



CALIFORNIA

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

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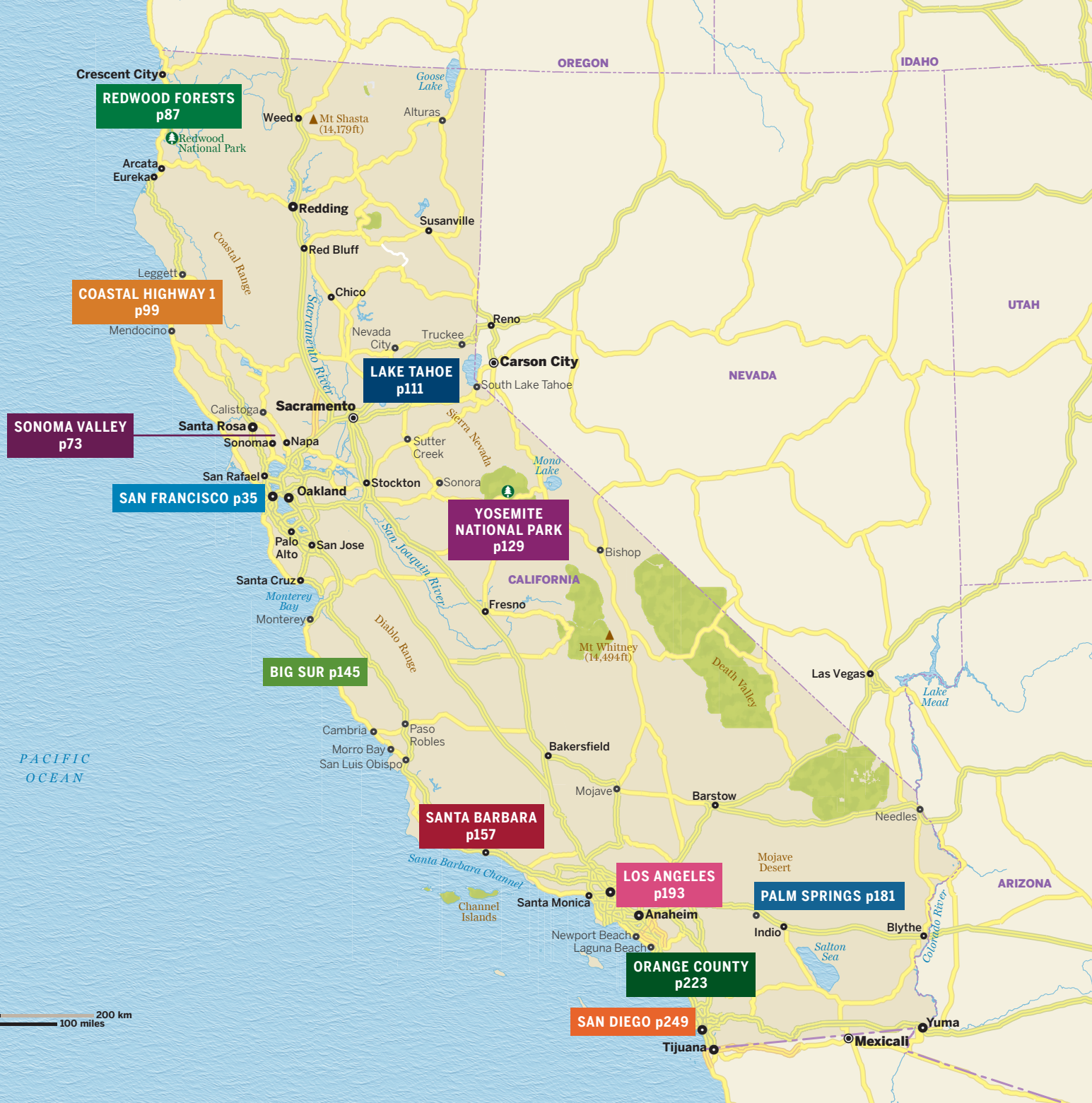
Welcome to California

From misty Northern California redwood forests to sun-kissed Southern California beaches, the siren call of the Golden State seduces travelers with its heart-aching beauty – not to mention its wildly diverse cultures, fabulous cities and mouthwatering food.

On the edge of a continent, this is a place where it seems like anything can happen – and often does. California's cities pulse with the singular energy of its people, and take on a twinkling magic as the sun sets over the Pacific and lights begin to sparkle across golden hillsides. Lamps illuminate San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter, the Hollywood sign glows as bright as the moon over LA, and Bay Bridge lights welcome San Francisco arrivals with a wink and a shimmy. Consider this your invitation to come out and play, and join the crowds at LA's star-studded nightclubs and movie palaces, San Francisco's historic LGBT hot spots and San Diego's brewpubs. Tomorrow there will be neighborhoods, beaches, spas and boutiques to explore – but tonight is a night on the town like no other.

Far from these cities, California's natural beauty is even more magical. It's no wonder that this is the home of Hollywood; the state's natural features are pure drama themselves, shaped by tectonic upheavals that threaten to shake it right off the continent. After 19th-century mining, logging and oil-drilling threatened the state's natural splendors, California's pioneering environmentalists rescued old-growth trees, reclaimed rivers and cleaned the beaches, ultimately creating national and state parks that continue to astound visitors today.

“On the edge of a continent,
this is a place where it seems
like anything can happen.”



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Sunrise at Lake Tahoe (p112)

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Plan Your Trip

California's Top 12

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San Francisco

A wonder of food, culture and beauty

As anyone who has ever clung to the side of a cable car can tell you, this city gives you a heck of a ride, from the Marina's chic waterfront to the edgy (p35) Mission District. And just when you think you have a grasp on the 'Paris of the West,' you turn another corner to find a brightly painted alleyway mural, a filigreed Victorian roofline or a hidden stairway leading up to bay-view panoramas that will entirely change your outlook. Left: Golden Gate Bridge (p38); Right: Downtown

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Orange County

Classic beaches and a Magic Kingdom

Where orange groves and walnut trees once grew, Walt Disney built his dream world. Since his 'Magic Kingdom' opened in 1955, Disneyland has expanded to neighboring Disney California Adventure to become SoCal's most-visited tourist attraction. For more OC (p223) adventures, hit the world-class beaches; while surfers hang loose in Huntington Beach and yachties mingle in Newport Beach, Laguna Beach lures them all with its natural beauty. *Laguna Beach* (p234)

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San Diego

Beaches, craft beer and an incredible zoo

San Diego (p249) is known for its golden beaches, but there's another side to this seaside town. Beautiful Balboa Park is the pride of San Diego, with Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival-style architecture along El Prado promenade and more than a dozen art, cultural and science museums. Glimpse exotic wildlife and ride the 'Skyfari' aerial tram at San Diego's world-famous Zoo or wander the streets of its historic old town. *Panda, San Diego Zoo* (p253)

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