop. Get the latest conditions at californiasnow.com

DECEMBER

The holidays brighten the long days of winter, with entire communities decked with twinkling lights and decorated trees. Spirited festivals and feasts abound.

The Bracebridge Dinners. At sumptuous productions in snow-filled Yosemite Valley, costumed revellers perform as you feast in the spectacular main dining room at the Majestic Yosemite Hotel. bracebridgedinners.com

Nevada City Victorian Christmas. With its Victorian-era buildings, this Gold Country town is the perfect setting for a festival straight out of Charles Dickens novel. Ride carriages, enjoy costumed carollers, and browse handmade crafts. nevadacitychamber.com

Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade. This Orange County town turns Newport Harbor into a spectacular floating light show, with boat owners decorating their crafts and then parading them after dark. newportbeachboatparade.com

SnowGlobe Music Festival. This wintertime blowout in South Lake Tahoe, in the snowy High Sierra, showcases ska, rap, and other hot music genres. Bring your parka and watch snowboarding and skiing exhibitions. snowglobemusicfestival.com



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