

2020 TRAVEL GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA

californiatravelguide.travel

12 UNIQUE REGIONS TO EXPLORE

17 FAVORITE DRIVES TO DISCOVER

CULTURAL RICHES

THEATER, MUSEUMS, OPERA, MUSIC

ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

EXQUISITE CUISINE

BREATHTAKING LANDSCAPES

LUXURIOUS SPAS

CLASSIC BEACH TOWNS

MAGICAL THEME PARKS

WHERE TO SHOP, HIKE, BIKE, SKI, SURF

\$6.95 DISPLAY UNTIL JUNE 15, 2020



6 2005828949 5

Naturally Awesome

Spend a day or fill a week exploring California's natural grandeur



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

First protected by Abraham Lincoln in 1864, then championed by John Muir to become a national park in 1890, Yosemite is one of America's most beloved and visited national parks. It is known for its soaring granite cliffs and majestic waterfalls as well as some of the country's most dramatic and accessible backcountry wilderness. Yosemite Valley, where most visitors spend much of their time, has a wide range of recreational activities, including cycling to see the sights, the best way to get around.

Scramble up boulders in Joshua Tree's Wonderland of Rocks. Time travel on a historic ship in San Francisco Bay. Stand beneath giant redwoods that author John Steinbeck called ambassadors from another time. Whatever your passion, California's 280 state parks and 32 national parks, seashores and monuments—whose mission is to protect the state's natural and cultural treasures—are the gateway to experiences as varied as the state's geography.

Yosemite & the Sierra Nevada

Yosemite National Park, with its glacier-sculpted valley and granite peaks, is justifiably one of the world's natural treasures. Come in spring when the waterfalls thunder to the valley floor. Come in summer when the park is abuzz with visitors to explore by tram, bike or on foot.

Choose a gentle half-hour hike or reserve a spot for the all-day climb up Half Dome. Junior Ranger Walks are popular with kids. Backpackers can enjoy the solitude of the park's high country and expert rock climbers have dozens of granite walls to scale. Don't leave the park without stopping at Glacier Point with its views of Half Dome and Yosemite Valley or at the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias to marvel at its 2,700-year-old Grizzly Giant.

To see a really big tree—the world's largest by volume—head south to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and marvel at the weighty General Sherman. While still in the mountains, take a trip to Lake Tahoe, North America's largest alpine lake. Along the lake's west shore, D.L. Bliss, Emerald Bay and Sugar Pine Point state parks offer camping, hiking and white sand



EMERALD BAY, LAKE TAHOE, left;
giant coast redwood trees at Redwood
National Park, Humboldt County,
below.

beaches. Farther north at Lassen Volcanic National Park, watch California take shape in the roaring fumaroles, thumping mud pots and boiling pools.

Giants in the Mist

While the Sierras are home to the heftiest redwoods, the state's fog-shrouded coastal range from Oregon to Big Sur boasts the loftiest—several are taller than the Statue of Liberty. These rare trees, once logged to near extinction, are now protected within California's redwood parks.

At Humboldt Redwoods State Park, home to the largest continuous old growth redwood forest on earth, drive the 31-mile Avenue of the Giants and make stops along the way to stroll among the titans. Founders Grove with its majestic 346-foot specimen is always a favorite. Visit in spring to see the pink redwood lilies and purple calypso orchids in bloom.

Farther north and closer to the coast, the Redwood National and State Parks is a collection of four parks with miles of unspoiled coast and hiking trails. The tallest recorded Coast Redwood hides here, its location kept secret to protect it. However, you can visit the remote Tall Trees Grove if you have a day to spare and want to nab one of the daily permits. But all the parks provide easy access to magnificent

groves as well as picnic sites, campgrounds and trails for hikers, cyclists and horses.

Burning Sands & Delicate Wildflowers

Miles from the coast, California's deserts are lands of extremes. Vast Death Valley National Park holds the record for the hottest temperature, driest climate and lowest elevation in North America. It is also famous for its explosion of wildflowers after winter rains. For a bird's-eye panorama, stop at Dante's View. On the valley floor, walk the Badwater Salt Flats or take an afternoon drive to Zabriskie Point to snap the garishly colored badlands. Trips to Titus Canyon and the Racetrack take you deeper into the park's unique landscape, but only for those with proper vehicles and preparation. Unfortunately the road to Scotty's Castle remains closed due to flood damage until the fall of 2021. Furnace Creek Campground, one of nine in the park, with sites for RVs, groups and tents, provides a central location for exploring the park. Because of favorable weather and temperatures, fall to spring is the park's busiest time.

The Mojave National Preserve is famous for its singing sand dunes and seven-million-year-old volcanic cinder cones. Joshua Tree National Park, a favorite with rock climbers, mountain bikers and birders, is home to the gangly tree that gives the park



its name. While both have spring wildflower displays, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is legendary. Its flowers are usually the first to burst into color—catching the park's cactus bloom is the prize.

To the Beach

A visit to California is incomplete without spending time on the beach, but not all of them are the iconic white sandy kind. You will find black sand at Sinkyone Wilderness State Park on the north coast. At the Mendocino Headlands State Park, bundle up and enjoy a beach walk with a view of the Victorian village.

Closer to San Francisco, the sweeping arc of Point Reyes National Seashore is home to a dozen beaches, with drive-up Drakes Beach and hike-in Limantour as favorites. Make your way to park headlands in early spring to view the gray whale migration.

» STATE & NATIONAL PARKS



Edging the entrance to San Francisco Bay, the beaches and cliff trails of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area are the gateways to urban adventures and historic sites such as Alcatraz Island.

Continuing down the coast to Santa Cruz and Monterey, surfing spots alternate with quiet coves that are home to sea otters and seals. Behold the thousands of monarch butterflies that winter at Natural Bridges State Beach. In Carmel, whose beauty has been long favored by plein air artists, Point Lobos State Natural Reserve is a must-visit for everyone. Big Sur's Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park offers stunning views of the rugged coast from its cliff-side trails. Access to Pfeiffer Beach, a day beach, is just south of the Big Sur Ranger Station. The road to Big Sur has reopened after the 2017 landslides but check park websites for current trail and park access information.

At mid coast, rocky cliffs finally give way to warm water and California's famous endless flat beaches. Movie buffs can camp at

Malibu Creek State Park where *M*A*S*H* and *Planet of the Apes* were filmed. And then there's Huntington Beach, a.k.a. Surf City USA. Huntington State Beach's soft sand, safe swimming and good surfing make it the California classic.

Rocks to Castles

California is more than its geography. Living history programs bring the past to life in many parks. At Railtown 1897 Historic State Park, ride the vintage trains that often appear in films, television productions and commercials. At Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park, visit a reconstructed village with a ceremonial roundhouse and presentations by descendants of the Miwoks. The 21 missions founded by the Spanish along El Camino Real, or the King's Highway, preserve the arrival of non-natives to California. Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, with its restored plaza and adobes, captures the period when San Diego grew from a Mexican pueblo into an American town. And then there's gold fever. Pan for gold at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park where the mineral was first discovered. Visualize a miner's life at Bodie State Historic Park, an intact ghost town from the era.

No place reflects California's big

POINT REYES LIGHTHOUSE at Point Reyes National Seashore, left; taking a day hike in Yosemite National Park, below.

dreamers better than the Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, a testament to publisher William Randolph Hearst and architect Julia Morgan. Tour the 115-room castle and imagine the presidents, publishing luminaries and Hollywood stars who gathered there. Also at mid state, climbers and birders will not be disappointed at Pinnacles, California's newest national park.

Whatever kind of experience you seek, from a city adventure to a high country trek, California's parks have a surprise in store for you. And whatever your destination, always check current conditions and access information before heading out. **CA**

» FIND YOUR PARK

Individual State Parks

www.parks.ca.gov

National Parks

nps.gov/state/CA

Campsites & Lodging Reservations

State Parks: reservecalifornia.com

National Parks: recreation.gov

Lighthouses

(many open to the public, some offering accommodations)

nps.gov/maritime/inventories/lights/ca.htm

Wildflower Updates at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

Wildflower Hotline

760-767-4684

Or check the park's website at www.parks.ca.gov.

Virtual Visits

California State Parks in partnership with Google Maps offers virtual visits to 110 state parks

www.parks.ca.gov/googletrekker