

2026

California

ROAD TRIPS

Point Dume
State Beach,
Malibu

**JOSH
MEYERS'**
FAVORITE
GOLDEN STATE
ADVENTURES

visit
California

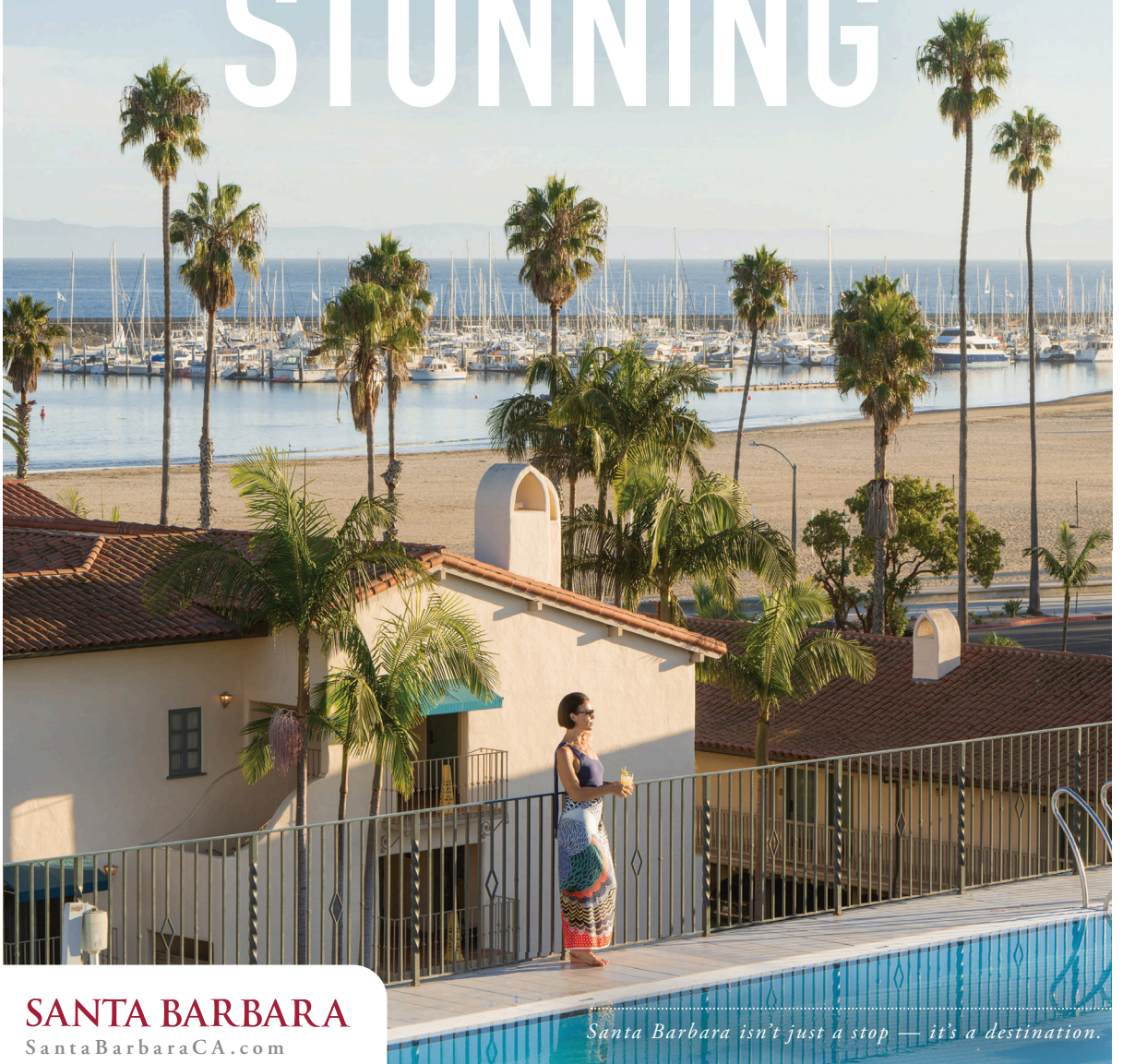
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There are vacations.

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SANTA BARBARA STUNNING



SANTA BARBARA
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Santa Barbara isn't just a stop — it's a destination.

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ON THE COVER

Josh Meyers

Actor and Los Angeles local Josh Meyers is always chasing his next California road trip adventure.

PHOTOGRAPHER
AMANDA FRIEDMAN

Marin County,
Highway 1

ON THE ROAD AGAIN...



There's nothing quite like hitting the open road in California. Every road trip reveals something new—a fresh perspective, a story waiting to be told, and the reminder that travel in the Ultimate Playground is about more than any single destination. It's about the collection

of moments, the unexpected detours, and the beauty that unfolds along the way.

This guide celebrates the journey as much as the incredible places it leads. Inside, you'll discover curated routes that reflect the best of California's diverse spirit: music history embedded in iconic hotels on the "Golden State Soundtrack" (p. 40), a surf-filled adventure worthy of the Beach Boys in "Gone Surfin'" (p. 34), and the breathtaking duality of Highways 1 and 101 in "Parallel Beauty" (p. 20).

You'll also travel alongside Josh Meyers on a heartwarming, snowy adventure to Mammoth Lakes (p. 13) that's also featured on our California Now Podcast.

These trips all leave room for choice: to plan ahead, to wander freely, or to simply see where the road takes you. California makes room for all of it.

Each of these experiences makes room for freedom—whether you plan every mile or follow your curiosity wherever it leads. That's the magic of California: There's space for it all.

Thank you for traveling with us, and for letting curiosity lead the way.

Caroline F. Beteta

CAROLINE BETETA
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
VISIT CALIFORNIA



ABOVE While filming the California Now Podcast, Josh Meyers finds fresh perspectives in one of his favorite spots, Mammoth Lakes.

BELOW Explore Graeagle, a charming northern hamlet, where shops, studios, and restaurants are housed in adorable red cabins.



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Alturas	-	577	374	281	471	689	457	724	676	144	302	810	358	419	571	676	369
Bakersfield	577	-	227	631	110	245	147	216	438	277	233	294	243	122	147	341	
Bishop	374	227	-	618	337	549	-	219	354	368	371	366	322	368			
Crescent City	281	631	618	-	549	729	470	764	834	213	375	850	365	401	585	690	302
Fresno	471	110	337	549	-	219	154	254	324	331	171	340	187	151	139	255	234
Los Angeles	689	112	267	729	219	-	321	37	107	545	385	121	382	341	201	95	428
Monterey	457	245	350	470	154	321	-	382	451	316	187	465	116	72	145	250	170
Ontario	724	147	257	764	254	37	382	-	71	580	420	114	416	375	238	132	463
Palm Springs	676	216	301	834	324	107	451	71	-	660	489	137	511	445	308	202	533
Redding	144	438	400	213	331	545	316	580	660	-	160	666	216	247	430	535	227
Sacramento	302	277	272	375	171	385	187	420	489	160	-	509	87	118	300	400	98
San Diego	810	233	354	850	340	121	465	114	137	666	509	-	502	461	325	216	549
San Francisco	358	294	368	365	187	382	116	416	511	216	87	502	-	48	232	337	55
San Jose	419	243	371	401	151	341	72	375	445	247	118	461	48	-	186	291	102
San Luis Obispo	571	122	366	585	139	201	145	238	308	430	300	325	232	186	-	106	283
Santa Barbara	676	147	322	690	255	95	250	132	202	535	400	216	337	291	106	-	388
Santa Rosa	369	341	368	302	234	428	170	463	533	227	98	549	55	102	283	388	-



0 50 mi
0 100 km

- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- California Highway
- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Capital

- California Welcome CenterSM
- NF National Forest
- NM National Monument
- NP National Park
- NRA National Recreation Area
- NS National Seashore
- SP State Park



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"Visitors often ask, 'What can I do if I only have a few hours?' My go-to answer is to explore our historic downtown or harbor. Grab a to-go picnic from one of our local delis to enjoy along the Coastal Trail. There are plenty of park benches with beautiful ocean views."

Ranger Klieak,

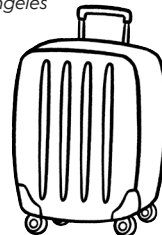
Coordinator, Visit Half Moon Bay and California Welcome Center

LOS ANGELES

“THE MOST POPULAR NEARBY ATTRACTION IS RIGHT HERE AT CITADEL OUTLETS. WE OFFER COMPLIMENTARY BAGGAGE CHECK, A LUGGAGE REPACKING ROOM (A LIFESAVER AFTER OUTLET SHOPPING), AND LUXURY RESTROOMS WITH A MOTHER’S LOUNGE.”

Cynthia Schmitt Easey,

Director, Global Sales & Marketing at the California Welcome Center at Citadel Outlets, Los Angeles



WHAT'S YOUR BEST INSIDER TIP FOR VISITORS?

A stop at one of the 22 California Welcome Centers is more than just a chance to stretch your legs. Visitors can charge an EV, snag deals for big-name attractions, and pick up free guides. Here are a few travel tips from the CWC experts.



OCEANSIDE

You don't need a fishing permit at Oceanside Pier, one of the longest wooden over-water piers on the West Coast. We partner with Oceanside Adventures to offer discounted whale-watching tours and even handle the reservations. Plus, our vintage VW Bug is perfect for selfies.

Lydia Petroff,

Visitor Services Manager, California Welcome Center-Oceanside



FAIRFIELD

"Our Welcome Center is uniquely located inside the Jelly Belly Candy Store, so visitors can enjoy free factory tours, a fudge-tasting counter, and a café. We always recommend the Chocolate & Wine Experience at Jelly Belly with local Suisun Valley wines, and the irregular 'Belly Flops' [candies] are also very popular and offered at a deep discount."

Anand Patel,

President and CEO, Visit Fairfield



ONTARIO

"Many of our road-trippers ask for a foldout map, which may surprise some people in 2026. Others are also looking for Route 66, just a few miles north. We offer free wheelchair rentals, a public lounge with free WiFi, and snacks and drinks for only \$1 each."

Audrey Gorbachenko,

Destination Services Manager, California Welcome Center, Ontario and GOCAL

LONG LIVE **THE SCENIC** ROUTE.



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Disneyland Resort

EXTENDING THE MAGIC:

THEME PARK ADD-ONS

Visiting a theme park may have inspired your family vacation, but the fun doesn't need to stop there. These famous California parks make an ideal launchpad for more unforgettable adventures.

BY KATRINA HUNT

DISNEYLAND RESORT

Disneyland is a world all its own—populated by princesses, Jedi, and Mickey—but it also sits at the crossroads of several Southern California destinations. With a short drive you can create a totally different getaway, whether you want beaches, mountains, or desert.

BEACH WEEKEND: Dana Point

DRIVE: 33 miles southeast

WHAT TO DO: Surf, build sandcastles, lounge—and repeat—in this Orange County beach town. Take the kids to Baby Beach for calm waters perfect for paddleboarding, kayak Dana Point Harbor, pet a starfish at the Ocean Institute, or shred some waves at Salt Creek Beach.

MOUNTAIN ESCAPE: Big Bear Lake

DRIVE: 91 miles northeast

WHAT TO DO: Find fresh-air fun in the San Bernardino Mountains, where warm months mean hiking, biking, zip-lining, and paddling. During winter, Big Bear Mountain and Snow Summit resorts offer classic winter sports along with tubing and sledding—don't miss Grizzly Ridge Tube Park.

DESERT DETOUR: Palm Springs

DRIVE: 101 miles east

WHAT TO DO: Hotel pools beckon for splashy downtime in Greater Palm Springs, but be sure to also take a ride up the Aerial Tramway for expansive views of the San Jacinto Mountains. Then, say hello to the wildlife at the Living Desert Zoo & Gardens in Palm Desert. Don't miss the chance to try a few date shakes around town too.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

Since it's a working studio as well as a theme park, Universal perfectly embodies Los Angeles' Hollywood magic. It's also an easy hop to the ocean, world-class museums, and even a national park. After exploring The Wizarding World of Harry Potter

and SUPER NINTENDO WORLD, enhance your trip with some of these classic SoCal experiences.

HOLLYWOOD AND BEVERLY HILLS

DRIVE: 3–10 miles southwest

WHAT TO DO: Extend your deep dive into Hollywood culture without even changing hotels: Stroll the Walk of Fame, then take the Warner Bros. Studio Tour in Burbank. Head to Beverly Hills for potential movie-star sightings while perusing the boutiques along Rodeo Drive. Turn up the educational component by visiting the Academy Museum or the Petersen Automotive Museum, or by getting seats at a kids-are-welcome TV show taping such as *American Idol*.

SANTA MONICA

DRIVE: 17 miles southwest

WHAT TO DO: Lounge on the beach at Santa Monica or get active—rent bikes at Perry’s Cafe and pedal along the 22-mile Marvin Braude Bike Trail that traces the coastline. Add an easy extra amusement park by boarding the solar-powered Ferris wheel and more rides at Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier.

VENTURA + CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

DRIVE: 60 miles northwest

WHAT TO DO: Explore the mellow beach town of Ventura, including the carousel and paddle boats of Ventura Harbor Village. From there, take the ferry for a day trip to the blissfully remote Channel Islands National Park. Hike trails, kayak through sea caves, and keep an eye out for foxes.

EXPLORE MORE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PARKS

LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA, CARLSBAD

ADD-ONS: After LEGO-fueled fun, you’re close to San Diego’s two famous zoos: the San Diego Zoo in Balboa Park (34 miles) and its sprawling sister property, San Diego Zoo Safari Park in Escondido (26 miles). Score some beach time by heading 4 miles north of LEGOLAND to walkable Carlsbad Village and its beaches, such as the extra-wide sands of Carlsbad State Beach.

SEAWORLD SAN DIEGO

ADD-ONS: Experience the marine life and thrill rides, then head to Mission Bay, an easy-access spot for mellow waves and kayaking. You could also head north less than 10 miles to La Jolla for ocean kayaking and snorkeling, or go south 7 miles to the prime tide pooling near Cabrillo National Monument.

KNOTT’S BERRY FARM, BUENA PARK

ADD-ONS: After the rides and boysenberry pie, it’s less than 15 miles to Huntington Beach, aka Surf City USA. Take a surf lesson, play in the water, or just walk along the pier to watch the experts. For a different view, venture west about 20 miles to Long Beach, home of the world-class Aquarium of the Pacific.

INSIDER TIP

Want to build your own add-on itinerary? Theme parks are fabulously fun—but they can also involve a lot of walking and waiting. Try to alternate park days with a downtime day to visit a state park, sit on the beach, or just enjoy the hotel pool.



Channel Islands



Huntington Beach

THEME PARKS THAT MAKE THEIR OWN GREAT ADD-ON

SIX FLAGS MAGIC MOUNTAIN (NORTH OF L.A.)

This Santa Clarita park boasts the most thrill rides on the planet (19) and has both Bugs Bunny and DC Comics heroes.

GILROY GARDENS (NEAR SANTA CRUZ)

Ride a giant mushroom or twirling artichokes, and check out the whimsically shaped trees.

SIX FLAGS DISCOVERY KINGDOM (NEAR NAPA VALLEY)

Come play at this Vallejo park that’s part classic rides, part wildlife adventure.

CALIFORNIA’S GREAT AMERICA (NEAR SAN JOSE)

Check out the unique two-story carousel along with coasters and Snoopy rides.

MINOR LEAGUES, MAJOR FUN

California's Minor League ballparks
offer a front-row seat to playful traditions,
local flavor, and nonstop fun

BY BENJAMIN HILL / @THEBENSIBZ

California is home to nine (soon to be 10) Minor League teams, where tomorrow's Major League stars sharpen their skills. This collection of road-trip-worthy Inland Empire and Central Valley ballparks highlights the quirks, characters, and community pride that make Minor League Baseball one of California's most joyful summer experiences—something I've covered from the bleachers for two decades.



FRESNO GRIZZLIES

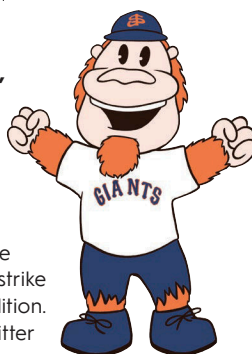
The Grizzlies at Chukchansi Park in downtown Fresno pioneered Minor League Baseball's "alternate identity" craze as the Fresno

Tacos in 2015—and the tradition lives on. Expect tributes to local culture, from lowrider "hopping" contests to creative concessions. And if you're looking to tie the knot, mascot Parker T. Bear is an ordained minister.

SAN JOSE GIANTS

Built in 1942, Excite Ballpark offers a throwback experience in the heart of Silicon Valley. The atmosphere is imbued with riotous charm, personified by the antics of beloved gorilla mascot

Gigante. Cheering for the game's "Beer Batter" to strike out is a fan-favorite tradition. (When the designated hitter does strike out, there's a 50% discount on beer for 15 minutes). Save room for a churro from Hipolito "Paul" Cerda the "Super Churros Man," a beloved park icon.



STOCKTON PORTS

Banner Island Ballpark sits along the San Joaquin River near Stockton's historic Mudville district, long linked to baseball lore. Today's experience boasts a spacious 360-degree concourse, themed seating areas, and mascot Splash, the Delta Creature.

SACRAMENTO RIVER CATS

Sutter Health Park has gotten a Major League shine, as 2025 marked the first of three seasons hosting the Athletics prior to the franchise's move to Las Vegas. The home of the River Cats offers views of Sacramento's Tower Bridge and a spacious general admission area (Home Run Hill). You'll probably spot Dinger, the team's larger-than-life river cat mascot.



(MORE THAN)
PEANUTS
AND
CRACKER JACKS

FRESNO GRIZZLIES

Tacos get the hype, but the tender tri-tip sandwich is the local must-try.

SAN JOSE GIANTS

Try smoked meats from Turkey Mike's BBQ along the third-base side.

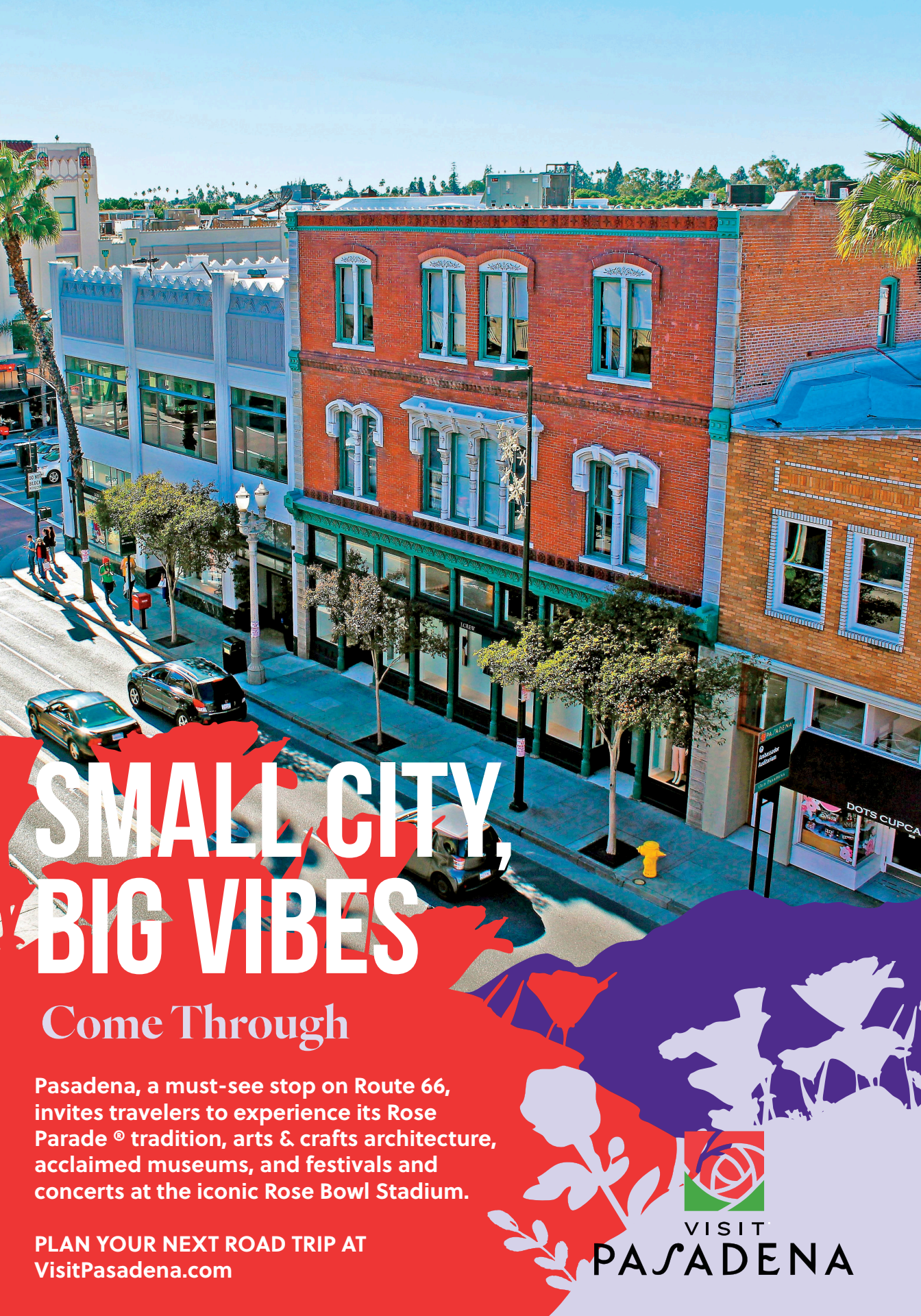
STOCKTON PORTS

Asparagus-topped hot dogs, jambalaya bowls, and loaded nachos are served in a souvenir Ports helmet.

SACRAMENTO RIVER CATS

The footlong Dinger Dog is best paired with Gold Rush Fries (topped with pulled pork, sour cream, and scallions).

TOWER BUZZERS, READY FOR TAKEOFF California's newest Minor League team, the Ontario Tower Buzzers, debuts in 2026 at the aviation-themed ONT Field—a nod to nearby Ontario International Airport and *Top Gun*.



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Visit Visalia
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Discover the Sequoias
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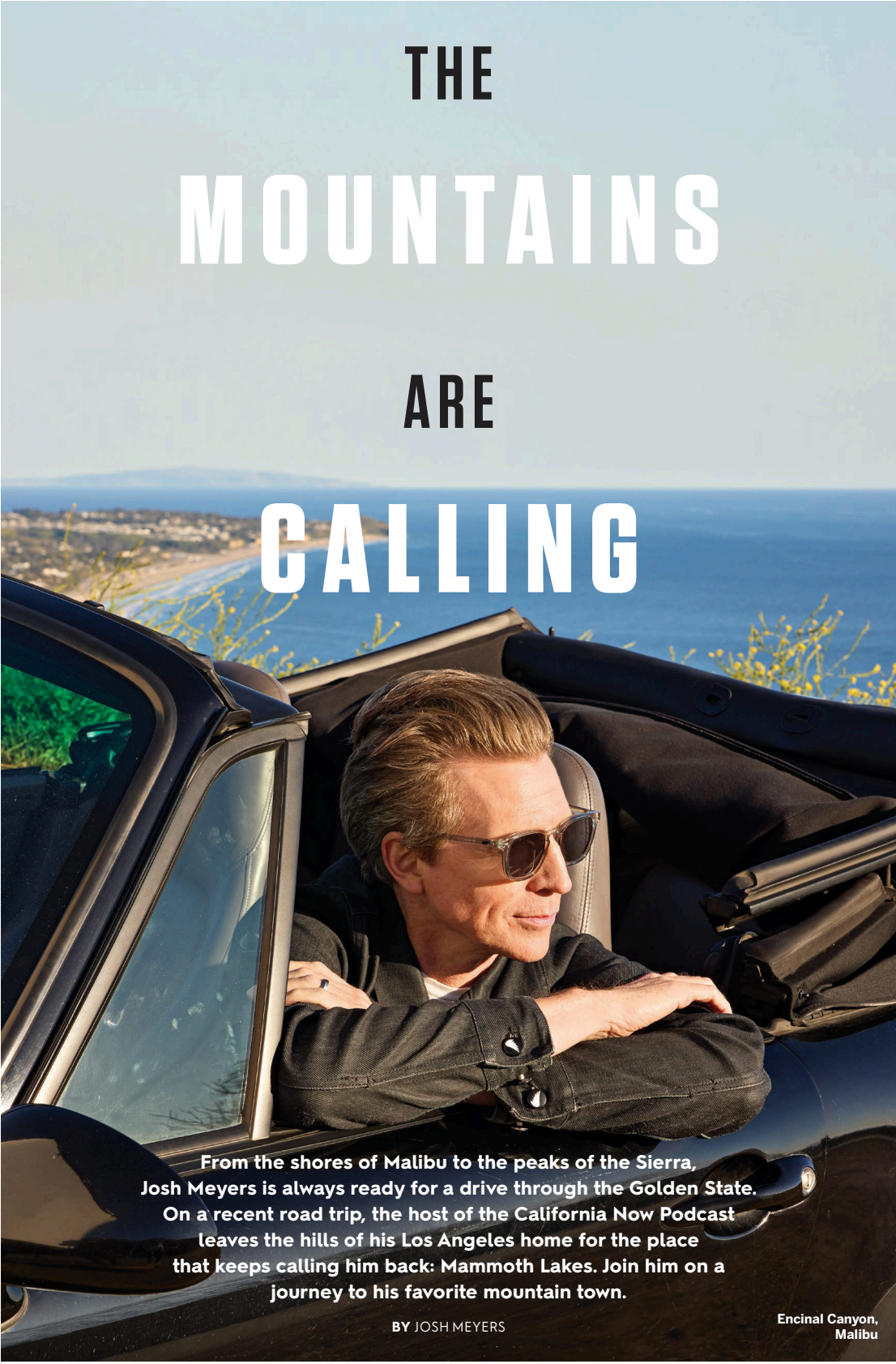
Yosemite Madera County
yosemitethisyear.com



CALIFORNIA'S
Central Valley
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visit
California

A man with light brown hair and sunglasses is sitting in the driver's seat of a black convertible car. He is looking out the window at a scenic view of a coastline with a beach and mountains in the distance. The car's top is down, and his arms are resting on the dashboard.

THE MOUNTAINS ARE CALLING

From the shores of Malibu to the peaks of the Sierra, Josh Meyers is always ready for a drive through the Golden State. On a recent road trip, the host of the California Now Podcast leaves the hills of his Los Angeles home for the place that keeps calling him back: Mammoth Lakes. Join him on a journey to his favorite mountain town.

BY JOSH MEYERS

Encinal Canyon,
Malibu

As I've gotten older, I've become a morning person. I'm typically up around 6:30 or 7 a.m. But on the morning of a trip to Mammoth Lakes, I'm up at 4:30 or 5 a.m.

I make coffee but don't drink it yet. Don't need it. I'm too amped thinking about my destination!

I usually make the drive solo. This time, I've got my dear friend Alex riding shotgun. We're technically on a work trip—filming for the California Now Podcast—but we're leaving a day early to steal some time on the mountain.

An hour outside of Mojave, the sun peeks up over the horizon. That's my cue for the first sip from my old beat-up Stanley thermos, still hot.

As day breaks, the jagged, snowcapped peaks of the Eastern Sierra are illuminated on my left. The rolling mountains of the Inyo Range are off to my right. We steadily make our way through Big Pine, Lone Pine, and Fort Independence—towns that still feel like the Wild West.

In Bishop, I consider stopping at Schat's Bakery. But I know better. One glance at the pastry case and I'd lose 45 minutes and gain three loaves of bread. Another day. The mountains are calling.

We arrive at the base of the mountain and it feels like we've arrived a day before the class field trip. The sun is out. The lift lines are a breeze. And at the moment, there's more snow here than at any other ski resort in the country.

You can ski here until June. Sometimes July. That's nuts!

We call it a day at around 3 p.m. and head back to The Village Lodge to watch a football game in front of the fire. Afterwards we drive to a favorite

spot of mine for dinner, Noodle-ly, for big bowls of noodles and broth. Just what you want after a day on the slopes.

The next morning, we get to "work." We rendezvous with Mammoth Mountain's VP Senior Advisor Clifford Mann on the summit of the mountain. This legend has been here for 60 years, and he's the kind

INSIDER TIP:

Make time for a stop at Erick Schat's Bakery in Bishop. The fresh sheepherder bread or a still-warm San Francisco roll makes the final stretch to Mammoth that much sweeter.



**FIND JOSH
IN CALIFORNIA**
*Watch or listen to
the Mammoth
Lakes episode of
the California Now
Podcast.*

Filming atop Mammoth Mountain at 11,053 feet near Dave's Run, named after resort founder Dave McCoy

“BY THE TIME I LEFT, MY TEMPLES WERE SORE FROM SMILING SO MUCH.”

JOSH MEYERS

of skier I aspire to be: calm, cool, and controlled.

As we step outside, people constantly stop him to say hello. Clifford belongs to this mountain—and it to him.

We bomb down Cornice, one of the only groomed runs off the top, and make our way around the mountain on sun-streaked bowls and fast groomers. Lunch is at The Yodler, a Bavarian-inspired slopeside restaurant famous for its Oktoberfest-style outdoor tables, schnitzel, giant pretzels, and massive beers. I toast Clifford and we say our farewells, because I've got a snow-tubing date with a mammoth.

A couple miles down the road is Woolly's Adventure Summit, a yearlong playground complete with a climbing wall, a mountain coaster, and zip-lines. I've always assumed it was just for kids. But I was proven wrong as I zoomed down the tubing hill with Woolly multiple times. By the time I left, my temples were sore from smiling so much. Day three brings another first.

I've stayed at the Tamarack Lodge before—a rustic and secluded resort perched on Twin Lakes—but I've never tried cross-country skiing. At the Tamarack Cross-Country Ski Center, I meet Olivia Amber, a former competitive Nordic skier turned pro runner, who teaches me the basics.

The first thing that strikes me is that I've never been on a proper cross-country ski trail before. They're so smooth!

The peace and solitude is exquisite. But so is the workout. I've walked through the snow many times, of course, but this is something else entirely.

When we're done, I look at

the map to see how many of the trails we've explored. And I'm slightly embarrassed to say it was maybe 3 percent of what they've got to offer. I guess that just means I'll have to come back.

Our final stop is Convict Lake, a glacier-formed lake framed by dramatic peaks. I learn more about it from our podcast guest Michelle

Kelly, the education and events manager with Sierra Forever. From ancient geology to the colorful backstory of Convict Lake's name, Michelle has the passion for education that reminded me of my best teachers growing up.

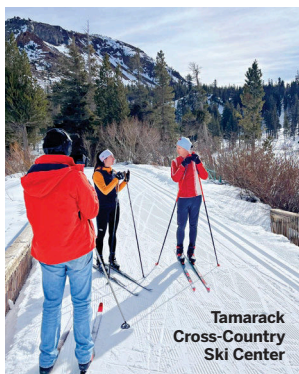
As the sun dips below the sharp peaks opposite the lake, Alex and I start our drive home. But the show's not over yet. As we drive back through the valley, the sky becomes a mix of blues, purples, and pinks before finally fading to black.

This trip has taught me that there's so much more to Mammoth Lakes. That tends to be the way most of us travel. The things we usually do end up being all we do.

But this time, as I drive into the night, I'm more conscious of everything I'm passing, yet haven't done or seen.

I haven't hiked Mt. Whitney, walked the Mobius Arch trail in Lone Pine, checked out the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, stopped to explore the formations at Red Rock Canyon State Park... and the list goes on.

I've just spent three days in the snow. And tomorrow I'll wake up in Los Angeles where it'll probably be mid-70s and sunny. Not bad, California. Not bad at all.



GATEWAY

WEEKEND GETAWAYS

**Looking to add on to your next big-city trip?
Escape to these destinations that are three hours or less
from California's major urban destinations.**

BY ANN MARIE BROWN



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: AMANDA FRIEDMAN; FIJI PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK; EMILY MARIE WILSON/SHUTTERSTOCK



Capitola

INSIDER TIP

Pick up a pie from *Pizza My Heart*, just steps away from Capitola Beach, and enjoy a leisurely picnic by the water or on the sand. When you're finished, take a stroll down the wharf and look for dolphins.

FROM LOS ANGELES

NEWPORT BEACH

45 miles southeast

A sun-drenched shoreline welcomes surfers and shoppers. Rent an electric Duffy and putt around Newport Harbor, explore the tide pools of Crystal Cove, then hit the boutiques at the upscale Fashion Island.

SANTA BARBARA

95 miles northwest

This coastal town lives in endless summer with sandy beaches and Pacific sunsets. Sip and shop your way through the Funk Zone and grab a smash burger at The Win-Dow.

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

130 miles east

Desert highways lead to a surreal landscape of spiky Joshua trees and giant boulders. Spend the day scrambling through rock formations, hiking quiet trails, and stargazing in one of California's darkest night skies.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

189 miles northwest

Time ticks slowly in this carefree college town. Admire wave-sculpted bluffs at Montaña de Oro State Park, explore eclectic stores, and linger over lunch on Novo's creekside patio.

FROM SAN FRANCISCO

LIVERMORE

45 miles east

Head to the easygoing Livermore Valley for wide-open spaces, historic wine country estates, and sunny hiking trails. Venture into neighboring towns by biking the Iron Horse Trail or sampling flavors along the Tri-Valley Ice Cream Trail.

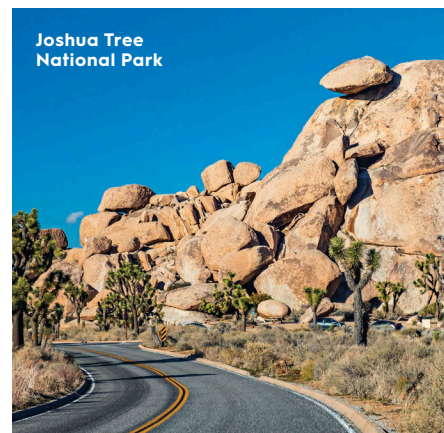
CAPITOLA

76 miles southeast

Savor the beach life in this Santa Cruz County getaway. Take a surf lesson, browse sun hats at Capitola Village, and nosh on a croissant at Gayle's Bakery.



Crystal Cove



Joshua Tree National Park

JENNER

78 miles northwest

Tune out the world in this Sonoma Coast hamlet. Kayak the Russian River Estuary, wander the bluffs at Jenner Headlands Preserve, and beachcomb along Goat Rock Beach. At sunset, clink glasses at River's End.

NEVADA CITY

161 miles northeast

Wander tree-lined streets dotted with meticulously restored Victorian homes, quaint shops, and inviting cafés.

FROM SAN DIEGO

TEMECULA

58 miles north

Home to more than 50 wineries, Temecula is perfect for slow weekends savoring blends and scenic hikes. Book a poolside cabana at Bottaia Winery and relax with sangria.

JULIAN

60 miles northeast

Step into a Gold Rush-era mountain town where pine forests and sweeping viewpoints replace the coastline in under an hour. Take a hike on the scenic trails of Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, then reward yourself with a slice of Dutch apple pie at Julian Pie Company.



LAGUNA BEACH

80 miles north

Beachcombers and culture mavens find common ground in this artsy oasis. Follow the stairs to Pirate Tower on Victoria Beach, skimboard at Aliso Beach, then tour dozens of galleries.

IDYLLWILD

111 miles northeast

This mile-high playground is laced with hiking trails and rock-climbing sites. Catch live music at Cafe Aroma, trek to Tahquitz Peak, or just inhale the pine-scented air.

FROM SACRAMENTO

AUBURN

33 miles northeast

This laid-back foothill town is packed with adventurous options. Hike or run canyon trails in Auburn State Park, raft or paddle stretches of the American River, then wind down with a craft beer at Moonraker Brewing or Knee Deep Brewing.

LODI

35 miles southeast

Lodi may be famed for its Zinfandels, but more than 135 varietals shine at its approachable wineries. Escape to the Appellation Lodi-Wine & Roses Resort and Spa and savor chef Charlie Palmer's farm-to-table cuisine.

SONORA

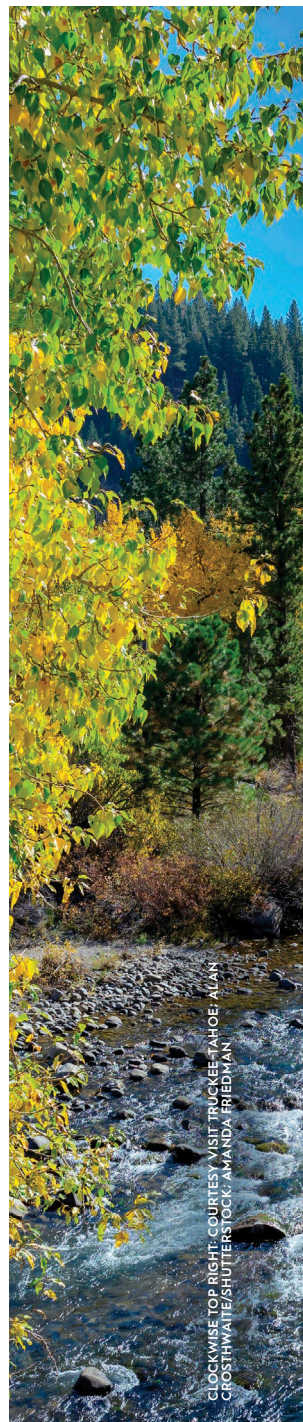
95 miles southeast

Step into the 1850s at the Tuolumne County Museum, slurp ramen at Yoshoku, and browse Local Collective's one-of-a-kind goods in this historic but hip foothill town.

TRUCKEE

101 miles northeast

From skiing to biking to tubing, this riverside village has a sport for every season. Downtown buzzes with shops, breweries, and brunch joints.



CLOCKWISE TOP RIGHT: VISIT TRUCKEE-TAHOE; ALAN CROSTHWAITER/SHUTTERSTOCK; AMANDA FRIEDMAN

**DOWNTOWN
TRUCKEE**

*The historic town
center is perfect for
window shopping.*



Truckee



PARALLEL BEAUTY

HIGHWAY 1 ——— U.S. 101

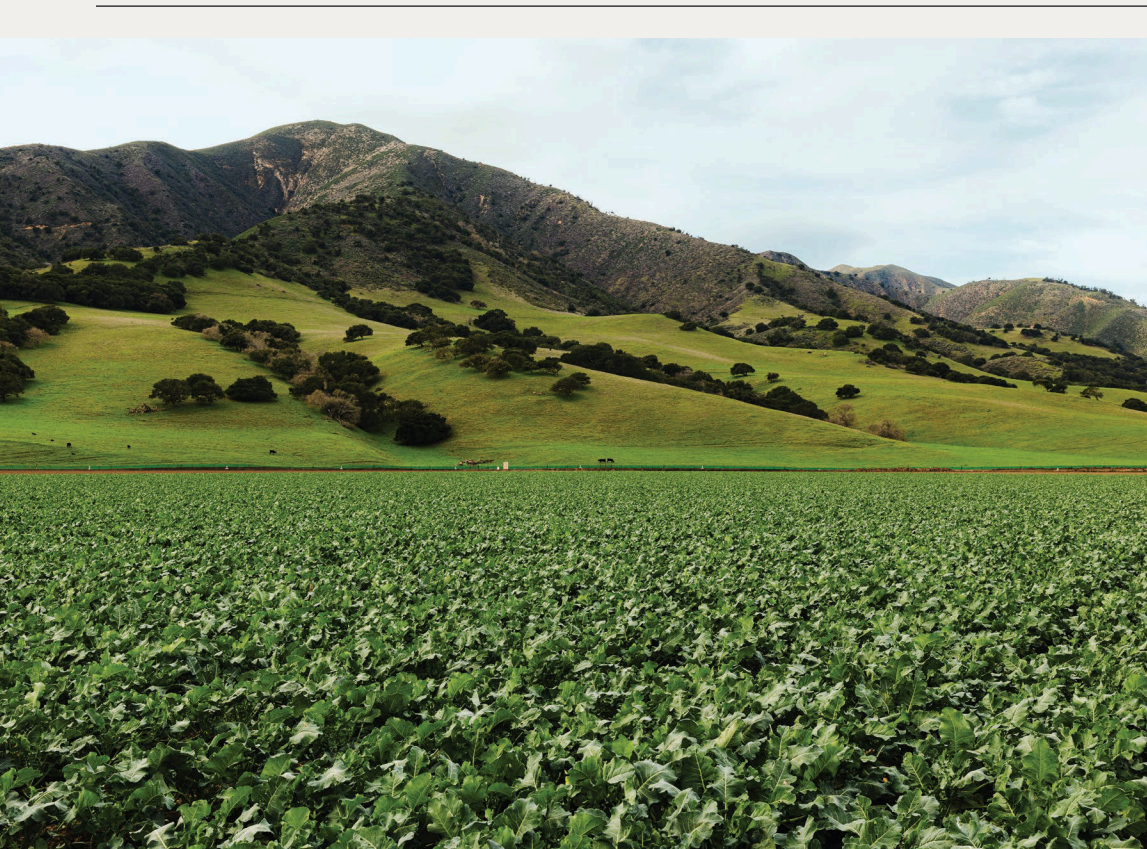
Highway 1 and U.S. 101 travel the length of the Central Coast, each offering its own brand of beauty—one dramatic and ocean-hugging, the other pastoral and sunlit. Whether you're tracing cliff edges above crashing waves or cruising through fertile valleys, these dual routes prove there's no wrong way to go.



**GARRAPATA
STATE PARK, BIG SUR**
HIGHWAY 1

Winding south from Carmel-by-the-Sea, Highway 1 offers a first glimpse of Big Sur's wild waves and craggy cliffs. At Garrapata State Park, blufftop trails lead from roadside pullouts, and an easy ramble to Soberanes Point delivers views of rocky coves and frolicking sea otters. With a short detour to Whale Peak's summit, you can scan for gray whales making their long migrations.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANE DEANER WORDS BY ANN MARIE BROWN



SALINAS VALLEY

U.S. 101

As U.S. 101 cuts through the Salinas Valley, drivers come to understand the region's nickname: Salad Bowl of the World. Leafy green rows stretch for miles, and the fertile fields produce more than one-third of all lettuce, celery, broccoli, and spinach in the U.S. each year. Wine grapes flourish near here, too, especially Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

LEFFINGWELL LANDING, CAMBRIA

HIGHWAY 1

There isn't much sand on Cambria's beaches, but this artsy seaside village wins for come-hither trails tracing its shoreline. Follow the mile-long boardwalk alongside Moonstone Beach and you will be dazzled by the sight of semiprecious stones below—wave-polished quartz, jade, jasper, or agate. At Leffingwell Landing, there's driftwood to collect, surfers to watch, and tide pools that reveal intertidal creatures.



AN INSPIRED TOUR OF SAN JOSÉ

The spirit of San José thrives on artistic and culinary expression. This creative energy is given, received and enhanced by the city and its community. Discover some of the locations that inspire great works.

VISIT
SAN JOSÉ
CALIFORNIA



BERTRAND “PATRON” PAULE

Inspired by San José's Downtown

📍 Paseo de San Antonio

“Downtown San José lives in every line of this work. Not just the view, but the mindset: the boldness to climb, to look down, despite my phobia of heights, and keep going. It's a tribute to San José's pulse, its grit, and the journey we all make chasing something higher.”



HANA LOCK

Inspired by San José State University

📍 4th Street and East San Fernando Street

“I found community and a place to unapologetically pursue my interests in the art department. It was where I could be myself, and it helped me build confidence and skills that would lead to me becoming a part of the San José art community.”

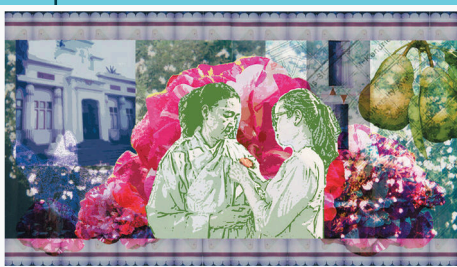


TACHIYA BRYANT

Inspired by SOFA District Downtown

📍 South First Street

“Most of the artwork created for the Got Joy series comes from the San José African American Community Service Agency's annual Juneteenth celebration, where I took most of these photos and later collaged them.”

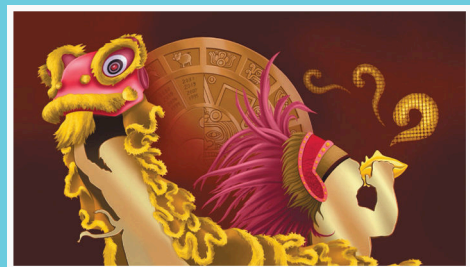


CYNTHIA CAO

Inspired by San José Municipal Rose Garden

📍 Naglee Avenue and Dana Avenue

“Between Roots and Roses is a digital collage that weaves together elements inspired by the San José Municipal Rose Garden, located in the Shasta-Hanchett neighborhood, which was once a pear and prune orchard in the late 1800s.”



ELBA RAQUEL MARTINEZ

Inspired by East Side San José

📍 Mexican Heritage Plaza at 1700 Alum Rock Avenue

“My heart stays connected to the East Side through work and my kids' school, keeping those cultural roots strong. It's become this wonderful community where art brings laughter and connection.”

CURIOUS? CHECK IT OUT AT SANJOSE.ORG

SOLEDAD MISSION, SALINAS VALLEY

U.S. 101

Beginning in 1769, Spain built a chain of 21 missions across the length of what is now California, staking out their claim to the new frontier. At Soledad Mission, 13th in the chain, the Franciscan padres constructed a chapel and dormitories, planted a vast vineyard, and raised cattle, sheep, and horses. California's mission era ended in 1834, but its architectural legacy endures in the state's red tile roofs, whitewashed walls, and bell towers.



ASILOMAR STATE BEACH, PACIFIC GROVE

HIGHWAY 1

Ask a Monterey local where to watch the sunset, and they'll probably point you here. At this westward-facing beach, low afternoon sunlight dances across the windswept surface of Spanish Bay. Start from Sunset Drive and meander north or south past rocky coves, pocket beaches, and tide pools teeming with sea stars and anemones. To skip the sand, follow the boardwalk-lined Asilomar Coast Trail paralleling the beach.

An Amazing AMERICAN ROAD TRIP



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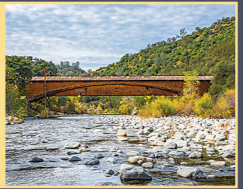


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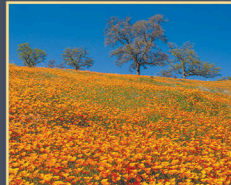
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The Heart of
Yosemite National Park



**POINT LOBOS
STATE NATURAL
RESERVE, CARMEL**

HIGHWAY 1

Just off Highway 1 lies one of California's richest marine habitats. Scuba divers can explore the sublime wonderland of 70-foot-tall kelp forests, and everyone can stroll along the headlands to admire aquamarine coves and wind-sculpted cypress trees. As you follow Bird Island Trail past the jade-green waters of China Cove, look for harbor seals, sea otters, and whales.

**HALTER RANCH,
PASO ROBLES**

U.S. 101

In the Santa Lucia Mountains, a 2,700-acre estate is dedicated to land conservation, sustainable wine making, and art just west of U.S. 101. Envisioned by Swiss entrepreneur and philanthropist Hansjörg Wyss, Halter Ranch features organically farmed vineyards planted with Rhône- and Bordeaux-style grapes. Visitors can sip, tour the underground caves, or dine at Alice, where every dish is crafted with local, sustainable ingredients.

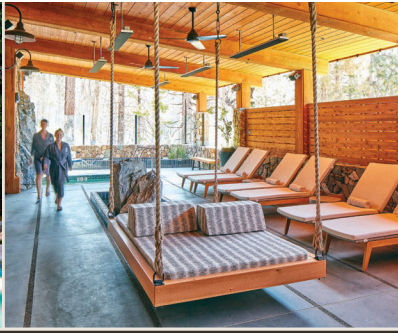




**MORRO ROCK,
MORRO BAY**

HIGHWAY 1

Defying the waves battering its ramparts, monolithic Morro Rock stands guard at the entrance to Morro Bay. The 576-foot-tall peak is the most famous of the Nine Sisters, a chain of volcanic "morros" that dot the Central Coast. You can drive to the rock's base from Highway 1, but the view is even better from Morro Strand State Beach, a 3-mile-long stretch of windswept dunes and sand.



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New to the Yosemite landscape in Spring 2024, this luxurious resort features 55 standalone Cottages and Villas situated among 300 serene acres of sprawling meadows and Sierra foothills along Yosemite's Highway 120 West corridor.

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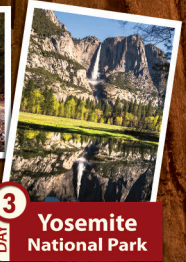
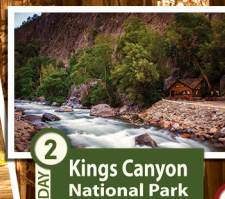
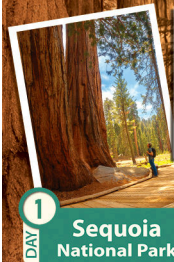
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PASO ROBLES TO CAMBRIA

HIGHWAY 46

For more than 100 miles, Highway 1 and U.S. 101 keep their distance, separated by the rugged Santa Lucia Mountains. But south of Paso Robles, a curvy byway connects them. Highway 46 snakes through the cascading hills, opening a portal from the inland valleys to the sea. Pleasures lie around every bend: boutique wineries, historic farms, and Green Valley Viewing Point, where you might catch a breathtaking sunset or glimpse of Morro Rock.

MONTEREY BAY COASTAL TRAIL

HIGHWAY 1

Monterey Bay's shoreline is best viewed at human-powered speed. The paved, car-free Coastal Recreational Trail makes it possible to walk or bike from Cannery Row to Lovers Point with nearly nonstop views of pelicans soaring, sailboats swaying, kayakers paddling, and endless waves colliding with the shore. Popular stops include the Monterey Bay Aquarium and dozens of eateries and shops.



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June Lake Loop

GONE SURFIN'

Create the ultimate surfing trip with our guide to some of California's best beach towns

470 MILES • 6 DAYS

BY JEN SEE / @IAMJENSEE

Surfrider Beach, Malibu

Do you dream of riding legendary swells, or are you ready to cross "learn to surf" off your bucket list? Here's our guide to creating your own California surfin' safari.

DAY 1 SANTA CRUZ

Santa Cruz became California's first surf city in the 1880s, when three Hawaiian princes surfed boards carved from local redwood. Cruise to the pier, where Dream Inn overlooks the much-loved waves at Steamer Lane and Cowells. Grab a breakfast burrito at The Point Market or coffee at Verve Coffee Roasters. Rent a board from Freeline, a family-owned shop in Pleasure Point, then explore surf lore in a historic lighthouse at the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum. End your evening at vintage-styled Hula's Island Grill.

DAY 2 SANTA BARBARA

Start the day with a pastry in the garden at Dart Coffee Co. Take a walk around the corner to Surf N' Wear Beach House, a classic surf shop with a rad collection of vintage boards. Then leap into the future with the latest high-performance craft at Channel Islands Surfboards. Sip local beers and relax on the patio at Rincon Brewery. Pizza at Saint Bibiana and burritos from Taquería Rincón Alteño are local favorites. Bodega Flower Girl has you covered for on-the-go snacks made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients. If you're lucky, a summer swell will light up Rincon, but the famous point shines brightest during the winter.

CATCH A WAVE

Many of these stops are called out in the Beach Boys' 1963 hit "Surfin' USA."





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**DAY 3****MALIBU**

Cruise Pacific Coast Highway to County Line—Ventura County Line, that is—and catch a wave. Grab fish 'n' chips at the landmark Neptune's Net, featured in *Point Break*. Continue to the storied Surfrider Beach, where long, alluring waves line up with almost mechanical regularity. Sleep overlooking the waves at The Surfrider Hotel, an easy walk to brunch on the pier at Malibu Farm. Traveler Surf Club & Coastal Outpost offers rentals and essentials, while John's Garden serves post-surf sandwiches. In nearby Venice Beach, Saba Surf showcases handcrafted boards and coffee in a mellow setting.

DAY 4**SAN CLEMENTE**

Spend the night camping under the stars at San Onofre Bluffs and catch the dawn patrol at "San O," the timeless longboard break. In town, Sur Coffee is an airy cafe with a sun-filled deck and ocean views. Nearby, Album Surf showcases innovative board designs in an art gallery setting. Check out Pedro's Tacos, Board & Brew, or Pizza Port Brewing Co. for easygoing eats. In the afternoon, follow the winding trail under the sycamore trees to Trestles Beach, a perfect A-frame peak. Refresh with a smoothie at Active Culture.

DAY 5**ENCINITAS**

Pull into the parking lot at Swami's, named for the onion-domed ashram that overlooks the lineup—all the characters are there. Watch the waves from the bluffs and listen to the banter. Then paddle out and join the fun. The wave's a favorite, so expect a crowd. Leucadia Donut Shoppe is a classic pre-surf stop, while Rose Hill Purveyors in Cardiff has morning treats and an enthralling

view of the ocean. Cruise PCH and look for uncrowded peaks at the area's many beach breaks. Nearby overnight options include the carefree Surfhouse, a renovated motor inn in Leucadia, or ocean-view camping at San Elijo State Beach.

DAY 6**LA JOLLA**

Get started with a Midnight Surf dark roast at Bird Rock Coffee Roasters, a breezy, open-air café. Hermosa Surf Shop has you covered for smoothies, açai bowls, and a curated collection of surf wear. Explore boards of every shape and era at Bird's Surf Shed on Morena, housed in an arched Quonset hut-style building. For newbies, Surf Diva provides rentals and lessons at the easy-rolling La Jolla Shores. Refuel with sandwiches at the Cheese Shop or sautéed mussels at El Pescador Fish Market, located across from Mitch's Surf Shop, a local favorite. Sunset dinner on the patio at Duke's La Jolla—a surf-infused restaurant named for Hawaiian legend Duke Kahanamoku—is a stunning end to the day.

BEST WAVES FOR BEGINNERS**COWELLS, SANTA CRUZ**

Easy roller under picturesque cliffs near the pier

MONDOS, VENTURA

Sand-bottom break in a protected cove, sheltered from the wind

REDONDO COUNTY BEACH, REDONDO BEACH

Classic California sand-bottom beach break

DOHENY STATE BEACH, DANA POINT

Consistent, easygoing spot with camping nearby

BOLSA CHICA STATE BEACH, HUNTINGTON BEACH

Surf City USA's quieter favorite, a soft sandbar away from the bigger waves by the pier

SAN ELIJO STATE BEACH, CARDIFF

Sand-bottom beach break with plenty of space

LA JOLLA SHORES, LA JOLLA

A favorite longboard spot and chill beach break

TOURMALINE SURFING PARK, PACIFIC BEACH

Consistent waves, long rides, friendly crowd

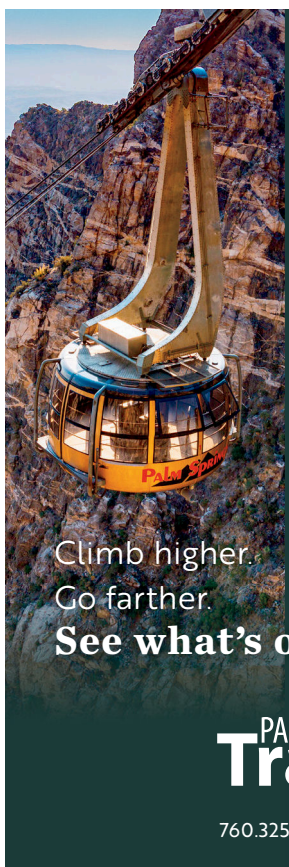
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Dragon Golf Course
at Nakoma Resort

LEFT TO RIGHT: COURTESY NAKOMA RESORT; CHRIS COUGHLIN/COURTESY PLUMAS SKI CLUB; COURTESY KATE EATERY • DRINKERY

UNDISCOVERED SIERRA

Slow down for low-key adventures in
this quiet mountain paradise

90 MILES • 3 DAYS

BY ANN MARIE BROWN

In the Internet age, no “hidden gem” is truly undiscovered, but the Lost Sierra region comes close. Sacramento is only three hours away, but there’s no hustle-bustle here. A mere 750 people live in Graeagle and Blairsdien, two charming enclaves surrounded by serene lakes, rambling meadows, and wide-open spaces. If even that sounds like a crowd, head over to Clio, where a sign reads “population 74, dogs 36.”

DAY 1

PLUMAS-EUREKA STATE PARK

Make your home base Graeagle, a revamped lumber town dotted with wood-framed, fire-engine-red cabins. They look like a Hallmark movie set, but these structures were homes for lumber company workers in the 1920s. Now they house shops and cafés: There's cappuccino at Graeagle Outpost, ice cream at Sugar Pine, grilled cheese sandwiches at Café Eatery + Drinkery, handmade jewelry at Wild Pines, and woodsy trinkets at Graeagle Mercantile.

Next, drive 5 miles west to Plumas-Eureka State Park for hikes and history. In the late 1800s, millions in gold was mined here. Admire the massive stamp mill and peruse the miners' bunkhouse—now a fascinating museum—then go find the true gold in these hills. The Jamison Creek/Grass Lake Trail leads through a red-fir forest to Grass Lake, and the Eureka Peak Loop shows off wildflowers and lofty views.

Refuel with dinner at Johnsville's The Iron Door, an atmospheric spot that serves steaks, crab cakes, and Jaeger schnitzel in a 1906 post office and general store.

A 15-minute drive takes you to Chalet View Lodge, a stylish cluster

of 52 cabins, suites, and villas on 10 scenic acres. Sip a nightcap at onsite Eureka Peak Brewing Co. or go for a dip in the pool before drifting off to sleep.

DAY 2

LAKE BASIN RECREATION AREA & GOLD LAKE HIGHWAY

Get an early start for a full day of hiking, swimming, and exploring in the Lakes Basin Recreation Area. Head for the Gold Lake Highway, a 20-mile stretch of conifer-clad forests, sparkling lakes, and hiking trails. Pack along the swimming towels—you'll want to take a dip at Gold Lake, the basin's largest body of water, and Lower Sardine Lake, which has an unbeatably dramatic setting below the jagged Sierra Buttes.

Hikers face big decisions. Dozens of trails start at the Gold Lake Highway and lead to rockbound peaks, gushing waterfalls, and gem-like lakes. Everyone can stroll the paved path to 176-foot-high Frazier Falls, best viewed in early summer when it's swollen with snowmelt. Lake lovers should ramble along the Bear Lakes and Round Lake Loop, stopping at five lakes in less than 5 miles. Peak baggers should tackle

the challenging climb to 7,818-foot Mount Elwell.

After a full day of outdoor adventure, nothing tastes better than an IPA or amber ale, so cruise over to Graeagle's Ronin Fermentation Project or Blairsden's The Brewing Lair. At both woodsy microbreweries, you'll find tasty beer and friendly folks sipping at outdoor tables.

End the day at chic Nakoma Resort, where mountain-style lodging



comes with luxurious extras like spa treatments and fabulous meals at Fifty44. Dinner might be bison carpaccio or lobster ravioli, but the cathedral-like dining room steals the limelight. A grand rock fireplace holds up a vaulted ceiling of wood and copper, and stained-glass windows let in the light. The building was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1923, but it existed only in blueprints until 2001 when Nakoma's owners brought Wright's ideas to life.

DAY 3

NAKOMA RESORT

Start the day with a round of golf. Since you're waking up at Nakoma, the Dragon Golf Course and Whitehawk Ranch are your closest options, but within a 20-mile radius lie three more breathtaking courses—Graeagle Meadows, Plumas Pines, and Grizzly Ranch—each with towering pines and beautifully manicured greens.

Non-golfers can play around at Nakoma's Altitude Recreation Center—try the climbing wall, pool, and steam rooms. Late in the day, everyone can meet in Graeagle for dinner at Cuccia's for shared plates of capellini aglio e olio where you'll toast the joys of getting lost in the Lost Sierra.



VISITING IN WINTER? Winter's biggest event is the offbeat Longboard Racing Revival Series at the historic Plumas-Eureka Ski Bowl in Johnsville. Skiers gather to race downhill on 9- to 16-foot-long wooden skis just as miners did 150 years ago. Join the fun or bring your snowshoes or cross-country skis to explore the trails of Plumas-Eureka State Park.

GOLDEN STATE SOUNDTRACK

Retrace the footsteps of the rock gods, crooners, and chart-toppers who found inspiration at these hotels and hideaways across the state

572 MILES • 5 DAYS

BY KATE EPLBOIM



Pink Floyd at Casa Madrona Hotel

California has always been a magnet for musicians. For decades, artists have checked into hillside suites, beachside bungalows, and unassuming desert motels in search of inspiration. This road trip traces the hideaways where artists from The Doors to U2 have penned hits, shaped albums, and let loose. Experience California through the eyes—and ears—of the musicians who’ve drifted their way down its coastline on this music-inspired journey.



HIGHWAY JAMS

Scan the QR code for a travel playlist for the road, packed with songs about and made in California

DAY 1

CASA MADRONA HOTEL, SAUSALITO

This trip begins at Casa Madrona Hotel & Spa in Sausalito, a laid-back coastal

town known for its vibrant houseboat community and hippie roots. Back in 1967, a little-known British rock band named Pink Floyd spent some time in the Mansion Suite during their first U.S. tour. While you can’t recreate the iconic fire-escape photos used to promote *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, you can do your best impression of Roger Waters and Syd Barrett on the 86 stairs leading up to the room. Once inside, lounge by the fireplace or take in sweet harbor views from the balcony of your suite.

Let's Go Chasing WATERFALLS

There are dozens of beautiful waterfalls dotting the landscape of UpState California! Make Redding your home base as you take a road trip through the Shasta Cascade region and explore what National Geographic called "the Golden State's waterfall mecca." Here you can find a waterfall for everyone, from engaging day-long hikes, to ADA-accessible vista points and everything in between. Get a free UpStateCA visitor guide and waterfall brochure mailed to you and start planning your waterfall chase!

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McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park can reach capacity during peak times. To avoid crowds, visit weekdays or off season. For current park details, call (530) 335-2777.



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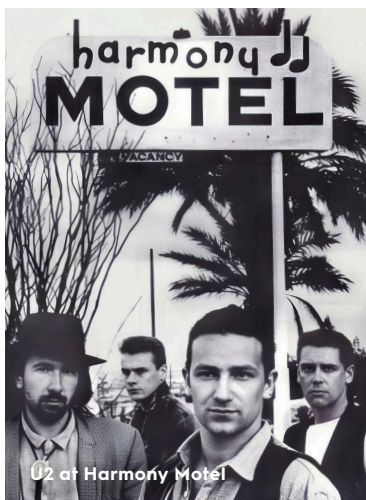
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U2 at Harmony Motel

A few doors down is No Name Bar, a funky little joint that promises live music every night. And in the summertime, Sausalito hosts free Friday concerts by the waterfront in Gabrielson Park. Bands are booked from June to the end of September.

DAY 2 FAIRMONT, SAN FRANCISCO

Before crossing the Golden Gate Bridge, grab a latte at Franko&Co, then cue up some Grateful Dead as San Francisco comes into view.

Located in Nob Hill, the Fairmont has long been a magnet for musical greats including James Brown, Ella Fitzgerald, and Nat King Cole. In its glamorous Venetian Room, Tony Bennett debuted "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" in 1961.

Once you've settled in, make a reservation at the Tonga Room & Hurricane Bar, the hotel's famous tiki bar. Built around a tropical "lagoon," the space stages an indoor rainstorm during the nightly show, as the band performs floating on a boat.

DAY 3 SKYVIEW, LOS ALAMOS

In the morning, fuel up in the Laurel Court Restaurant with a 72-layer croissant or a black truffle frittata before the next leg of your trip.

Drive south along U.S. Route 101 toward Santa Barbara. Break up the journey with a stop on San Luis

Obispo's vinyl trail, where indie shops like Boo Boo Records offer crates worth flipping through on your way toward Santa Ynez.

Wind through vineyard-lined roads to arrive at Skyview Los Alamos, a rescued roadside motel. Rumor has it The Mamas and the Papas did some California dreamin' here way back when. Pass out like a rockstar or head straight to Norman restaurant, its name a playful nod to the "Bates Motel" nickname locals used before the restoration. Spend the next day exploring this low-key wine region: Savor Michelin-praised bistro fare at Bell's, then unwind with a Hemingway Daiquiri by the adults-only pool.

DAY 4 CHATEAU MARMONT, WEST HOLLYWOOD

Trade the coast for the city and follow Highway 1 into West Hollywood, where you'll pull into the storied Chateau Marmont. Countless rock legends have found inspiration at this French Gothic castle—the Red Hot Chili Peppers created much of *By the Way* within these walls, Judy Garland played the grand piano in the lobby, and Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham allegedly road a motorcycle down the halls. Take in a high-volume set at the Whisky a Go Go where acts like The Doors, Guns N' Roses, and Mötley Crüe cut their teeth. For drinks and dancing, hit Andy's, Anderson .Paak's '70s-inspired bar with live bands and dance parties.

DAY 5 HARMONY MOTEL, TWENTYNINE PALMS

End your trip in the Mojave Desert's modest but memorable Harmony Motel. U2 famously stayed here during *The Joshua Tree* era, and later Snow Patrol tapped into its desert-edge calm. Lounge at the pool, stargaze from the hot tub, or take a short drive into Joshua Tree National Park to wander the otherworldly rock formations. Close your journey with a selfie in front of Harmony's neon sign.



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Mother Road

ROUTE 66, REIMAGINED

Content creator Evita Robinson explores living history along Route 66—where desert conservation, car culture, queer landmarks, and community pride reshape the Mother Road

125 MILES • 3 DAYS

BY EVITA ROBINSON / @NOMADNESSTRIPE



Palisades Ranch

Historic Route 66 isn't just a 2,448-mile stretch of road connecting Chicago to Santa Monica. It's a living artery of the United States that fuses together histories, communities, and cultures. We may know it from songs and Old Hollywood films, but the historic highway is also rich with lesser-known stories—ones that span Indigenous homelands, generational small businesses, and communities of color, as well as districts that honor the people who live and work along its path.

It's also got a big birthday this year—Route 66 officially turns 100 in 2026. To celebrate, I set out on a three-day journey along California's Mother Road.

DAY 1 PALISADES RANCH

California has taught me that I'm a desert girlie. Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms, Palm Springs... it's become an annual visitation. I had to kick off my road trip by paying homage to the ancestral land of the Mojave (Mohave) People at Palisades Ranch, managed by the Mojave Desert Land Trust. The organization is responsible for working with tribes for the conservation of more than 125,000 acres (and counting), including habitat for the endangered Mojave desert tortoise. Palisades Ranch is wild. Literally. Nestled along the Mojave River between the seemingly unending desert and Route 66, this

unexpected pasture of free-growing green plant life feels like a world apart. The air changes, the vegetation becomes lush, and the desert fades away. (Check for events and visitation opportunities at mdlt.org.)

Before you get back on the road, don't miss Red Hen Cafe, a quaint and quirky breakfast-and-lunch-only spot. The food is delicious, the staff is gracious, and photo opportunities here are begging to be featured on your Instagram feed.

DAY 2 ONTARIO & RANCHO CUCAMONGA

Less than a 90-minute drive from Helendale, the fourth-generation-owned Galleano Winery near Ontario



NEXT STOP: WONDER

From breathtaking scenery to unmatched outdoor adventures to wide-open space to roam, there's nothing like a long weekend or mid-week road trip to Yosemite Mariposa County. And that's not even mentioning the Gold Rush-era towns, museums, dining, shops and lodging options — from rustic cabins to first-class resorts — that call the area home as well. It's all in Yosemite Mariposa County. No matter which route you take to get here, there's an experience waiting that will change you, for all time.



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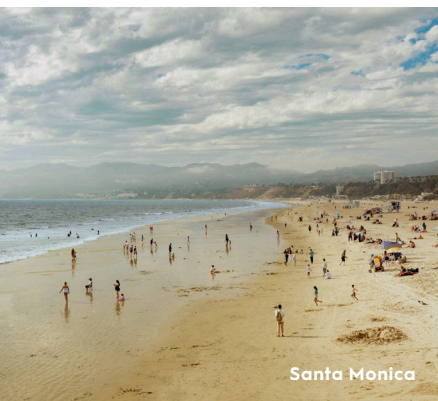


is the perfect kickback. Dating back to Prohibition, some of the winery's buildings have been granted landmark status. Set amid industrial surroundings, Galleano blends a welcoming farmhouse atmosphere with a vineyard-inspired vibe. Try the award-winning cream sherry and notable Zinfandels and linger on the open courtyard.

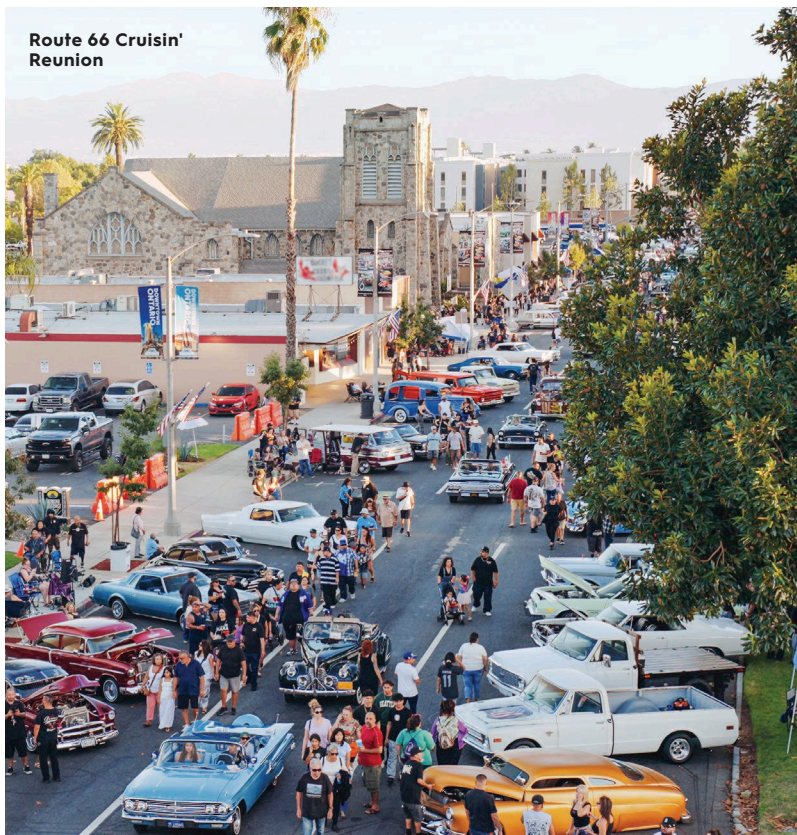
Route 66 runs along Foothill Boulevard through Rancho Cucamonga and delivers a dopamine hit of nostalgia. The renowned Cucamonga Service Station is not just an old-school gas station stop—it's also a mini museum celebrating car culture and community pride. Admire classic cars in the lot and consider buying a brick to embed your name as a part of their (literal) foundation.



Galleano Winery



Santa Monica



Route 66 Cruisin' Reunion

One of the best times to visit Ontario is during September's annual Route 66 Cruisin' Reunion, when thousands of lowrider enthusiasts and classic-car collectors line the streets of downtown to admire vintage and tricked-out vehicles. Ontario has a largely Latino population, and the beauty of this community is on full display—it's multigenerational, joyful, and unmistakably local.

Just a short walk away, Logan's Candies offers more than 600

variations of sweets. A personal favorite is the chocolate-covered honeycomb. Time your visit to coincide with one of their interactive candy-making demonstrations hosted by the owner, Jerry Rowley.

INSIDER TIP
Up for a hike? The impressive Amboy Crater is just off Route 66 near Amboy. The trek covers around 4 miles and offers out-of-this-world views.

DAY 3

WEST HOLLYWOOD & SANTA MONICA

About 90 minutes from Ontario, Route 66 takes on a bold identity as it passes through West Hollywood's newly dubbed "Rainbow District." Murals, rainbow flags, and artwork centered on LGBTQ+ themes transform the historic highway into a celebration.

One Gallery, part art space and part queer and trans archive, has been a welcome space for LGBTQ+ artists and subject matter for years. Its present location is housed just around the corner from the newly revealed AIDS Monument on San Vicente Boulevard.

As always, this route wraps up at the Santa Monica Pier. I capped off the journey by treating myself to a warm lobster roll at Seaside on the Pier and some ice cream. Breathing in the Pacific air, I paused to reflect on my desert-to-ocean journey of California.

THIS IS GONNA BE HUGE

THE NEW
ELEPHANT
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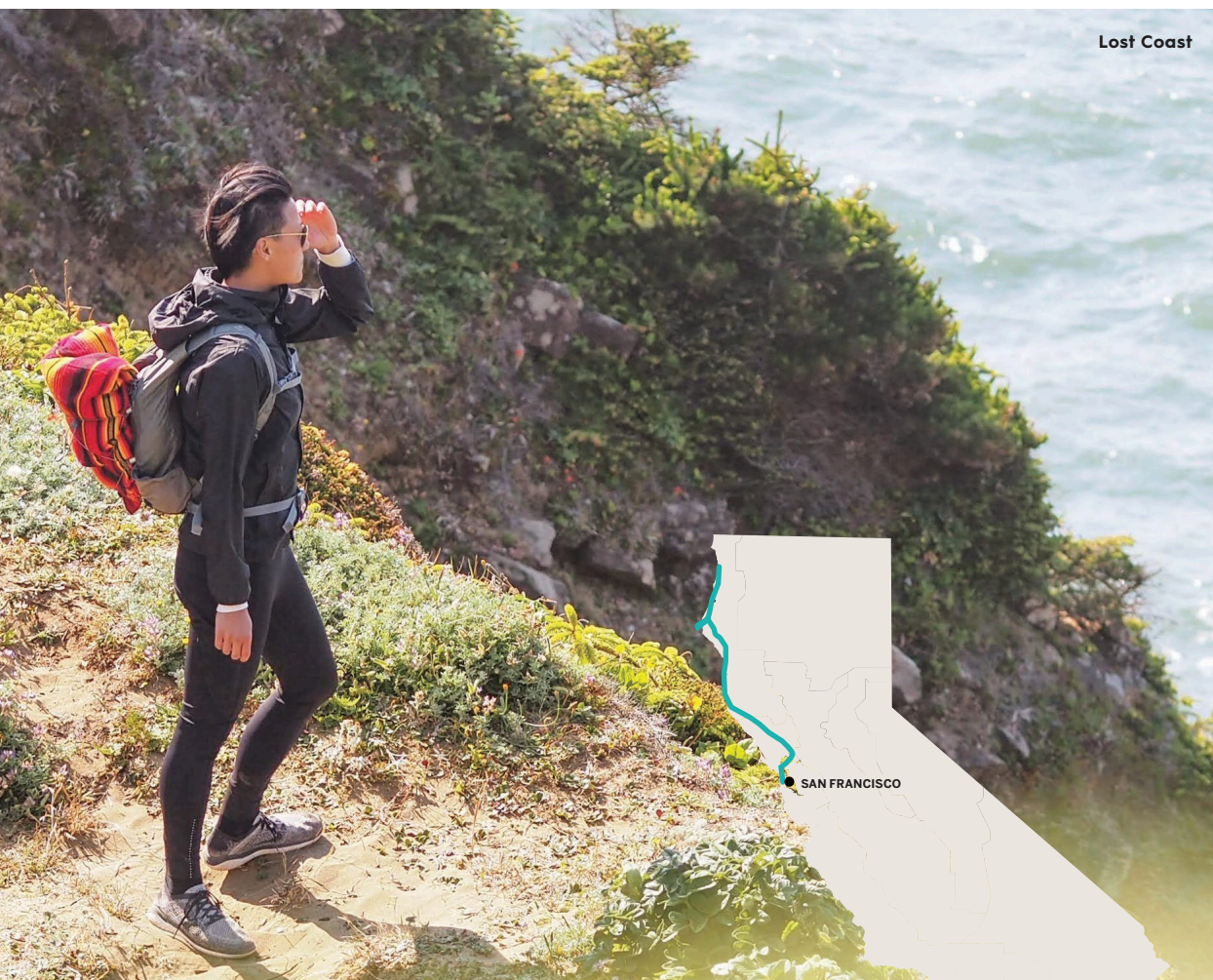
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Lost Coast



TASTE TREK THROUGH THE NORTH COAST

Top Chef: All-Stars winner, cookbook author, and San Francisco local Melissa King retraces memorable moments along the northern coastline

526 MILES • 4 DAYS

BY MELISSA KING / @CHEFMELISSAKING

I'm a California native, yet I somehow grew up taking this state's beauty for granted. It wasn't until I moved to San Francisco that I fell in love with road trips, and with California. Something about driving the North Coast is special; I was blown away. You're literally meeting forests, ocean, and mountains all in one space. You get the coastal sunsets, and you get the breeze.

Driving offers the freedom to go at your own pace, make spontaneous stops, and be intentional about where you pause. Fun little things along the way, like a fruit stand, can spark a whole other journey. And I did plenty of that on this trip from San Francisco to Humboldt County.

MELISSA KING

DAY 1

WINE & PROVISIONS

Start the morning with a coffee in San Francisco's Outer Sunset. I like to swing by Andytown Coffee Roasters on the Great Highway alongside the beach for a Snowy Plover. It's an iced espresso with brown sugar syrup and sparkling water, topped with a giant dollop of sweetened whipped cream. Then cross the Golden Gate Bridge and head north to Scribe Winery in Sonoma.

The vineyard is warm and inviting, and it carries this old hacienda charm. The wines here have a lovely acidity and are delightfully well-balanced. I'm a fan of their Pinots, and every year they make a newly fermented, unfiltered Nouveau from freshly pressed red grapes. Scribe also produces their own olive oil from trees planted on the property. Reservations are limited to members, but you can easily join online before your visit.

After picking up a few bottles and some snacks, continue north to Calistoga. I like to book a night at Indian Springs Calistoga and wake up to a whole day packed with relaxation and rejuvenation at the hot springs.



Indian Springs Calistoga



The Marshall Store

DAY 2

MUD BATHS & HOT SPRINGS

I love a good spa. I love a hot spring. Luckily, Northern California has plenty of great spots from Orr, to Wilber, to Calistoga. Each place has its own atmosphere, so where I go depends on what mood I'm in.

If you want to treat yourself, Indian Springs has that luxury vibe and an Olympic-size mineral pool. There's a bar, mud baths, and massages, so you can really enjoy it as an all-day event. I like to order bar snacks like a charcuterie board while I soak and float. You can also opt for just the hot spring experience with a pool pass available to spa guests who book a 50-minute treatment.

For dinner, stay on property and dine at Sam's Social Club or stroll over to Solbar, a cozy restaurant that's part of the Solage resort right down the street.

DAY 3

FINE DINING, FORAGED

Wake up refreshed and start the drive to Elk for dinner at The Harbor House. On the way, stop for apples and cider at Gowan's Oak Tree, a charming farm in Anderson Valley.

PERFECT SAN FRANCISCO DAY TRIP

Here are King's go-to stops for a quick Bay Area foodie trip (don't forget the cooler):

MARIN FARMERS' MARKET

Head north up the 101 to this Marin County staple to load up on snacks and groceries first thing in the a.m. I start with a yeast-risen waffle from the waffle truck and end with the best \$5 falafel or sabich sandwich from Aviously Delicious Catering truck at the far end of the market.

POINT REYES FARMSTEAD CHEESE CO.

Stop for a cheese tasting and meet some happy cows.

HEIDRUN MEADERY

Beyond its signature honey, Heidrun crafts a range of distinctive meads, which is a fermented alcoholic beverage made with honey. You can also bring your own goodies and have a picnic.

THE MARSHALL STORE

Get a chowder, sit on the water, and enjoy the gorgeous coastal views at this cute little seafood shack. It's an easy place to unplug and relax.

HOG ISLAND OYSTER FARM

This is another favorite oyster spot. Pick up a sack of 50 or 100 and just shuck, drink, and eat along the water.

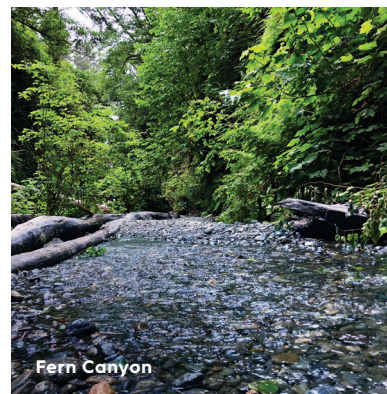
Harbor House is a stunning, two-Michelin-starred restaurant and inn perched on a cliff. Guests can walk down to the ocean, where chef Matthew Kammerer forages ingredients he incorporates into the meal at the lagoon's edge. It's a very intimate dining experience that I found to be so magical. Even shells and stones play a thoughtful role: The homemade sourdough bread with sea lettuce and whipped seaweed butter was served in a basket with a wooden spoon set on an abalone shell.

DAY 4 HIKE THE COAST

Before leaving Elk, stop at The Elk Store, a classic general store serving awesome no-frills sandwiches. I went for the "Nor Cal," thick-sliced bread, turkey, jack cheese, avocado, and mayonnaise. Stock up the car cooler for an impromptu picnic on the road.

From here, continue north toward Trinidad, a perfect base for a couple of amazing hikes. Stop at the otherworldly Fern Canyon, where they filmed *The Lost World*, then trek along the Lost Coast to check out the coastal cliff views. The terrain was so diverse, going from lush redwood forests to coastal tide pools. I climbed rocks along the shoreline exploring while collecting driftwood and sea glass.

For a final North Coast food stop, head to Humboldt Bay Social Club. Part boutique hotel, part restaurant, part community hub, they have tons of oysters—I eat mine with a big squeeze of lemon and freshly cracked, coarse ground pepper (it *has* to be coarse)—along with kits for grilling, picnicking, and s'mores. The place is spacious and even has a brewery and cornhole onsite. When I got there, I couldn't help but think, "I should have booked a stay here."



INSIDER TIP
Continue north up the coast to Crescent City to check out the historic Battery Point Lighthouse. This magical landmark is only accessible on foot during low tide. Reach out to the Del Norte County Historical Society for more details. delnorthehistory.org

Trinidad Coast



Photo: Ventura County Coast

CAMARILLO

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VENTURA

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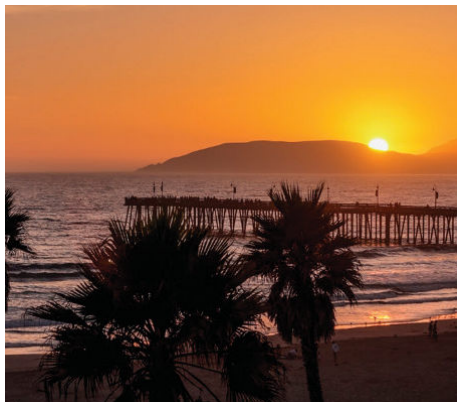
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GOLD COUNTRY TREASURES

Go deep on this adventure with content creator Asya Olson to see historic towns, wildflowers, and underground wonders

115 MILES • 3 DAYS

BY ASYA OLSON / @ASYATRAVELS



Folsom Lake

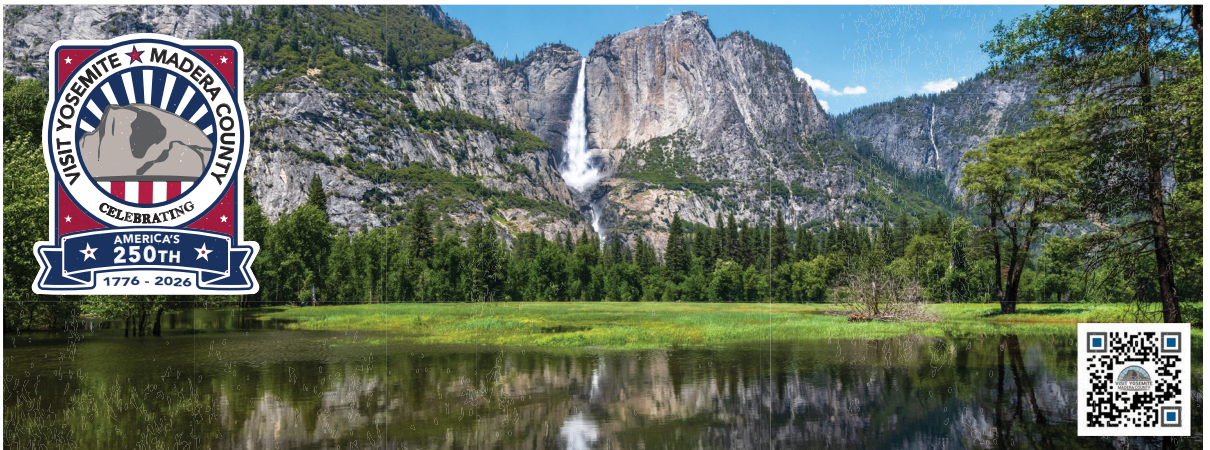


I'm originally from Ukraine, but California is now my home. My mission is to traverse this breathtaking landscape and surprise myself with gorgeous vistas and fascinating stopovers. On this springtime trip, I set out to discover Gold Country's wildflowers, limestone caverns, and swimming holes, and I learned some fascinating California history along the way.

DAY 1 FOLSOM LAKE TO JACKSON

I timed my trip carefully so I could see the lupines blooming at Folsom Lake, a reservoir just northeast of Sacramento. The blue-purple wildflowers blossom for only a few weeks in April and May, and I didn't want to miss them. As soon as I saw lupine photos showing up online, I drove to the lake's western shoreline at Beeks Bight. The flowers were like a beautiful blue carpet, even prettier than I imagined.

ASYA OLSON



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Main Street, Jackson

Next, I traveled south through green foothills to join the Golden Chain Highway (Highway 49), a winding road that connects the Sierra's historic Gold Rush towns. When I arrived in Jackson, I checked into the National Hotel, an elegant Victorian with a second-floor balcony overlooking Main Street. I loved the hotel's rich history and stylish decor, and it was easy to walk around town from there. I peeked into the windows of Jackson's antique shops and galleries, and I ate a wonderful dinner at Teresa's Place, a cozy Italian restaurant that first opened as a boarding house for miners in 1921.

DAY 2 BLACK CHASM CAVERN & CALIFORNIA CAVERN

The next morning, I walked to Rosebud's Café for delicious beignets and coffee before driving 12 miles east to Volcano. The tiny town's main street is less than two blocks long, so it was hard to imagine that during Gold Rush days, it had more than 5,000 residents and dozens of hotels and saloons. Now only about 100 people live there, but every building is filled with history. I stopped into the Sizemore Country Store for snacks—the grocery shop has been serving customers since 1852.

My first adventure of the day was a guided tour of Black Chasm Cavern, just outside of Volcano. My mother is a geography and geology teacher, and I've always been fascinated by the wonders of the underground world. Black Chasm is a deep, vertical cavern, and I was really excited to see and photograph it. I followed our guide down a staircase that descends 165 feet below the earth's surface. It has five flights of stairs with three large landing areas, and each step gave me a different view. I saw amazing stalactites, stalagmites, and Black Chasm's signature formation—twisting, tube-like crystal helictites that sparkle in the light.

Back in the car, I drove about 30 winding miles south for a very different cave tour at California Cavern. Since this was my first visit, I took the one-hour guided walk by Gold Country Adventures through its main chambers. The cavern is horizontal, not vertical, and the path inside is nearly level with only a few stairs. The shimmering cave formations are lit up by electric lights and easy to see. The tour was awesome, and I can't wait to come back for the "Middle Earth

Expedition," a much longer and more demanding tour that goes deeper into the cave where explorers must crawl through narrow passageways using a headlamp to guide the way.

DAY 3 NATURAL BRIDGES TRAIL

For the final leg of my trip, I continued south to the small town of Vallecito for a hike-and-swim adventure near New Melones Lake. Starting at Parrotts Ferry Road, I hiked the Natural Bridges Trail for nearly a mile to the spot where Coyote Creek flows out of a wide, dark cavern.

Over millions of years, the creek has carved a 250-foot-long passageway through a block of limestone. When the creek level is high, you can't enter the cavern, but when the level drops, you can swim in through one entrance and swim out the other side.

Thankfully, I brought an inner tube to float on because the creek water was chilly. Even so, I wanted to float in it forever. Drifting through that cavern was an experience I'll never forget.

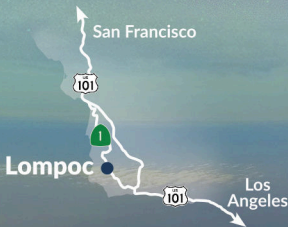
INSIDER TIP
Pack a pair of water shoes for easy hiking through the Natural Bridges Trail. Check parking details ahead of time and come prepared with payment.



Natural Bridges Trail

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OUT AND EXPLORING

New York-based couple Gabi & Shanna Meit-Sciara travel from the Central Coast to the High Sierra and back

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BY GABI AND SHANNA MEIT-SCIARA / @27TRAVELS



Santa Monica



Gabi and Shanna Meit-Sciara are creatives and curious explorers, and for their first California road trip, they traced a sweeping loop from the coast to the mountains and back, blending bucket-list sights with queer-owned businesses, community spaces, and unforgettable landscapes.

DAY 1

LOS ANGELES

We started in Los Angeles, where we admired the city skyline from the Montrose at Beverly Hills rooftop and then stopped into Gracias Madre for vegan fish tacos and queso fundido. After dinner, we walked the Sunset Strip to see the lights and sights at night.

DAY 2

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Three hours north, we explored San Luis Obispo's adorable downtown filled with boutiques and eateries. We bought a necklace at JunkGirls, a queer-owned shop run by two artists who turn found objects into treasures. Luna Red serves delicious entrées—we loved the vegetable paella and tahini cauliflower tacos.

Near Pismo Beach, we took a crazy-fun tour at Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area. A guide from Pacific Adventure Tours drove us up and down the steep, silky

sand dunes in a Humvee. At sunset, we headed to Paso Robles to view the glowing outdoor light installations at Sensorio. We took so many photos of the colorful light sculptures.

Back in San Luis Obispo, we checked into the quirky Madonna Inn, where all the rooms have a different theme. Ours was American Home, and the decor was just like a grandma's house. Our friend stayed in the Caveman Room, which had rock walls and a waterfall shower.

DAY 3 CAMBRIA

The next day we drove up the coast to San Simeon for a tour of Hearst Castle, the most extravagant castle we've ever seen. We could not believe the swimming pools, the fabulous antiques and furnishings, and the zebras grazing by the road. Our day ended in Cambria with a walk on Moonstone Beach and a vegan curry dinner at Robin's. The best part was the awesome Pacific sunset from our room at Cambria Beach Lodge.

DAYS 4-5 SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

We drove 135 miles northeast to Visalia, the gateway to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Our base was The Darling Hotel, a revamped courthouse from the 1930s that has cool Art Deco vibes. We visited The Source LGBT+ Center, which offers programs and resources for the local community.

We headed up into the hills to Sequoia National Park to see the world's largest living trees in Giant Forest. The sequoias are mind-blowing—you have to see them

yourself to believe how big they are. Around sunset, we hiked more than 350 steps to the top of Moro Rock, a sheer granite peak. We had to stop a few times to catch our breath, but it was incredible to watch the orange-pink sky from the summit.

The next day we drove into Kings Canyon National Park. We had so many "wow" moments as we followed the curving road from Grant Grove to Cedar Grove. The cliffs were steep and dramatic, and the canyon is even deeper than the Grand Canyon.

INSIDER TIP
Reception in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks can be spotty. Download a map on your phone for easy access before you head out on your trip. Or go analog with a foldout.

With friends on the road,
Santa Barbara County



DAYS 6-7 MONTEREY PENINSULA & BIG SUR

We left the mountains and drove three hours west to the Monterey coast. At Asilomar State Beach, we saw a golden sunset and tide pools filled with starfish. We stayed at The Charles in Pacific Grove, an elegant, queer-owned B&B. Owner Charles Gruwell spoils his guests with charcuterie boards and wine flights and a big breakfast in the morning.

The next day we toured Cannery Row and Fisherman's Wharf. The shops, arcades, and nostalgic vibes reminded us of summer fun at Coney Island. We ate saltwater taffy and took a guided kayak tour of Monterey Bay. We were amazed to see sea lions, seals, and otters swimming so close to our boat. In the evening, we hung out at Pearl Hour, a cocktail bar with live jazz, cool art, and drag and burlesque shows. The bartender made us a pink Paloma and a pot of tea, which were presented so beautifully.

On our final day, we left before dawn to drive to Big Sur. Having seen that stretch of Highway 1 on TV shows and in magazines, we really wanted to see it in person. It was even better than we imagined, and we vowed to come back again for a longer stay.



Sequoia National Park

TIME FOR A ROAD TRIP:

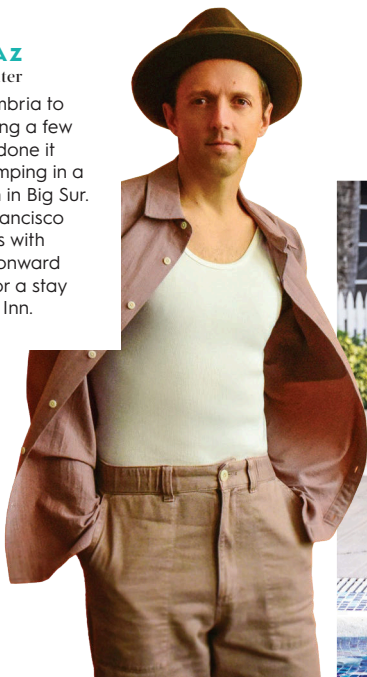
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

We asked notable Californians
to map out their ideal itineraries for
a Golden State drive

JASON MRAZ

Singer-Songwriter

The drive from Cambria to Carmel is worth taking a few days for and I've done it all the ways, from camping in a van to renting a cabin in Big Sur. Just beyond San Francisco the trip continues with Muir Woods, then onward up to Mendocino for a stay at the Stanford Inn.



DIOR GOODJOHN

Actor, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*

If I want something cute and easy, I'll go down to San Diego. If I need a reset, Joshua Tree. And if I want my "ski moment," I'm going to Mammoth to snowboard with friends.



NICOLE BYER

Comedian/Host, *Nailed It!*

I'd drive up Highway 1 to the Madonna Inn in San Luis Obispo for the Pink Champagne Cake. The views are great, too, but you can't get the cake anywhere else. And I've tried.



ALYSA LIU

Olympic Gold Medalist

I'd go to Lake Tahoe and enjoy a whole day skiing or snowboarding. Another option would be a day trip to Santa Cruz to enjoy the beach and boardwalk.



ABBEY ROMEO

Reality Star and Singer-Songwriter, *Love on the Spectrum*

My cousin Mary and I would drive down to San Diego because at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park you can sleep over and listen to the lions roar in the middle of the night.



JEFF PROBST

Host, *Survivor*

Napa Valley. We usually go twice a year. It's become a tradition. The highlight is BottleRock, which is one of my favorite music festivals. Where else can you sip world-class wine while listening to everything from jazz to heavy metal in one weekend? It's the perfect mix of California culture... laid-back, slightly adventurous, and just a little indulgent.



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