



California



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Itineraries



1
WEEK

Los Angeles to San Francisco

First-timers can get a taste of both halves of the Golden State – Southern *and* Northern California – on this 450-mile coastal drive, lazily stretching from the ‘City of Angels’ to the ‘City by the Bay,’ with astounding ocean panoramas almost all along the way.

Swoop down on **Los Angeles** for stargazing and clubby, cosmopolitan style. Cruise north through celeb-happy **Malibu**, strung with idyllic beaches. Hop aboard a boat to **Channel Islands National Park** from **Ventura**, then slow down for sophisticated sea-side **Santa Barbara**, nestled against wine country. North of retro-1950s **Pismo Beach** and the college town of **San Luis Obispo**, Hwy 1 curves past picturesque beach towns like **Morro Bay**, **Cayucos** and **Cambria** reaching hilltop **Hearst Castle**.

Wind north along dizzying cliff edges through soul-stirring **Big Sur**, where redwood forests and waterfalls call. Dive into California’s best aquarium in maritime **Monterey**. Next it’s time for a bone-rattling roller coaster on the beach boardwalk at **Santa Cruz**.

Snake in the slow lane up Hwy 1, passing lighthouses, wind-tossed beaches and bays, to the counter-cultural capital of **San Francisco** for farm-to-table dining and artisanal cocktails.



California Classics

Cover almost all of the Golden State's greatest hits on this grand tour, starting up north in foggy San Francisco and finishing over 1400 unforgettable miles later in sunny San Diego, down south by the Mexican border.

Kick off with a dose of big-city culture in **San Francisco**, sitting proudly on its bay. Hop a boat over to infamous Alcatraz prison, aka 'the Rock.' Then it's all aboard a cable car before traipsing through grassy Golden Gate Park. Head north over the arched Golden Gate Bridge into outdoorsy **Marin County**. California's most famous grapes grow just east in down-home **Sonoma Valley** and chichi **Napa Valley**. Detour west through more vineyards and apple orchards in the rural **Anderson Valley**, jumping onto coastal Hwy 1 north to **Mendocino**, a postcard-perfect Victorian seaside town.

Work your way north to rejoin Hwy 101 at **Leggett**, where your magical mystery tour of the Redwood Empire really begins. In **Humboldt Redwoods State Park**, encounter some of the tallest trees on earth. Kick back in historic harborfront **Eureka**, with its candy-colored Victorian architecture, or its radical northern neighbor, **Arcata**. Turn east on Hwy 299 for a long, scenic trip to hidden **Weaverville**, skirting the lake-studded Trinity Alps. Keep trucking east, then south on I-5 to **Redding**, where families throng Turtle Bay Exploration Park. Climb east on Hwy 44 to unearthly **Lassen Volcanic National Park**, a hellishly beautiful world at the southern tip of the Cascades Range.

Head southeast on Hwy 89 to **Lake Tahoe**, a four-seasons outdoor playground in the Sierra Nevada. Roll down the Eastern Sierra's Hwy 395, taking the back-door route via Tioga Rd (open seasonally) into **Yosemite National Park**. Gape at waterfalls tumbling over soaring granite cliffs and wander in groves of giant sequoias, the world's biggest trees.

Zoom south to **Los Angeles**, where cinematic beaches, diverse neighborhoods and cutting-edge cuisine await. Pound the pavement in Hollywood, then sprawl on the sand in chic Santa Monica or quirky Venice. Cruise south past the beautiful beaches of oh-so-stylish **Orange County** to hang-loose **San Diego** for surfing and fish tacos, dude.

5
DAYS

LA & Orange County

Top-notch attractions, bodacious beaches and fresh seafood form an irresistible trifecta on this Southern California sojourn, covering 100 miles of sun, sand and surf.

Kick things off in **Los Angeles**. Skate north from oddball **Venice** to oceanfront **Santa Monica**, which beckons with a carnival pier. After you've photographed the star-studded sidewalks of **Hollywood**, dive into the many museums of **Mid-City** and the arts and cultural scenes of **Downtown LA**. Make a date with Mickey at perfectly 'imagined' Disneyland. Next door, Disney California Adventure celebrates the Golden State. Both theme parks, part of **Disneyland Resort**, are in Anaheim. Not far away is **Knott's Berry Farm**, tempting with more thrill rides, and nostalgic **Old Towne Orange**.

Cruise west toward the Pacific to **Huntington Beach**, aka 'Surf City, USA.' Rent a board, play beach volleyball and build a bonfire. Swing by **Newport Beach** for people-watching by the piers, then roll south to **Laguna Beach**, an artists' colony. Slingshot back toward the I-5, making a quick detour to historic **Mission San Juan Capistrano**.

10
DAYS

SoCal Deserts

Southern California's deserts feel like another planet, with giant sand dunes, palm-tree oases, volcanic craters and a rainbow of cinder cones. Go get lost on this 800-mile driving tour.

Start in glam **Palm Springs** resort, a masterpiece of mid-century modern architecture. Sip mojitos poolside, hike to palm-studded canyons and ride a tram into cool pine-scented mountains.

Drive past the Coachella Valley's date farms and along the shores of the mirage-like **Salton Sea**, turning west for wild **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park** to see bighorn sheep and wind-sculpted caves.

Boomerang north to **Joshua Tree National Park**, famous for its giant boulders and twisted namesake trees. Keep motor-ing north into the **Mojave National Preserve**, which protects 'singing' sand dunes and the world's largest Joshua-tree forest.

Ready for a change of pace? **Las Vegas**, baby. Before you gamble away your life savings at the Strip's casinos, escape west to **Death Valley National Park**, where otherworldly salt flats and marbled canyons amaze.

10
DAYS

Sierra Nevada Ramble

Nothing can prepare you for the off-the-charts scenery, wildflower meadows and lakes of the Sierra Nevada. Take this 850-mile trip in summer, when all roads are open.

To gaze in awe up at the world's biggest trees and down at a gorge deeper than the Grand Canyon, start in **Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks**. Go west, then north to **Yosemite National Park**, where thunderous waterfalls and eroded granite monoliths overhang a verdant valley. Soar over the Sierra Nevada's snowy rooftop on Yosemite's high-elevation **Tioga Rd** (open seasonally). It's a quick trip south on Hwy 395 to **Mammoth Lakes**, an all-seasons adventure base camp, and 100 more miles to **Lone Pine**, in the shadow of mighty **Mt Whitney**.

Backtracking north, gaze out over **Mono Lake** and its odd-looking tufa formations, which you can paddle past in a kayak. Head to **Lake Tahoe**, a deep-blue jewel cradled by jutting peaks endowed with rugged hiking trails, hot springs and the slopes of ski resorts. Roll across the Nevada state line for casino nightlife in **Reno**.

2
WEEKS

North Coast & Mountains

North of San Francisco, Hwy 1 skirts rocky shores, secluded coves and wind-whipped beaches before joining Hwy 101. Loop via the majestic Northern Mountains for a memorable 800-mile journey.

Across the Golden Gate Bridge, hike over the **Marin Headlands** or around **Mt Tamalpais**. Uncover **Bolinas** on your way north to ruggedly beautiful **Point Reyes National Seashore**. Beyond **Bodega Bay**, picnic at stunning **Sonoma Coast State Beach** or **Salt Point State Park**. Now the coast gets truly wild; climb to the tippy-top of **Point Arena Lighthouse**, poke around charming **Mendocino** village and ride the Skunk Train at **Fort Bragg**. Hwy 1 curves inland to Hwy 101, running north into hippie Humboldt County. Hike underneath ancient redwood trees on the **Avenue of the Giants** or further north in misty **Redwood National & State Parks**. Cut east through Oregon to the I-5 Fwy southbound to **Mt Shasta**. Pay your respects to that majestic mountain, then dart southeast on Hwy 89 to **Lassen Volcanic National Park**, a geological wonderland. Take a dip in **Lake Almanor**, nearby the amiable mountain town of **Quincy**.

Off the Beaten Track

**LOST COAST**

Tackle an epic backpacking route, take a day hike to Punta Gorda Lighthouse, or beachcomb in utterly remote Shelter Cove, an overnight escape. (p250)

LAVA BEDS NATIONAL MONUMENT

It's a geological wonderland of lava flows, spatter cones, shield volcanoes and craters. Strap on a helmet and clamber inside two-dozen lava tubes. (p299)

AMADOR COUNTY WINE REGION

Explore one of California's oldest, but least-known wine countries up in the Sierra Nevada foothills, where old Zinfandel grapevines thrive in mineral-rich soil. (p352)

SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN RIVER DELTA

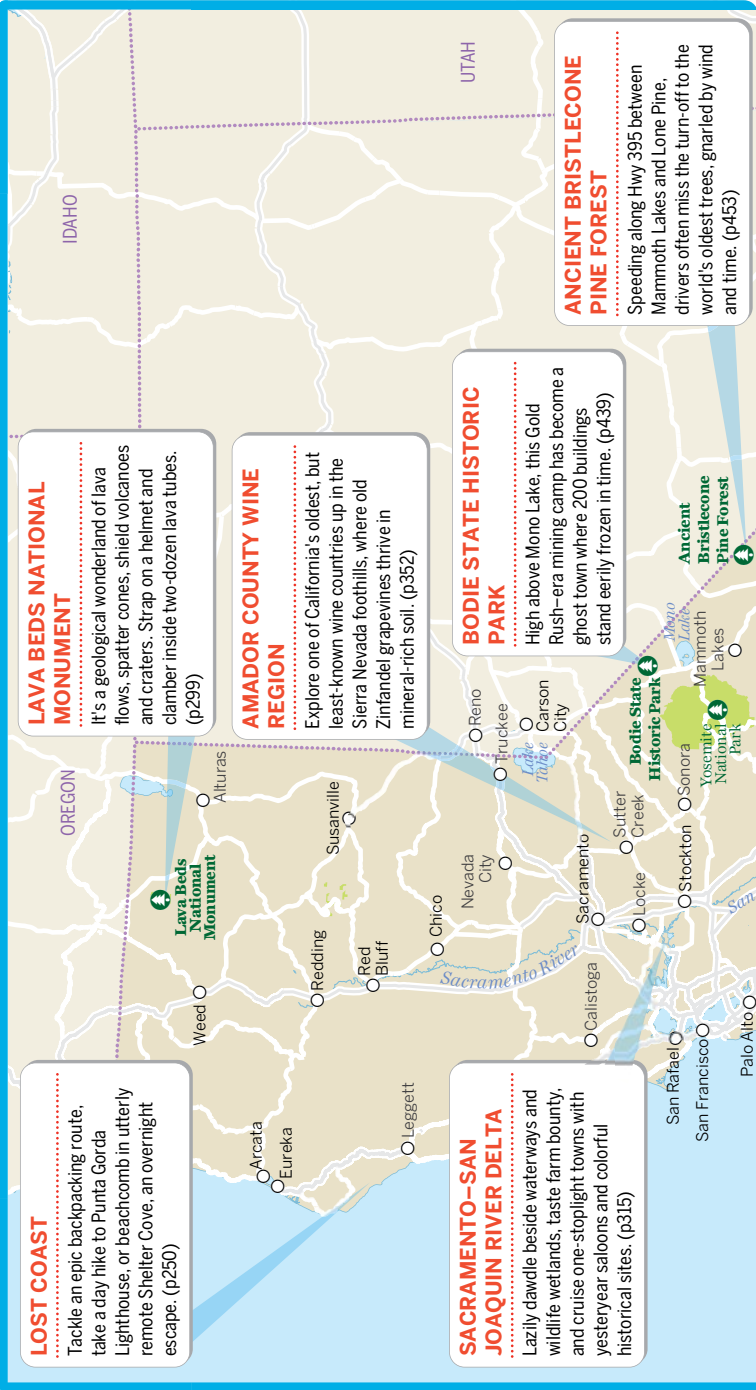
Lazily dawdle beside waterways and wildlife wetlands, taste farm bounty, and cruise one-stoplight towns with yesteryear saloons and colorful historical sites. (p315)

BODIE STATE HISTORIC PARK

High above Mono Lake, this Gold Rush-era mining camp has become a ghost town where 200 buildings stand eerily frozen in time. (p439)

ANCIENT BRISTLECONE PINE FOREST

Speeding along Hwy 395 between Mammoth Lakes and Lone Pine, drivers often miss the turn-off to the world's oldest trees, gnarled by wind and time. (p453)



PINNACLES NATIONAL PARK

On the way to nowhere, petite Pinnacles is worth a big detour for a chance to see endangered California condors soaring above spiring rock formations. (p500)

MINERAL KING VALLEY

Forget overcrowded Yosemite Valley. Head south to Sequoia National Park, where this wildflower-strewn basin shaped by glaciers beckons with hiking trails to unspoiled alpine lakes. (p430)

ANZA-BORRGO DESERT STATE PARK

Just shy of the Mexican border, Anza-Borrego was once an ancient sea. Today this painterly mosaic of Sonoran Desert is home to hot springs, wind caves and rare bighorn sheep. (p682)

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE

More beautifully lonely than Death Valley, this serene desert of volcanic cinder cones, Joshua trees and 'singing' sand dunes is a soul-stirring spot for hikers and campers. (p691)





Tienlon Ho

Sacramento & Central Valley, Gold Country An Ohioan by birth but a Californian at stomach, Tienlon Ho has walked, run, climbed, crawled, tumbled, fished, swam, and eaten her way around the state enough times to say California is huge: and spectacular. Besides writing guides and books for Lonely Planet, she writes about food, environment, and technology for a number of publications. Follow her travels and more at tienlon.com and [@tienlonho](https://twitter.com/tienlonho).



Beth Kohn

Marin County & the Bay Area, Lake Tahoe, Yosemite & the Sierra Nevada, California Wildlife, Best Hikes of the Sierra Nevada A lucky long-time resident of San Francisco, Beth lives to be playing outside or splashing in big puddles of water. For this guide, she hiked and biked Bay Area byways, backpacked Yosemite and Lake Tahoe in winter and soaked in myriad mountain view hot springs. An author of Lonely Planet's *Yosemite*, *Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks* and

Mexico guides, you can see more of her work at www.bethkohn.com.



Adam Skolnick

Los Angeles Adam Skolnick has written about travel, culture, health, sports, human rights and the environment for Lonely Planet, *New York Times*, *Outside*, *Men's Health*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Salon.com*, *BBC.com* and *ESPN.com*. He has authored or co-authored 25 Lonely Planet guidebooks. Find him on Twitter and Instagram ([@adamskolnick](https://twitter.com/adamskolnick)).



John A Vlahides

Napa & Sonoma Wine Country John A Vlahides co-hosts the TV series *Lonely Planet: Roads Less Travelled*, screening on National Geographic Channels International. John studied cooking in Paris, with the same chefs who trained Julia Child, and is also a former luxury-hotel concierge and member of Les Clefs d'Or, the international union of the world's elite concierges. He lives in San Francisco, sings tenor with the Grammy-winning San Francisco Symphony, and spends free time biking

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Read more about John at:
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OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Sara Benson

Coordinating Author, Santa Barbara County, Central Coast, California's Best Wine Countries, Southern California's Best Beaches

After graduating from college, Sara jumped on a plane to California with just one suitcase and \$100 in her pocket. After driving tens of thousands of miles to every corner of this state, she settled in a little beach town halfway between San Francisco and LA. She's an avid hiker, backpacker, cyclist and all-seasons outdoor enthusiast who has

worked for the National Park Service in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The author of more than 65 travel and nonfiction books, Sara is the lead writer for Lonely Planet's *California, California's Best Trips, Coastal California* and *Los Angeles, San Diego & Southern California* guides. Follow her latest adventures online at www.indietraveler.blogspot.com, www.indietraveler.net, @indie_traveler on Twitter and indietraveler on Instagram.

Read more about Sara at:

lonelyplanet.com/members/Sara_Benson



Andrew Bender

Disneyland & Orange County, San Diego & Around, Palm Springs & the Deserts

Andy is a true Angeleno, not because he was born in Los Angeles but because he's made it his own. This native New Englander drove cross-country to work in film production, and eventually realized that the joy was in the journey (and writing about it). He writes the Seat 1A travel site for Forbes, and his writing has also appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, in-flight magazines and over three dozen

LP titles. Current obsessions: discovering SoCal's next great ethnic enclave, and photographing winter sunsets over the Pacific.



Alison Bing

San Francisco Over 10 guidebooks and 20 years in San Francisco, author Alison

Bing has spent more time on Alcatraz than some inmates, become an aficionado of drag and burritos, and willfully ignored Muni signs warning that "safety requires avoiding unnecessary conversation."



Celeste Brash

North Coast & Redwoods, Northern Mountains Celeste's ancestors moved to

Northern California in 1906 and this is the region she will always consider home. After 15 years in French Polynesia she now lives in the Pacific Northwest and was thrilled to head south to explore and imbibe the treasures of her old stomping grounds, hike snowy peaks, find petroglyphs in caves, be awed by redwoods and seduced by the wild coast. Find out more about Celeste at www.celestebrash.com.

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Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

7th edition – February 2015

ISBN 978 1 74220 619 6

© Lonely Planet 2015 Photographs © as indicated 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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