



Northern California



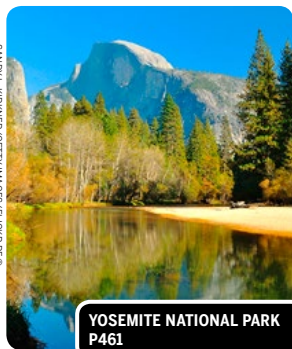
Helena Smith, Brett Atkinson, Sara Benson, Alison Bing, Celeste Brash,
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Itineraries



San Francisco, Marin County & Wine Country

This classic NorCal itinerary explores San Francisco, then heads north up the rugged coast and inland to Wine Country.

San Francisco begs exploration – its hills, cable cars, glorious bay and dynamic culture are unique in the world. Wander hidden alleyways in Chinatown, see Beat-poet hangouts in North Beach and ascend Telegraph Hill beneath flocks of wild parrots. Head to Golden Gate Park for gorgeous gardens and thrilling museums, then make for the Mission District to find colorful murals and delicious tacos. Cross the Golden Gate Bridge to the **Marin Headlands** and hike cliffs rising straight from the Pacific. Or wander among redwoods – the world's tallest trees – at cathedral-like **Muir Woods National Monument**. For a full-day trip, go whale-watching on the rugged coast of **Point Reyes National Seashore**. Stay the night.

Explore Sonoma Coast State Beach, near **Bodega Bay**, then cut inland to tiny **Occidental** and Wine Country to spend another night. Recharge in thermal springs and mud baths in **Calistoga** before sampling famous California vintages in the surrounding Napa Valley. Grab a fancy meal in downtown **Napa** and return to San Francisco via **Sonoma** to explore historic sights between visits to wine-tasting rooms.



Up the Coast

The serpentine stretch of Hwy 1 (and Hwy 101) between San Luis Obispo and the Oregon border is among Northern California's most epic road trips, connecting cute beach towns, rugged coastline and majestic redwood forests.

Start with a delicious breakfast and a stroll among the cafes and boutiques of college town **San Luis Obispo** before heading for jaw-dropping **Hearst Castle** (reservations are essential). Here begins one of America's most famous and dramatic drives: the **Big Sur** coast, 1000ft above the Pacific and lush with cypress trees. Spend at least one night between Hearst Castle and Santa Cruz. Choose your adventure: a romantic hideaway in Big Sur, the West's best aquarium at **Monterey**, or a classic beachside amusement park, complete with boardwalk and bone-rattling wooden roller coaster, in **Santa Cruz**. Or combine them over several days.

Get an early start for **San Francisco**, the thrilling urban centerpiece of the trip. Spend at least two days exploring the City by the Bay, being sure to wander through the verdant Golden Gate Park and tap into Beat-poet culture in North Beach. Then continue north for a day to the stunningly scenic **Point Reyes National Seashore** and **Sonoma Coast State Beach**, where you can pick up baguettes and some incredible cheese and stop for picnicking, tide-pooling and whale-watching. Here the coast gets wild again, with windswept bluffs and nary a traffic light. Spend a couple of nights in a seaside cottage near **Gualala** and lollygag on hidden beaches; or book a B&B in moody **Mendocino** to gallery-hop, explore rocky headlands and fall asleep beside a toasty, crackling fire.

Hwy 1 cuts inland and joins four-lane Hwy 101 at the **Lost Coast**, the North Coast's premier backpacking destination. Leave the main highway to follow the parallel-running **Avenue of the Giants**, flanked by towering redwoods. Most people turn around after the Avenue, but to see the depth of the redwood forests, keep going north. Detour from the main road for lunch in the cute-as-a-button Victorian village of **Ferndale**, or the wildly progressive college town of **Arcata**. Spend two days exploring the magnificent ancient groves of **Redwood National and State Parks** before returning south.



Northern California Classics

To see Northern California's most spectacular scenery, plan to make a loop around the entire region. Begin with a dose of big-city culture in **San Francisco**. Get a taste of the California food scene at the Ferry Building market, then hop on a ferry to notorious Alcatraz. Plan to ride a cable car, wander the waterfront, and discover the spectacular gardens and museums of Golden Gate Park. Head north over the famous Golden Gate Bridge to **Marin County** and the windswept coastline of Point Reyes National Seashore. California's most famous grapes grow nearby in Wine Country – leave time to explore the over-the-top wineries of **Napa Valley** and historic **Sonoma**. If you've extra time, get lost on back roads in the **Russian River Valley**. Wine Country meets the boondocks in hidden **Anderson Valley**, on the way north to coastal **Mendocino**, a picture-perfect New England-like village on rocky Pacific headlands above the roaring surf.

Work your way north, past Leggett, where Hwy 1 cuts inland and joins Hwy 101; here begins the Redwood Coast, home to the world's tallest trees. In **Humboldt Redwoods State Park** drive beneath towering redwoods along the Avenue of the Giants. Stop for a night in conservative **Eureka**, with its pretty waterfront and candy-colored Victorians; or let your hair down with the college kids in Eureka's left-leaning neighbor, **Arcata**. Turn east on Hwy 299 for a mountainous scenic drive toward gold-rush-era **Weaverville**, skirting the lake-studded Trinity Alps. Head north on I-5 to gape at stunning **Mt Shasta**, then head southeast on Hwy 89 to **Lassen Volcanic National Park**, that hellishly beautiful volcanic landscape in the Cascade Range. Keep trucking southeast on Hwy 89 to **Lake Tahoe**, a four-season mountain resort. Spend a couple of nights. Afterward, cut south down the Eastern Sierra and Hwy 395 to the back-door entrance into **Yosemite National Park**, via summertime-only Tioga Rd.

If you've time, tack on a drive down spectacularly scenic Hwy 395, which passes between the highest and lowest points in the contiguous US: **Mt Whitney** and Death Valley. Otherwise, after a night or two in Yosemite Valley, head west and then south to check out **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**, where you can wander groves of giant sequoias – the world's most massive living things.



Top: Yosemite Falls
(p461), Yosemite
National Park

Bottom: Alamo Square
Park (p82), San
Francisco



CANADASTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

California: Off the Beaten Track



LOST COAST

Tackle an epic backpacking route, take a day hike to Punta Gorda Lighthouse, or beachcomb in utterly remote Shelter Cove, an overnight escape. (p254)

SMITH RIVER NATIONAL
RECREATION AREA

One of the state's last undammed river systems tumbles out of the Siskiyou Mountains, into Redwood National and State Parks. Plan to hike or raft. (p269)

**LAVA BEDS NATIONAL
MONUMENT**

A geological wonderland of lava flows, spatter cones, shield volcanoes and craters. Strap on a helmet and clamber inside two dozen lava tubes. (p359)

AMADOR COUNTY WINE REGION

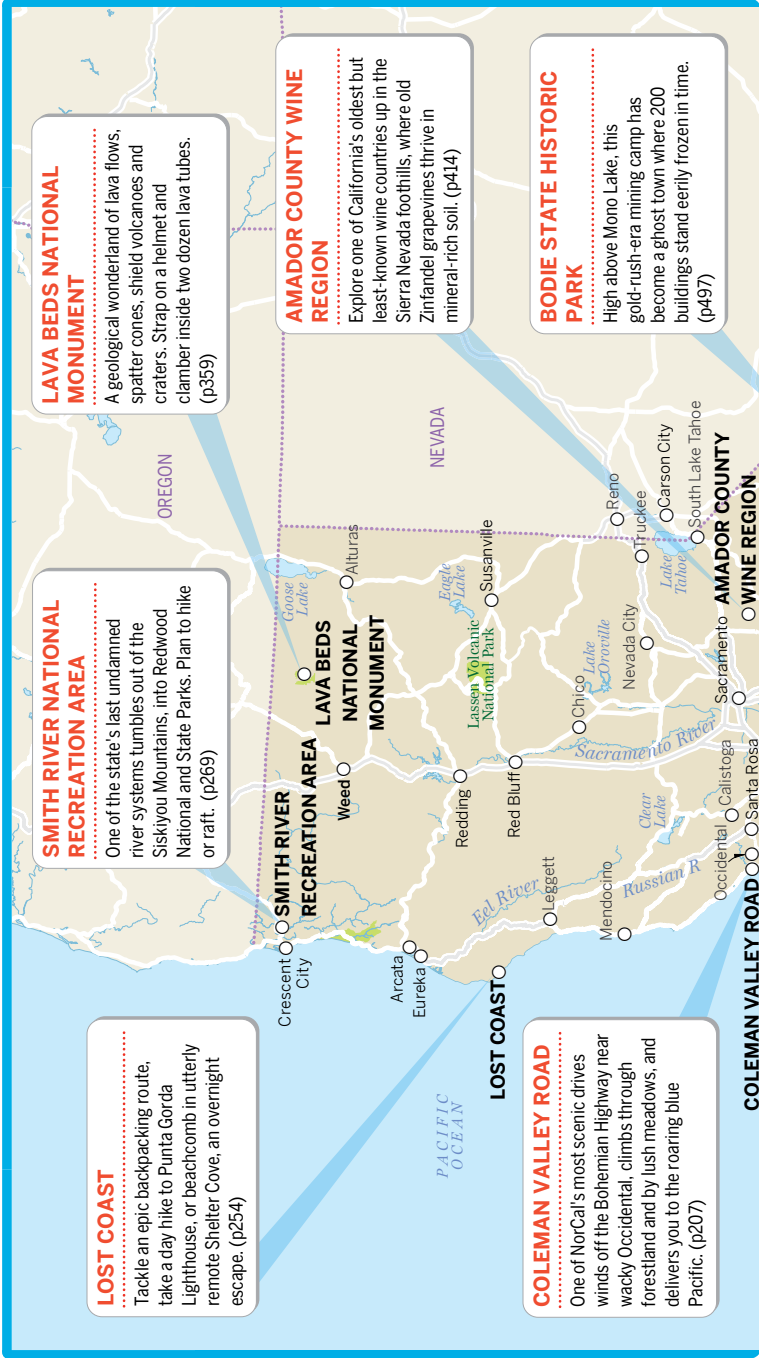
Explore one of California's oldest but least-known wine countries up in the Sierra Nevada foothills, where old Zinfandel grapevines thrive in mineral-rich soil. (p414)

COLEMAN VALLEY ROAD

One of NorCal's most scenic drives winds off the Bohemian Highway near wacky Occidental, climbs through forestland and by lush meadows, and delivers you to the roaring blue Pacific. (p207)

**BODIE STATE HISTORIC
PARK**

High above Mono Lake, this gold-rush-era mining camp has become a ghost town where 200 buildings stand eerily frozen in time. (p497)





Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkeling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- BART station
- Border crossing
- Boston T station
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/Muni station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway/SkyTrain station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Celeste Brash

Northern Mountains Like many California natives, Celeste now lives in Portland, Oregon. She arrived, however, after 15 years in French Polynesia, a year and a half in Southeast Asia and a stint teaching English as a second language (in an American accent) in Brighton, England – among other things. She's been writing guidebooks for Lonely Planet since 2005 and her travel articles have appeared in publications from *BBC Travel* to *National Geographic*. She's currently writing a

book about her five years on a remote pearl farm in the Tuamotu Atolls.



Nate Cavalieri

Sacramento & the Central Valley Nate is a writer and musician based in Oakland, California, and has authored over a dozen titles for Lonely Planet including guides to California, the Caribbean and Latin America. He also married his obsessive interest in cycling and travel as an author of Lonely Planet's *Epic Bike Rides of the World*. In other loosely professional pursuits, he's cycled across China and Southern Africa as a guide with Tour d'Afrique, played third chair percussion in

an Orlando theme park and accompanied modern dance classes. He's fortunate to make his living writing about things he loves: music, travel and social justice.



Michael Grosberg

Yosemite & the Sierra Nevada Michael has worked on over 45 Lonely Planet guidebooks. Whether covering Myanmar or New Jersey, each project has added to his rich and complicated psyche and taken years from his (still?) relatively young life. Prior to his freelance writing career, other international work included development on the island of Rota in the western Pacific, writing about political violence and helping train newly elected government representatives in South

Africa, and teaching in Ecuador. He has a Masters in Comparative Literature, and taught literature and writing as an adjunct professor at several New York colleges.



Ashley Harrell

Napa & Sonoma Wine Country After a brief stint selling day-spa coupons door-to-door in South Florida, Ashley decided she'd rather be a writer. She went to journalism grad school, convinced a newspaper to hire her, and starting covering wildlife, crime and tourism, sometimes all in the same story. Fueling her zest for storytelling and the unknown, she traveled widely and moved often, from a tiny NYC apartment to a vast California ranch to a jungle cabin in Costa Rica, where

she started writing for Lonely Planet. From there her travels became more exotic and farther-flung, and she still laughs when paychecks arrive.



Josephine Quintero

North Coast & Redwoods Josephine first got her taste of not-so-serious travel when she slung a guitar on her back and traveled through Europe and Israel in the early '70s. In the mid '70s Josephine moved to the US and launched her journalism degree as assistant editor for a wine-and-lifestyle magazine in the Napa Valley. This was followed, ironically, with a move to 'dry' Kuwait, where she was editor of the *Kuwaiti Digest* for six years until August 1, 1990 – the day Iraq invaded. After

six weeks as a hostage and escape to Turkey, Josephine moved to the relaxed shores of Andalucia in southern Spain where she initially earned a crust as a ghostwriter, mainly on autobiographies for Marbella-based crooks and minor celebrities. Throughout this time, Josephine wrote regularly for in-flight magazines. She also writes short stories and has had some minor publishing success.



John A Vlahides

San Francisco (Nob Hill, Russian Hill & Fillmore; The Castro & Noe Valley; The Marina, Fisherman's Wharf & the Piers) John has been a cook in a Parisian bordello, a luxury-hotel concierge, a television host, a safety monitor in a sex club and a French-English interpreter, and he is one of Lonely Planet's most experienced and prolific guidebook authors. A native New Yorker living in San Francisco, John has contributed to 18 Lonely Planet guidebooks since 2003. He also cohosted the

TV series *Lonely Planet: Roads Less Travelled*.



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, Dublin, 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



Helena Smith

Curator, Lake Tahoe, Gold Country Helena is an award-winning writer and photographer covering travel, outdoors and food, and has written guidebooks on destinations from Fiji to northern Norway. Helena is from Scotland but was partly brought up in Malawi, so Africa always feels like home. She also enjoys global travel in her multicultural home area of Hackney and wrote, photographed and published *Inside Hackney*, the first guide to the borough (<https://insidehackney.com>).

Her 1000-word autobiography won a *Vogue* annual writing contest, and she's a winner of the *Independent on Sunday* travel-writing competition.



Brett Atkinson

Central Coast Brett is based in Auckland, New Zealand, but frequently on the road for Lonely Planet. He's a full-time travel and food writer specializing in adventure travel, unusual destinations and surprising angles on more well-known destinations. Craft beer and street food are Brett's favorite reasons to explore places. He is featured regularly on the Lonely Planet website and in newspapers, magazines and websites across New Zealand and Australia. Since becoming a

Lonely Planet author in 2005, Brett has covered areas as diverse as Vietnam, Sri Lanka, the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Morocco, California and the South Pacific.



Sara Benson

Marin County & the Bay Area After graduating from college in Chicago, Sara jumped on a plane to California with one suitcase and just \$100 in her pocket. Today she makes her home in Oakland. She also spent three years living in Japan. She has worked as a teacher, a journalist, a nurse and a national park ranger. The author of more than 70 travel and non-fiction books, Sara's writing has featured in national and international newspapers and magazines. She has

written for Lonely Planet guides covering Peru, Japan, Malaysia, Las Vegas, California, Southwest USA, Canada, Australia and Hawaii, as well as several other Lonely Planet titles.



Alison Bing

San Francisco (Downtown, Civic Center & SoMa; Golden Gate Park & the Avenues; North Beach & Chinatown; The Haight & Hayes Valley; The Mission & Potrero Hill)

Over 10 guidebooks and 20 years in San Francisco, author Alison Bing has spent more time on Alcatraz than some inmates, become an aficionado of drag and burritos, and willfully ignored Muni signs warning that safety requires avoiding unnecessary conversation.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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