

Welcome to Northern California

With soaring peaks, vast coastline and the tallest of the world's trees, Northern California inspires all who visit to dream that much bigger.

Natural Splendor

Mother Nature puts on a spectacular show across Northern California. In the mighty Sierra Nevada Mountains, blue Lake Tahoe is so deep that if drained it would fill the state with 14 inches of water. Yosemite National Park is home to some of the world's highest waterfalls, and the tallest trees on the planet grow in Redwood National Park. Lassen Volcanic National Park showcases a bona fide volcano, while King's Canyon has gorges deeper than even the Grand Canyon. Across the Sierra's eastern escarpment, the mountains hang like curtains above the vast high deserts of the Great Basin.

Food & Drink

Expect to eat really well – this is a region at the forefront of American culinary trends. Everything grows here, from apple trees to Zinfandel grapes, and great food and wine are a collective fetish. You need not be fancy. Locals wax poetic about the humble burrito, or a platter of fresh cracked crab, plucked that day from the sea. Napa and Sonoma are the rural outposts of the Bay Area's dynamic and progressive food scene, with restaurants by celeb chefs, you-pick-'em orchards and artisanal dairy farms producing some of the highest-grade foods anywhere in the nation.

Weekend Escapes

Idyllic escapes are never far away here – just pick your theme. For road trips, it's hard to beat coastal drives up fog-shrouded Hwy 1 to Mendocino; or down the dramatic Pacific Coast Hwy to Big Sur, a thousand feet above the crashing surf. For history, head east to explore the foothills of the Sierra Nevada and Old West towns dating to the gold rush. For outdoor adventure, go up, up, up the mighty Sierra Nevada and hike granite domes and valleys made famous by John Muir. And for world-class art and culture, you need never leave San Francisco's city limits.

Big City, Little Towns

Whether it comes from the dramatic, Victorian-clad hills, the buzzing innovations of the culinary scene, or the eccentric, larger-than-life residents, there's an unmistakable energy crackling through San Francisco, beckoning visitors. Orbiting this cultural capital, Northern California's smaller cities and towns each hold their own unique appeal. There's the vibrant diversity of Oakland, the seaside elegance of Mendocino, and the sun-drenched idyll of Santa Cruz. Nevada City is the picture of a well-preserved and charming former gold-rush town, and even Sacramento, with its historic parks and agricultural bounty, will occasionally inspire a traveler to gasp with awe.



Why I Love Northern California

By Ashley Harrell, Writer

I'll never get over the feeling of crossing the Golden Gate Bridge, its massive red towers peeking above the fog, a swirl of ocean, sky and mountains framed by suspension cables in every direction. There are things I miss about SF: sunset hikes up Bernal Hill, sipping wine and playing Balderdash on a blanket in Dolores Park, the curiously slanting floors of my Chinatown apartment. But the storybook farmlands of Point Reyes made the deepest impression, and particularly one rancher I know there, who replaced a horse's lost eye with a ping-pong ball. Only in NorCal.

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