



North Coast & Redwoods

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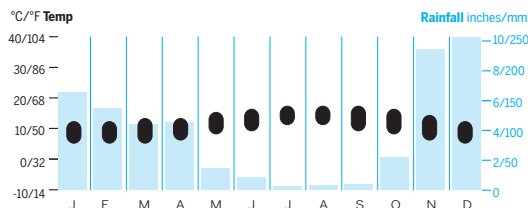
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Why Go?

The craggy cliffs, towering redwoods and windswept bluffs of the north have little in common with California's other coastline. This is no Beach Boys' song; there are no bikinis and few surfboards. The jagged edge of the continent is wild, scenic and even slightly foreboding, where spectral fog and outsider spirit have fostered the world's tallest trees, most potent weed and a string of idiosyncratic two-stoplight towns. Visitors explore hidden coves with a blanket and bottle of local wine, scan the horizon for migrating whales and retreat at night to fire-warmed Victorians. The further north you travel on the region's winding two-lane backloop, the more dominant the landscape becomes, with valleys of redwood, wide rivers and mossy, overgrown forests. Befitting this dramatic clash of land and water are its unlikely mélange of residents: timber barons and tree huggers, pot farmers and political radicals of every stripe.

When to Go

Eureka



Jun–Jul The driest season in the Redwoods is spectacular for day hikes and big views.

Aug–Oct Warm weather and clear (or clearer) skies are the best for hiking the Lost Coast.

Dec–Apr Whales migrate off the coast. In early spring look for mothers and calves.

Getting Around

Although Hwy 1 is popular with cyclists and there are bus connections, you will almost certainly need a car to explore this region. Those headed to the far north and on a schedule should take Hwy 101, the faster, inland route and then cut over to the coast. Windy Hwy 1 hugs the coast, then cuts inland and ends at Leggett, where it joins Hwy 101. Neither Amtrak nor Greyhound serve cities on coastal Hwy 1.

Amtrak (☎800-872-7245; www.amtrakcalifornia.com) operates the *Coast Starlight* between Los Angeles and Seattle (see p776). From LA, buses connect to several North Coast towns including Leggett (\$82, 11 hours, two daily) and Garberville (\$84, 11½ hours, two daily).

Brave souls willing to piece together bus travel through the region will face a time-consuming headache, but connections are possible to almost every town in the region. **Greyhound** (☎800-231-2222; www.greyhound.com) runs buses from San Francisco to Santa Rosa (\$22, 1¾ hours, one daily), Ukiah, (\$40, three hours, one daily) Willits (\$40, 3½ hours, one daily), Rio Dell (near Fortuna, \$52.50, six hours, one daily), Eureka (\$52.50, 6¾ hours, one daily) and Arcata (\$52.20, seven hours, one daily). In Santa Rosa, **Golden Gate Transit** (☎707-541-2000; www.goldengatetransit.org) bus 80 serves San Rafael (\$5.55, 1½ hours) and San Francisco (\$8.80, 1¼ hours, 19 times daily), **Sonoma County Transit** (☎800-345-7433; www.sctransit.com) serves Sonoma County, and **Sonoma County Airport Express** (☎707-837-8700, 800-327-2024; www.airportexpressinc.com) operates buses to San Francisco (\$32, 2¼ hours, 15 daily) and Oakland (\$34, 2¼ hours, 10 daily) airports.

The **Mendocino Transit Authority** (MTA; ☎707-462-1422, 800-696-4682; www.4mta.org; fares \$3.25-7.75) operates bus 65, which travels between Mendocino, Fort Bragg, Willits, Ukiah and Santa Rosa daily, with an afternoon return. Bus 95 runs between Point Arena and Santa Rosa, via Jenner, Bodega Bay and Sebastopol. Bus 54 connects Ukiah and Hopland on weekdays. Bus 75 heads north every weekday from Gualala to the Navarro River junction at Hwy 128, then runs inland through the Anderson Valley to Ukiah, returning in the afternoon. The North Coast route goes north from Navarro River junction to Albion, Little River, Mendocino and Fort Bragg, Monday to Friday. The best long distance option is a daily ride from Fort Bragg south to Santa Rosa via Willits and Ukiah (\$21, three hours).

North of Mendocino County, the **Redwood Transit System** (☎707-443-0826; www.hta.org) operates buses (\$2.75) Monday through Saturday between Scotia and Trinidad (2½ hours), stopping en route at Eureka (1¼ hours) and Arcata (1½ hours). **Redwood Coast Transit**

FAST FACTS

- » **Population of Mendocino** 1000
- » **Average temperature low/high in Mendocino** Jan 47/60°F, Jul 50/71°F
- » **Mendocino to San Francisco** 155 miles, 3¼ hours
- » **Mendocino to Los Angeles** 530 miles, nine hours
- » **Mendocino to Eureka** 145 miles, three hours

(☎707-464-9314; www.redwoodcoasttransit.org) runs buses Monday to Saturday between Crescent City, Klamath (\$1.50, one hour, five daily) and Arcata (\$25, two hours, three times daily), with numerous stops along the way.

COASTAL HIGHWAY 1

Down south it's called the 'PCH,' or Pacific Coast Hwy, but North Coast locals simply call it 'Hwy 1.' However you label it, get ready for a fabulous coastal drive, which cuts a winding course on isolated cliffs high above the crashing surf. Compared to the famous Big Sur coast, the serpentine stretch of Hwy 1 up the North Coast is more challenging, more remote and more *real*; passing farms, fishing towns and hidden beaches. Drivers use roadside pull-outs to scan the hazy Pacific horizon for migrating whales and explore a coastline dotted with rock formations that are relentlessly pounded by the surf. The drive between Bodega Bay and Fort Bragg takes four hours of daylight driving without stops. At night in the fog, it takes steely nerves and much, much longer. The most popular destination is the cliffside charmer of Mendocino.

Considering their proximity to the Bay Area, Sonoma and Mendocino counties remain unspoiled, and the austere coastal bluffs are some of the most spectacular in the country. But the trip north gets more rewarding and remote with every mile. By the time Hwy 1 cuts inland to join Hwy 101, the land along the Pacific – called the Lost Coast – the highway disappears and offers the state's best-preserved natural gifts.

Coastal accommodations (including campgrounds) can fill from Memorial Day to Labor Day and on fall weekends, and often require two-night stays, so reserve ahead. Try to visit