

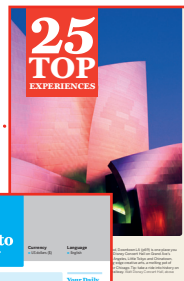
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# PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

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

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GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

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

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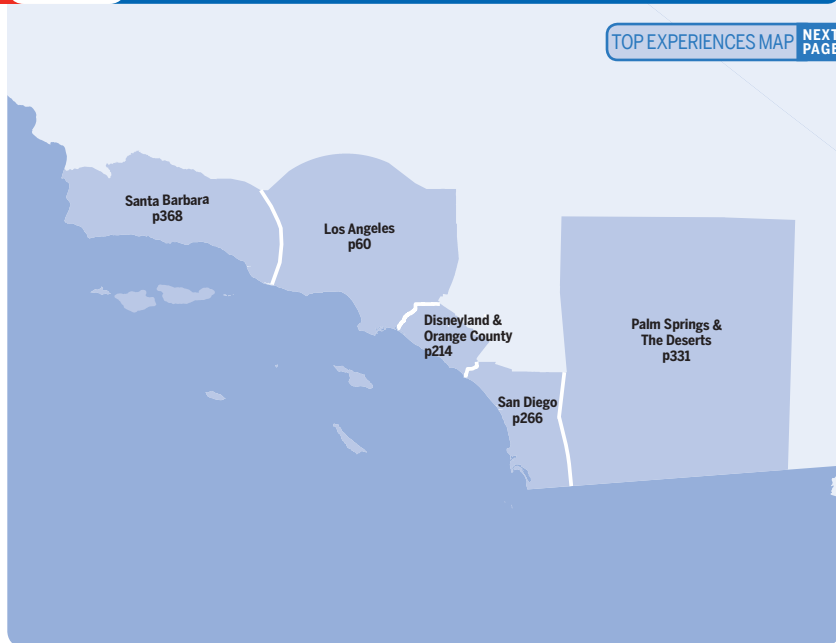


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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Sara Benson,**  
**Andrew Bender, Adam Skolnick**



**Look out for these icons:**



Our author's  
recommendation



A green or  
sustainable option



No payment  
required

# On the Road

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## Los Angeles, San Diego & Southern





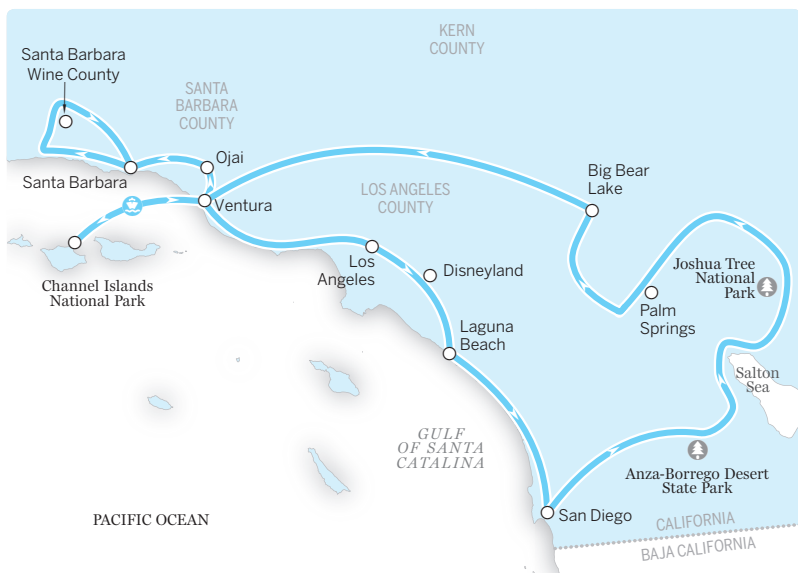
# California

## Top Experiences >



# itineraries

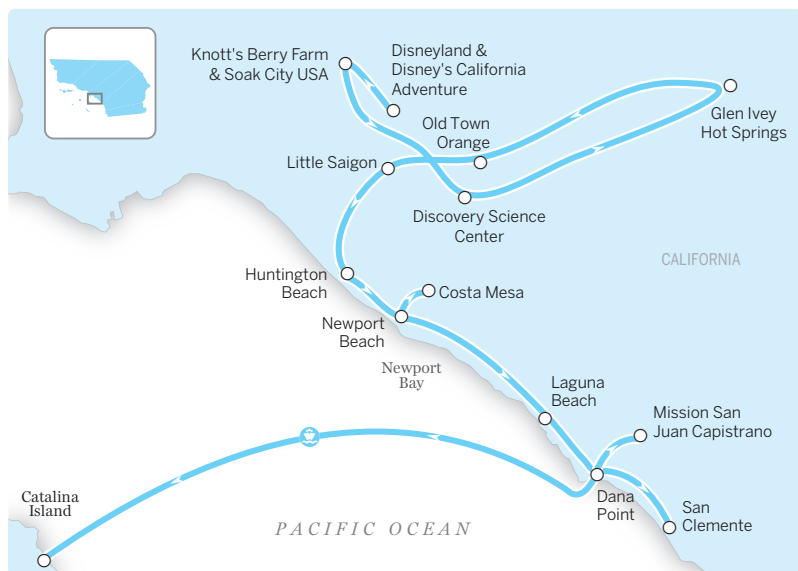
*Whether you've got three days or 30, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travelers.*



Two Weeks

## SoCal Classics

Kick things off in **Los Angeles**, where top-notch sights, bodacious beaches and tasty food form an irresistible trifecta. Follow up with a date with Mickey at **Disneyland** or a day of sybaritic downtime in **Laguna Beach** before heading south to **San Diego** for arts and culture in Balboa Park and a wild night out in the Gaslamp Quarter. Leaving civilization behind, head out to starkly beautiful **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**. Cruise around the eerie **Salton Sea** and into iconic **Joshua Tree National Park**, beckoning with its 'Wonderland of Rocks.' Squeeze in a day of margarita-sipping and lazing poolside in **Palm Springs** before heading to **Big Bear Lake** for hiking, biking, fishing and skiing. Wind west via the scenic Rim of the World Drive to **Ventura** for a boat trip to **Channel Islands National Park**, then inland to arty, alternative **Ojai** to catch a 'pink moment' at sunset. Take a breather in seaside **Santa Barbara**, whose gorgeous Spanish-Mediterranean downtown offers boutique shopping and dining. Before heading south to LA via star-studded **Malibu**, stock up on fine pinots in the **Santa Barbara Wine Country**.



One Week

## Disneyland & Orange County

It's no secret: many of SoCal's most popular attractions are in Orange County, famed for its glorious beaches, sunny skies and cartoonish theme parks. But there's more to discover here, too, from high-tech museums to old-fashioned Spanish missions.

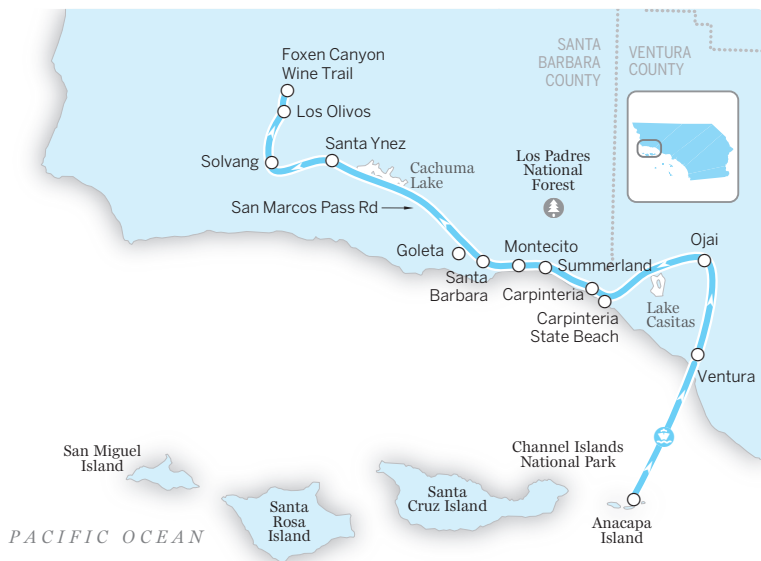
It will leave the kids thrilled and you exhausted, but there's no question an audience with Mickey at **Disneyland** is a quintessential SoCal experience. Skip down Main Street USA or dive into **Disney's California Adventure** next door. Then head to nearby **Knott's Berry Farm**, America's oldest theme park, which pairs Old Western cowboy themes with futuristic roller-coasters and classic fried-chicken dinners with boysenberry pie. If it's too darn hot, cool off at Knott's **Soak City USA**.

Just so you don't think SoCal is all about theme-park thrills, drop by the interactive **Discovery Science Center** in Santa Ana, where the whole family can virtually experience the shake, rattle 'n' roll of a 6.9-magnitude earthquake. Then leave the kiddos with a sitter and make a detour inland to adults-only **Glen Ivy Hot Springs**, aka 'Club Mud,' for a long, therapeutic soak. Back closer to Anaheim, **Old Town Orange** is another break from Disneyfied magic, with its antique and vintage shops and eclectic restaurants. **Little Saigon** is not far away, where you can trade those theme-park hot dogs and funnel cakes for a steaming bowl of *pho* (noodle soup).

Cruise toward the OC's unbeatable beaches. Take a day off in **Huntington Beach**, aka 'Surf City USA.' Rent a board, play beach volleyball, build a bonfire at day's end – whatever, just kick back and chill, dude. The next day, roll south to **Newport Beach**, for soap opera-worthy people-watching by the piers. Make a quick stop for power shopping and eclectic eats in **Costa Mesa**, then keep going to **Laguna Beach**, a former artists' colony with more than two dozen public beaches to spoil you, plus an art museum and a chic downtown shopping and eating scene.

From **Dana Point** you could catch a ferry to **Catalina Island**. Otherwise 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 the beach-bum attitude by slacking south to retro **San Clemente**, near Trestles, a year-round surf break.





One Week

## Santa Barbara & Wine Country

Leave behind star-struck LA and uncover the pacific charms of Santa Barbara and its vineyards. If you crave a little solitude first, hop a ferry over to **Channel Islands National Park** and spend a day or two exploring ‘California’s Galapagos.’ Back on dry land, oceanfront **Ventura** has a walkable downtown, plum full of vintage shops and cafes. Mountainous **Ojai** is an inland Shangri-la with an artsy pedigree, stunning scenery, a spiritual vibe and unbeatable spa experiences.

It’s less than an hour’s drive from Ojai to Santa Barbara, but why rush? Once you hit the coast, drop by **Carpinteria** for a lazy day at the beach and a plate of Mexican tacos or fresh seafood downtown, where the retro main street is lined with surf shacks and unusual shops. Just up Hwy 101, **Summerland** and **Montecito** are more affluent suburbs, beloved by antiques, art and boutique shoppers.

Ah, **Santa Barbara**. Strut down State St, with its quaint sea of red-tile roofs, then climb to the top of the courthouse for bird’s-eye vistas. Down at Stearns Wharf, dig into a bowl of chowder on the pier. Meet local hotties in a pickup game of volleyball on East Beach, or take your sweetheart to romantic Butterfly Beach. If fog hides the ocean views, Santa Barbara’s ‘Queen of the Missions’ awaits inland, as do jewel-like museums, from art and rare manuscripts to maritime and Spanish colonial history. After dark, university students light up downtown’s bars and live-music clubs.

Santa Barbara lies at the edge of the **Los Padres National Forest**, an outdoor wonderland of rocks, creeks and waterfalls great for overnight camping. Or take a scenic drive on **San Marcos Pass Rd** (Hwy 154) past Cachuma Lake up to the farming and ranch town of **Santa Ynez**, a back door to Santa Barbara’s wine country. Drive west to kitschy Danish **Solvang**, with its pancake houses, faux windmills and tiny mission, then north to the hoity-toity village of **Los Olivos**. From there, follow the **Foxen Canyon Wine Trail**, which lazily winds on back roads past big-shouldered wineries and small artisan producers, where you can tipple to your heart’s content.



Three Days

## Los Angeles: No Car Required

Hollywood Walk of Fame. Walt Disney Concert Hall. Melrose Ave. Beverly Hills. The beaches. Yup, it can all be done in LA without a car, we promise. You'll need patience, an open mind, a good sense of direction and a couple of Metro day passes. Get an early start and plan on being back at your hotel by dinnertime. Double-check bus and subway route maps and timetables with the [Metro's online trip planner](http://www.metro.net) ([www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net)) before heading out.

Without further ado, may we present: the logistics for three fun-filled carless days in LA, the city infamous for its traffic. **West Hollywood** makes a handy base of operation and puts you within walking distance – or a short DASH bus ride – of the Original Farmers Market and Grove shopping mall, Mid-City's Museum Row, fashion-forward shopping on Melrose Ave and hip restaurants and bars.

Explore your immediate surroundings on day one, then the following morning catch the DASH bus north on La Cienega Blvd, then east along the legendary **Sunset Strip to Hollywood Boulevard**. Explore the famous star-studded walk, then board the **Metro Rail** Red Line subway at Hollywood & Highland and head to **Union Station** in downtown LA. Spend the afternoon exploring downtown's neighborhoods on foot, making sure to return to Union Station before 5pm to catch the Red Line to Pershing Sq, then take Metro Rapid Bus 720 from Broadway & 5th St west to Fairfax & Wilshire, catching the last DASH bus at 6pm.

On day three, pack a swimsuit because you're headed to the beach. But first, Beverly Hills. Board the DASH bus on La Cienega, transferring to the Metro Rapid 720 west bus at Fairfax & Wilshire. Get off at **Rodeo Drive** for a whiff of the lifestyles of the rich and famous and perhaps breakfast at Nate 'n Al delicatessen. Then it's back on the bus and on to **Santa Monica**. Spend a couple of hours on the sands, check out the pier or squeeze in some shopping along the Third St Promenade or Montana Ave. Catch the Metro Rapid 720 east no later than 5pm, again transferring to the last 6pm DASH at Wilshire & Fairfax.



## One Week

**Pacific Coast Highway**

Drop the convertible top, cue up ‘California Girls’ and step on it! This famous route hugs the Pacific throughout most of coastal Southern California.

Before you steer northward, admire the 360-degree views from **Point Loma**, the buff surfers in **Mission Beach** and the underwater treasures of **La Jolla** in San Diego. Our vote for prettiest Orange County town is artsy **Laguna Beach**, whose secluded coves, craggy cliffs and azure waves enchant. Want ritzy? Plow on to **Newport Beach**, where bobbing yachts are tell-tale signs of the rich and famous. Officially ‘Surf City USA,’ **Huntington Beach** is just up the road.

Head across the LA County line to **Long Beach**, where families find plenty of fun. Continue around the surreally beautiful **Palos Verdes Peninsula** before plunging headlong into LA’s South Bay towns: **Redondo Beach**, **Hermosa Beach** and **Manhattan Beach**. North of boho-chic **Venice**, **Santa Monica** beckons with a carnival pier, superb restaurants and shopping.

The busy coast highway delivers surreal ocean vistas en route to **Malibu**, a celebrity hideaway. Wrap up your tour in **Santa Barbara**, a symphony of red-tile roofs, wine-country restaurants and idyllic beaches.

## One Week

**Desert Escapes**

Start your trip in surfside **San Diego**, then head for the hills and **Julian**, an Old West mining town where you can pan for gold and gorge on apple pie. Drop into ginormous **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**, where dirt roads and trails lead to hidden canyon oases, Native American petroglyphs and 19th-century stagecoach stops.

Gaze into the mirage-like **Salton Sea**, then head north to retro-chic **Palm Springs**, the once-again hip resort hangout of Elvis and the Rat Pack. Then it’s goodbye to poolside cocktails and off to mystical **Joshua Tree National Park**, whose twisted namesake trees have inspired artists and poets, while its desert-baked boulders invite world-class rock climbers.

By now, you’re ready for a big-city fix: **Vegas**, baby. It’s seductive, cheesy and absolutely outrageous. Where else can you climb the Eiffel Tower, make out in a gondola and witness pirate battles with exploding pyrotechnics, all in the same day? Before you gamble away your life savings, drive west to sere **Death Valley National Park**, a jigsaw puzzle of sand dunes, sun-baked salt flats, volcanic cinder cones and mining ghost towns.



## 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



### Sara Benson

**Coordinating Author, Disneyland & Orange County, Santa Barbara** 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, in between stints living, working and backpacking abroad, including in Asia. Her travel writing features on popular websites and in magazines and newspapers including the *Los Angeles Times*. Already the author of dozens of

travel and nonfiction books, Sara has contributed to Lonely Planet's *California*, *Coastal California*, *California Trips*, *Las Vegas Encounter*, *Route 66*, *USA* and *USA's Best Trips* guides. Her biggest surprise on this research trip? Finding authentic Japanese ramen in Orange County. Follow more of her adventures around the country and the world online at [www.indietraveler.net](http://www.indietraveler.net), [www.indietraveler.blogspot.com](http://www.indietraveler.blogspot.com) and @indie\_traveler on Twitter.

Read more about Sara at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/lostasia](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/lostasia)



### Andrew Bender

**San Diego, Palm Springs & The Deserts** Andy is a true Angeleno, not because he was born in LA 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 that the joy was in the journey (and writing about it). His work has since appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, over two dozen Lonely Planet titles and on his blog, [www.wheres-andy-now.com](http://www.wheres-andy-now.com).

Current obsessions: San Diego-style fish tacos, Palm Springs' midcentury architecture, the next great ethnic enclave and winter sunsets over the bike path in Santa Monica.



### Adam Skolnick

**Los Angeles** Adam is a third-generation Los Angeleno whose family moved from the old country to Boyle Heights, the Fairfax district and finally to Santa Monica. A freelance journalist, he writes about travel, culture, health, sports and the environment for Lonely Planet, *Men's Health*, *Outside*, *Travel & Leisure* and *Spa*. He has authored and coauthored nine previous Lonely Planet guidebooks, and a few unsold screenplays. He lives in Santa Monica and Bali, but has an increasing

fondness for Downtown and Echo Park. You can read more of his work at [www.adamskolnick.com](http://www.adamskolnick.com). His new web series, *Aspiring*, is online at [www.youtube.com/user/The-Holdingpattern](http://www.youtube.com/user/The-Holdingpattern).

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