



Directory A–Z	504
Transportation	513
Index	526
Map Legend	534



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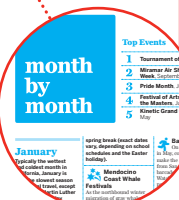
PAGE
2PLAN
YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

Welcome to Coastal

California	2
25 Top Experiences	6
Need to Know	18
If You Like	20
Month by Month	24
Itineraries	26
Beaches & Outdoors	30
Travel with Children	40
Regions at a Glance	44

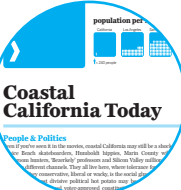
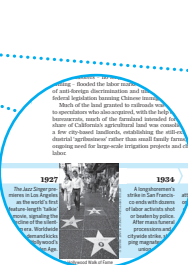
PAGE
465UNDERSTAND
COASTAL CALIFORNIA

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

Coastal California

Today	466
History	468
California Flavor	475
The People & Way of Life	482
Music & the Arts	488
Redwoods & Wild Things	494
Earthquakes & the Land	497
Sustainable California ...	501



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➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

SAN FRANCISCO48

MARIN COUNTY & THE BAY AREA100

MARIN COUNTY..... 101

Marin Headlands 101

Sausalito 104

Tiburon..... 109

Mill Valley..... 110

Sir Francis Drake Blvd & Around 112

San Rafael..... 113

Mt Tamalpais State Park.. 114

Muir Woods National Monument..... 115

The Coast 116

EAST BAY..... 121

Oakland 121

Berkeley..... 129

Mt Diablo State Park..... 139

John Muir National Historic Site 139

Vallejo..... 139

THE PENINSULA 140

San Francisco to

San Jose 140

San Jose 140

San Francisco to

Half Moon Bay 145

Half Moon Bay 147

Half Moon Bay to

Santa Cruz..... 147

NAPA & SONOMA

WINE COUNTRY 159

Napa Valley 163

Napa Valley Wineries..... 163

Napa..... 168

Yountville 172

Oakville & Rutherford 174

St Helena..... 175

Calistoga 177

Around Calistoga..... 181

SONOMA VALLEY..... 182

Sonoma Valley Wineries..... 182

Sonoma & Around 184

Glen Ellen & Around..... 191

Jack London State Historic Park..... 193

RUSSIAN RIVER AREA... 193

Russian River Area Wineries..... 193

Sebastopol 197

Occidental..... 199

Guerneville & Around ... 201

Santa Rosa 205

Healdsburg 207

NORTH COAST &

REDWOODS..... 212

COASTAL HIGHWAY 1.... 213

Bodega Bay..... 215

Sonoma Coast State Beach..... 217

Jenner 218

Fort Ross State Historic Park..... 218

Salt Point State Park..... 219

Sea Ranch..... 219

Gualala & Anchor Bay... 220

Point Arena 221

Manchester..... 222

Elk..... 223

Van Damme State Park.. 223

Mendocino..... 223

Jug Handle State Reserve 228

Fort Bragg 229

Mackerricher State Park..... 232

Westport 232

ALONG HIGHWAY 101 233

Hopland..... 233

Clear Lake 233

Anderson Valley 236

Ukiah 237

Around Ukiah 239

Willits 240

SOUTHERN REDWOOD COAST..... 242

Leggett..... 242

Richardson Grove State Park 243

Benbow Lake..... 243

Garberville..... 244

Lost Coast..... 245

Humboldt Redwoods State Park & Avenue of the Giants 247

Scotia..... 248

Ferndale..... 249

Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge 250

Eureka 251

Samoa Peninsula 254

Arcata..... 254

NORTHERN REDWOOD COAST..... 257

On the Road

Trinidad	257	ALONG HIGHWAY 101	306	Santa Ana	407
Patrick's Point State Park	259	Gilroy	306	Orange	408
Humboldt Lagoons State Park	260	San Juan Bautista	306	Little Saigon	408
Redwood National & State Parks	260	Salinas	307	ORANGE COUNTY BEACHES	408
Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park ...	261	Pinnacles National Monument	309	Seal Beach	408
Klamath	261	Mission San Antonio De Padua	309	Huntington Beach	409
Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park ...	262	San Miguel	310	Newport Beach & Around	411
Crescent City	263	Paso Robles	310	Laguna Beach	415
Tolowa Dunes State Park & Lake Earl		San Luis Obispo	312	San Juan Capistrano ...	419
Wildlife Area	264	Avila Beach	317	Dana Point & Around ...	420
Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park ...	265	Pismo Beach	320		
Pelican Beach State Park	265	La Purísima Mission State Historic Park	322	SAN DIEGO	421
		Santa Barbara Wine Country	322	NORTH COUNTY COAST ..	457
		Santa Barbara	327	Del Mar	457
		Channel Islands National Park	336	Solana Beach	460
		Ventura	338	Cardiff-by-the-Sea	460
CENTRAL COAST ...	267			Encinitas	461
ALONG HIGHWAY 1	269	LOS ANGELES	341	Carlsbad	461
Santa Cruz	269	AROUND LOS ANGELES ..	389	Oceanside	463
Around Santa Cruz	277	Six Flags Magic Mountain & Hurricane Harbor	389		
Monterey	278	Catalina Island	389		
Pacific Grove	287	Big Bear Lake	390		
Carmel-by-the-Sea	288				
Big Sur	291	DISNEYLAND & ORANGE COUNTY ...	393		
Point Piedras Blancas	299	DISNEYLAND & ANAHEIM	395		
Hearst Castle	299	AROUND DISNEYLAND ...	407		
San Simeon	300	Buena Park	407		
Cambria	301				
Cayucos	302				
Morro Bay	303				
Montaña de Oro State Park	305				



Disneyland

SoCal's biggest
theme park (p395)

San Diego

Wet 'n' wild
surf city (p421)

Big Sur

Get lost with bohemian
beatniks (p291)

San Luis Obispo

Laid-back beaches and farm-to-table cuisine (p312)

Santa Barbara

Posh 'American Riviera' lifestyle (p327)

Channel Islands

SoCal's offshore
archipelago beckons (p336)

Los Angeles

See stars on the
boulevards (p341)

Orange County Beaches

Surf style with
arty flair (p408)





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Disneyland & Orange County, San Diego Though she travels all over Latin America to write about glaciers, penguins and giant turtles, the sunshine and sailboats of southern California always draw Bridget back to the USA. She covers food, wine, hotels and adventure travel for *Afar*, *Budget Travel*, *Jetsetter*, Mr & Mrs Smith and *Delta Sky*.

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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 Melbourne, London and Oakland, 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



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Coordinating Author, Central Coast After graduating from college in Chicago, Sara jumped on a plane to California with just one suitcase and \$100 in her pocket. She has bounced around the Golden State ever since, including just about everywhere between San Francisco and LA. She paddled, hiked, cycled and drove all along the Central Coast while researching this guide. The author of 50 travel and nonfiction books, Sara has contributed to Lonely Planet's *USA*, *California* and *Hawaii* guides. Follow more of her adventures online at www.indietraveler.blogspot.com and www.indietraveler.net, and follow her on Twitter (@indie_traveler).

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Los Angeles Andy is a true Angeleno, not because he was born in Los Angeles but because he's made it his own. Two decades ago, this native New Englander packed up the car and drove cross-country to work in film production, and eventually realized the joy was in the journey (and writing about it). His work has since appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, more than two dozen LP titles and on his blog, www.wheres-andy-now.com. Current obsessions: discovering

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San Francisco Author, arts commentator and adventurous eater Alison was adopted by California 16 years ago. By now she has done everything you're supposed to do here and a few things you're definitely not, including talking up LA bands in San Francisco bars and falling in love on the 7 Haight bus. Alison holds a graduate degree in international diplomacy, which she regularly undermines with opinionated commentary in magazines, newspapers, on public radio and in

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North Coast & Redwoods A native of central Michigan, Nate lives in Northern California and has crisscrossed the region's back roads by bicycle, bus and rental car on a quest for the biggest trees, the best camping and the hoppiest pints of beer. In addition to authoring guides on California and Latin America for Lonely Planet, he writes about music and professional cycling. He's the Jazz Editor at Rhapsody Music Service. Photos from his travels in Northern California

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OVER MORE
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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to connect with other travelers.



Three Days San Diego & North County

The best part about San Diego? It's usually at least 68°F (20°C) and sunny. Add insanely good Mexican food, beaches of all stripes, historic sites and one of the best zoos in the world (plus a separate safari park). Are you sold yet?

Pearl-like beaches stretch all the way up San Diego's **North County Coast**. Before you head northward, drive out to **Point Loma** for sweeping views, or take a ferry over to old-fashioned **Coronado**, with its famous 'Hotel Del.' Ride the Giant Dipper roller coaster at family-friendly **Mission Beach**, join the funky surfers at **Pacific Beach**, dive or snorkel in **La Jolla**, bet on horse races or soar in a hot-air balloon at **Del Mar**, and get new-agey in **Encinitas**.

If you have kids, make a beeline to suburban **San Diego Zoo Safari Park**, where giraffes, lions and zebras roam. Otherwise, head back to the city to explore the zoo- and museum-loaded **Balboa Park** and atmospheric Spanish-Mexican **Old Town**. End your trip with a wild night out in **San Diego's** Gaslamp Quarter or the trendy Hillcrest neighborhood.



Five Days

San Francisco, Marin County & Wine Country

In the hilly 7-sq-mile peninsula that is dashing, innovative and ever-evolving **San Francisco**, you can spend a day uncovering the alleyways of **Chinatown**, wandering the mural-adorned **Mission District** and climbing **Coit Tower** above beatnik **North Beach**. Then brave the fog on a cruise over to **Alcatraz** from **Fisherman's Wharf**, or lose yourself on a sunny day in **Golden Gate Park**, stopping to smell the flowers where hippies danced during 1967's 'Summer of Love.' Wherever you roam, eat everything in sight – especially anything being hawked by organic farmers or artisanal cheese and olive-oil makers at the waterfront **Ferry Building Marketplace**.

Escape the city via the landmark **Golden Gate Bridge**, which you can trek, cycle or drive across. Safely on the far side of the bay, detour down to the waterfront to photograph the floating houseboats of picturesque **Sausalito**, or go hiking and mountain-biking across the **Marin Headlands**, stopping to check in on the 'patient' seals and sea lions at the Marine Mammal Center's wildlife hospital. To really get away from it all, hop aboard the ferry from **Tiburon** over to **Angel Island**, where you can pitch a tent within view of San Francisco's city lights.

Meander north along the Marin County coast, passing the tall redwood trees of **Muir Woods National Monument**, crescent-shaped **Stinson Beach** and the turnoff to quirky small-town **Bolinas**, or veer inland to conquer **Mt Tamalpais**. Make your way to wildly beautiful **Point Reyes National Seashore**, where end-of-the-world beaches lead to long rambles, and you can spy whales in winter from the historic lighthouse. Save time for sea kayaking and oyster shucking at nearby **Tomales Bay**.

From Bodega Bay, country roads wind inland to charming **Occidental** and the vineyards of the **Russian River Valley**. Paddle a canoe downriver to **Guerneville**, with its rustic redwood cottages and vibrant summertime festivals by the beach. Truck east across Hwy 101, then turn south to tiddle in the heart of Northern California's wine country, orbiting stylish **Napa** and its countrified but still-chic cousin **Sonoma**, or head north to equally posh **Healdsburg**. Soak your road-weary bones in a volcanic mud bath at a hot-springs spa in **Calistoga** before looping back to San Francisco.



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CHRISTINA LEASE/LOVELY PLANET IMAGES ©

- » (above) Huntington Beach (p409), Orange County
- » (left) Hollywood Walk of Fame (p353), Los Angeles



One Week

Los Angeles, Disneyland & Orange County

Kick things off in **Los Angeles**, where top-notch attractions, miles of beaches and tasty food form an irresistible trifecta. Traipse along the star-studded sidewalks of clubby **Hollywood**, dive into the arts and cultural scenes of **Downtown**, and browse the many museums of **Mid-City** and West LA's hilltop **Getty Center**. Out at the Pacific's edge, sophisticated **Santa Monica** beckons with a carnival seaside pier and creative restaurants, while artsy, alternative **Venice Beach** lives and breathes boho-chic style.

Forty miles inland, make a date with Mickey at perfectly 'imagined' **Disneyland** and next-door **Disney's California Adventure**, celebrating the Golden State. Both parks are in Anaheim, not far from **Knott's Berry Farm**, America's oldest theme park, which pairs Old Western cowboy themes with futuristic roller coasters. If it's too darn hot, cool off at Knott's **Soak City USA**.

Just so you don't think Orange County is all about theme-park thrills, head to **Santa Ana** and drop by the interactive Discovery Science Center, where the whole family can virtually experience a 6.9-magnitude earthquake, or peruse the art galleries of the Bowers Museum. Catch your breath in time-warped **Old Town Orange**, clustered with vintage and antiques stores, before cruising west toward the Pacific. **Little Saigon** is not far away, where you can trade theme-park hot dogs and funnel cakes for a steaming bowl of pho.

In **Huntington Beach**, aka 'Surf City USA,' rent a board, play beach volleyball, build a bonfire after sunset – whatever, just kick back and chill, dude. Hit **Newport Beach** for soap opera-worthy people-watching by the piers and lazily pedaling a beach cruiser along the oceanfront bike path. Make a quick stop for power shopping and eclectic eats in **Costa Mesa**, then roll south to **Laguna Beach**, a former artists' colony with more than two dozen public beaches to spoil you, plus a fashionable downtown boutique shopping, gallery and cafe scene.

Slingshot back toward the I-5, stopping off at **Mission San Juan Capistrano** for a taste of Spanish colonial and Mexican rancho history. Or keep up the beach-bum attitude by slacking south to **Dana Point**, with its yacht-filled harbor and kid-friendly beach, and retro **San Clemente**, near Trestles, a year-round surf break.