

welcome to Northern California



Natural Splendor

Drama is in Northern California's DNA: the edge of the continent between the Sierra Nevada and the sparkling Pacific holds the west's most accessible wilderness. Even the region's major city, San Francisco, shrinks when compared to the scale of surrounding nature, as the towers of the Golden Gate Bridge get enveloped in ethereal fog and a crashing coastline encroaches from north and south along Hwy 1. The region's diversity is evident in its three national parks: steep granite canyons and rushing waterfalls in Yosemite; mist-shrouded prehistoric ferns, spectacular seaside and immense forests in Redwood; and pitch-black lava caves and thermal geysers in Lassen.

Add white water rivers that rush out of the mountains, trails that bypass innumerable peaks and the sparkling blue waters of Lake Tahoe, and Northern California's natural beauty leaves visitors gobsmacked. The region's great conservationist John Muir claimed that 'thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out...that wilderness is a necessity.' A trip here is more necessary than ever.

Food & Drink

How cruel that most people only have an appetite for three meals a day. Bordering America's most agriculturally rich valley and blessed by long growing seasons, the



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Winding paths traverse mist-covered redwood groves, granite canyons and sun-washed vineyards, and lead into the inimitable City by the Bay's wild heart. Nature, culture and adventure exist in abundance.

(left) Coastal cliffs, Marin County
(below) Pots of ceviche, Santa Barbara



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region offers amazing food. A dinner reservation might be reason enough to book the plane ticket. Even putting aside the fancy digs – revolutionary fine-dining restaurants and famed wine regions – there's *still* a burden of riches. Locals wax poetic about burritos in San Francisco's Mission District, make weekend trips up the north coast for fresh crab and have the pick of hoppy microbrews. It's all part of a food scene that's dedicated to high quality and constant reinvention (have we mentioned the fine-dining food truck trend?) where even baguettes – chewy, perfectly crusty sourdough – are sterling. Have pity on the traveling foodie, this little piece of culinary heaven might be a bit overwhelming. Deep breaths. Deep breaths.

Weekend Escapes

The wonder about hitting the byways of Northern California is that things get better with every winding mile – trees get bigger, picturesque towns get cuter, roadside swimming holes get more inviting. An idyllic escape is constantly within reach. There's the cliffside route on Hwy 1 between Big Sur and Oregon, or a winding jaunt traversing wineries and Gold Country along Hwy 49. There are looping back roads between vineyards and the B&Bs of Napa Valley, organic farm tours in Sonoma and Marin Counties and a weekend drive to the slopes around Lake Tahoe. A lifetime of weekends won't cover it, so consider calling in sick and extending the trip.