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Los Angeles, San Diego & Southern California



this edition written and researched by Sara Benson, Andrew Bender, Adam Skolnick

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Itineraries





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 **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 Rim of the World Scenic Byway to **Ventura** for a boat trip to **Channel Islands National Park**, then head inland to arty, alternative **Ojai** to catch a 'pink moment' at sunset. Take a breather in seaside **Santa Barbara**, with its gorgeous Spanish-Mediterranean downtown and offbeat Funk Zone. Before heading back to LA via star-studded **Malibu**, stock up on Pinot Noir in **Santa Barbara Wine Country**.





Top: Carnival rides, Knott's Berry Farm (p236)

(D250) Bottom: Posing for photos on the Hollywood Walk of Fame (p89). Hollywood TM and Hollywood Walk of FameTM & Design © 2014 HCC. All Rights Reserved



It's no secret: many of SoCal's most popular attractions are in Orange County, famed for its cinematic beaches, sunny skies and cartoonish theme parks. But there's more to discover here, too, from high-tech museums to historic 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 California Adventure Park** 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** water park.

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. Also near 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 either, where you can trade those theme-park hot dogs for a steaming bowl of *pho* (Vietnamese 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 around sunset – 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 or eclectic eats in **Costa Mesa**, then keep going south to **Laguna Beach**, a former artists' colony with more than two dozen public beaches to spoil you, as well as an art museum and chic downtown shopping and dining scenes.

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 small sampling of Spanish colonial and Mexican rancho history. Or keep the beach-bum attitude going by slacking south to **San Clemente**, near Trestles, a year-round surf break.



Santa Barbara & Wine Country

Leave behind star-struck LA and uncover the pacific charms of Santa Barbara and its vineyards. A sun-kissed Mediterranean climate earns this stretch of SoCal coast the nickname of the 'American Riviera,' and that's honestly not too far wrong.

If you crave a little solitude first, hop on a ferry from **Ventura** 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, bars and cafes. Mountainous **Ojai** is an inland Shangri-la with stunning scenery, artistic and spiritual vibes 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 afternoon at the beach and a plate of Mexican tacos or a burger, fries and a milkshake. Carpinteria's old-fashioned main street is lined with surf shacks and shops. Just up Hwy 101, **Summerland** and **Montecito** are more affluent Santa Barbara suburbs for antiques and boutique shoppers.

Ah, **Santa Barbara**. Strut down State St, with its 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. Then join a pickup game of volleyball on East Beach, or take your sweetheart to romantic Butterfly Beach. Santa Barbara's 'Queen of the Missions' awaits inland, as do several petite museums, from art to maritime and Spanish colonial history. After dark, explore the restaurants, bars and wine-tasting rooms of the Funk Zone, down by the railroad tracks.

Take a scenic drive on **San Marcos Pass Rd (Hwy 154)** past **Los Padres National Forest** and **Cachuma Lake Recreation Area** up to Santa Barbara's wine country. Drive west to kitschy Danish **Solvang**, with its faux windmills and historical mission, then north to hoity-toity **Los Olivos**. The **Foxen Canyon Wine Trail** lazily winds along rural roads past wineries where you can tipple to your heart's content.



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 just need patience, a good sense of direction and a couple of Metro day passes. Get an early start and know that most DASH buses don't run on Sundays. Double-check bus and subway route maps and timetables with **Metro** and **LADOT** before heading out.

Without further ado, may we present the logistics for three fun-filled carless days in LA, a 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 mall, Mid-City's Museum Row, fashion-forward shopping on Melrose Ave, art galleries and hip restaurants and bars. Spend your first day exploring the local area.

On the morning of day two, catch the DASH bus east along Melrose Ave to Fairfax Ave, transferring to Metro bus 217 up to **Hollywood Boulevard**. Explore the famous star-studded Hollywood Walk of Fame, then at Hollywood/Highland board the Metro Rail Red Line toward Downtown LA. Get off at **Union Station** and spend the afternoon exploring Downtown's vibrant neighborhoods on foot. Return to Union Station before 5pm to take the Red Line to **Pershing Square**, then walk one block northwest to **Grand Ave & 5th St** and board Metro Rapid bus 720 west to **Fairfax Ave & Wilshire Blvd**, catching the last DASH Fairfax bus north at 6:30pm.

On day three, pack a swimsuit because you're headed to the beach. But first, Beverly Hills. Take the DASH bus east along Melrose Ave and south on Fairfax Ave, transferring at **Fairfax & Wilshire Blvd** to Metro Rapid bus 720 west. Get off at **Rodeo Dr** to gawk at the lifestyles of the rich and famous. Then it's back on the 720 and on to **Santa Monica**. Spend a couple of hours at the beach, check out the pier and squeeze in shopping along **Third Street Promenade**. Catch Metro Rapid 720 back east no later than 5pm, again transferring at Wilshire Blvd & Fairfax Ave to the last 6:30pm DASH north.

PLAN YOUR TRIP ITINERARIES





Drop the convertible top, cue up 'California Girls' and step on it. This famous route starts in **San Diego** and hugs the Pacific throughout most of SoCal.

Before heading north, admire 360-degree views from **Point Loma**, buff surfers in **Mission Beach** and the underwater treasures of **La Jolla** in San Diego. Our vote for prettiest Orange County town is arty **Laguna Beach**, whose secluded coves and craggy cliffs 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 beautiful **Palos Verdes Peninsula** before plunging into LA's **South Bay** beach towns. North of bohochic **Venice**, **Santa Monica** beckons with a carnival pier 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, wineries and idyllic beaches.





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 **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, before heading 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 desertbaked boulders challenge rock climbers.

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

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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 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 the state, she decided to settle down in a little beach town on the Southern California coast. She's an avid hiker, backpacker, cyclist and all-seasons outdoor enthusiast who has also worked for the National Park Service in California. Already the author of more

than 55 travel and nonfiction books, Sara is the lead writer for Lonely Planet's *California*, *California's Best Trips* and *Discover Las Vegas* guides. Follow her latest adventures online at www.indie-traveler.blogspot.com, www.indietraveler.net, @indie_traveler on Twitter and indietraveler on Instagram. Sara also wrote the Las Vegas content of the Palm Springs & the Deserts chapter as well as the Plan Your Trip. Understand and Survival Guide chapters. Read more about Sara at lonelyplanet. com/members/Sara_Benson



Andrew Bender

Disneyland & Orange County, San Diego, 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 Lonely Planet

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Adam Skolnick

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