

Welcome to California

From towering redwood forests in foggy Northern California to perfectly sun-kissed surf beaches in Southern California, this Golden State alongside the Pacific is a prize.

Natural Beauty

Don't be fooled by its perpetually fresh outlook and gung-ho attitude: California is older than it seems. Coastal bluffs and snowy peaks were created over millennia of tectonic upheavals that have threatened to shake California right off the continent. After unchecked 19th-century mining, logging and oil-drilling threatened to undermine the state's natural splendors, California's pioneering environmentalists – including John Muir and the Sierra Club – rescued old-growth trees and spurred the creation of national and state parks that still astound visitors today.

Fabulous Food & Drink

Because California produces most of the fresh produce in the US, minor menu decisions here can have nationwide impact. Every time they sit down to eat, Californians take trend-setting stands on meal-time moral dilemmas: certified organic versus spray-free, farm-to-table versus urban-garden-grown, veganism versus grass-fed humanely raised meats. But no matter what you order, it's likely to be local and creative, and it had better be good. For a chaser, California produces over 90% of the nation's wine-making grapes, and has twice as many breweries as any other state.

Creative Arts & Tech

From the Gold Rush to the dot-com bubble, California has survived extreme booms and busts, often getting by on its wits. Hollywood still makes most of the world's movies and TV shows, fed by a vibrant performing arts scene on stages across the state. Trends are kick-started here not by moguls in offices, but by motley crowds of surfers, artists and dreamers concocting the out-there ideas behind anything from skateboarding to biotechnology. If you linger in art galleries, cafes and bars, you may actually see the future coming.

Road Tripping

The wonder about hitting California's highways and byways is that things get more dramatic with every winding mile you detour from the big cities – trees get bigger, picturesque towns cuter and beaches more idyllic. Hug scenic oceanfront cliffs on Hwys 1 and 101 from Mexico to Oregon, or take an equally winding jaunt through historic Gold Country along Hwy 49. Follow pastoral back roads between vineyards in California's many wine countries (it's not just Napa), or take a weekend for a loop drive around Lake Tahoe. It's enough for a lifetime of road trips.



Why I Love California

By Sara Benson, Coordinating Author

Like almost half the people who live here, California is not where I was born, but it's where I've chosen to live. I never get tired of exploring (or more truthfully, eating my way around) my adopted home state, with its vibrant multicultural mix. Summer finds me climbing mountains in the Sierra Nevada and hitting SoCal beaches, while spring is time for wildflower blooms in the desert. Fall brings wine-country festivals and the tasting of new vintages straight from the barrel. In winter, nothing beats skiing at Lake Tahoe or Yosemite National Park.

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