

travel
itinerary
outdoors

A GRAND TOUR OF CALIFORNIA'S NATIONAL PARKS

An epic, 2-week road trip to California's nine **National Parks**, featuring forests, islands, deserts and many more diverse, dramatic protected landscapes

visit
California

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- Day 1: **San Francisco**
 - Day 2: **San Francisco to Eureka**
 - Day 3: **Redwoods National & State Parks**
 - Day 4: **Eureka to Lassen National Volcanic Park**
 - Day 5: **Lassen National Park to Mariposa**
 - Day 6: **Yosemite National Park**
 - Day 7: **Yosemite to Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks**
 - Day 8: **Sequoia Kings Canyon to Death Valley**
 - Day 9: **Death Valley National Park**
 - Day 10: **Death Valley to Joshua Tree**
 - Day 11: **Joshua Tree National Park**
 - Day 12: **Joshua Tree to Ventura**
 - Day 13: **Channel Islands National Park**
 - Day 14: **Ventura to Pinnacles National Park**

NATIONAL PARKS

Itinerary overview

California is home to nine National Parks—more than any other state in the U.S. From Redwoods, Death Valley, Joshua Tree and Channel Islands to Kings Canyon and Sequoia, Yosemite, Pinnacles and Lassen Volcanic, the state’s awe-inspiring natural beauty awaits intrepid travelers on a mission to see them all. The robust California State Park system

and other protected wilderness areas and natural landmarks add to the Golden State’s fresh air fun ecosystem. This grand tour of California’s peaks, valleys and coast is the ultimate Golden State outdoor adventure for travelers seeking a once-in-a-lifetime road trip fueled by Mother Nature’s majesty.



● Day 1: San Francisco

The **Golden Gate National Recreation Area** encompasses 70 miles (112 km) and includes several attractions spread around the Bay Area, including natural sites, parks, historic landmarks and viewpoints. See a sampling on your first day in the Bay.

- Take the **Bay Discovery Cruise: A National Park Tour**, a 90-minute sightseeing cruise that goes by the **Golden Gate Bridge**, **Alcatraz Island**, **Marin Headlands**, **Fort Point** and more. (Note: the tour does not dock at Alcatraz; audio is available in 20 languages)
- Soak up the sun and sea breezes at **Crissy Field** and wander through the city's newest park, **The Presidio Tunnel Tops**.
- Explore **Golden Gate Park**, visiting attractions such as the magnificent **California Academy of Sciences**, the striking **de Young Museum** and the country's oldest **Japanese Tea Garden**.
- After getting settled into your hotel, head out for dinner in **Chinatown**—the oldest in North America.
- Overnight in **San Francisco**.



● Day 2: San Francisco to Eureka

This will be a longer driving day (276 mi/444 km), covering some ground to get to the northernmost region of the state, where you'll be in position to experience **Redwoods National and State Parks** the following morning.

- Depart San Francisco heading towards **Marin County** via US-101.
- After crossing the **Golden Gate Bridge**, check out the sweeping views at **Marin Headlands**.
- Continue north on US-101, stopping in **Sonoma County** towns right off the highway such as Petaluma or Santa Rosa and **Mendocino County's** Ukiah and Hopland.
- Drive through the 2,000-year-old **Chandelier Drive Thru Tree** in Leggett.
- Continue on, driving 31 miles/50 kilometers through the **Avenue of Giants** in **Humboldt Redwood State Park** (Drury Chaney Grove is a good spot to get out for a walk).
- On your way into Eureka, stop at **Redwood Sky Walk at Sequoia Park Zoo** to take an elevated walk in the woods.
- Browse around **Old Town Eureka**, admiring the Victorian architecture and murals.
- Overnight in **Eureka**.



● Day 3: Redwoods National and State Parks

With Eureka as your base, this day will be dedicated to **Redwoods National and State Parks** in **Humboldt County**. It takes about an hour to reach the parks, driving north from Eureka.

- Spend the day exploring **Redwoods National and State Parks**, driving and walking among the majestic redwoods.
- Overnight in **Eureka**.

● Day 4: Eureka to Lassen National Volcanic Park

This eastbound driving day (194 mi/312 km) will bring you into the state's upper interior in the Shasta Cascade region, home to **Lassen National Volcanic Park**.

- Depart Eureka bright and early, heading east on CA-299.
- Stop in **Redding** to stretch your legs at Turtle Bay Exploration Park, walking the famed **Sundial Bridge** (one of the world's largest working sundials) that stretches across the Sacramento River, and grab a bite to eat in **Downtown Redding**.
- Spend the afternoon exploring the volcanoes, boiling mudpots and steaming fumaroles in **Lassen Volcanic National Park**—the only place you can see all four types of volcanoes all in one national park.
- Overnight in **Chester or Lake Almanor** (29 mi/46 km from the park).



● Day 5: Lassen National Park to Mariposa

Travel south, driving (304 mi/489 km) CA-99 through Gold Country and the Central Valley with Mariposa as your destination, a gateway to **Yosemite National Park**.

- Hit the road and have breakfast in the college town of **Chico**.
- Stop in downtown **Sacramento** to see sights such as the State Capitol and Old Sacramento Waterfront.
- Continue onto **Mariposa** via CA-99 S and CA-140 E.
- Stroll around Mariposa's historic 1850s-era downtown district and stop by the **California State Mineral & Mining Museum** and **Mariposa Museum & History Center**.
- Overnight in **Mariposa**.



● Day 6: Yosemite National Park

Spend this day sightseeing in **Yosemite National Park** with a recommended stay in the park to maximize the experience.

- Hit the road (CA-140 E 40 mi/64 km) to catch the sunrise in **Yosemite Valley** from the **Tunnel View** vista as you enter the park; reservations are required April through October.
- Wander through **El Capitan Meadow** and gaze up at **El Capitan** to look for climbers on the famous rock face.
- Walk to the base of **Bridal Veil Falls** and move onto the **Cooks Meadow** loop to see lower **Yosemite Falls** and admire **Half Dome**.
- Explore **Yosemite Village** and have dinner in the grand 1920s-era **The Ahwahnee Dining Room**.
- Overnight in **Yosemite National Park**.



Day 7: Yosemite to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Travel a few hours south (127 mi/204 km) to reach the two-parks-in-one duo of neighboring **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**.

- Depart Yosemite via CA-41 S and CA-180 E for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.
- Spend the day exploring **Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks** along the scenic byway, stopping at highlights including **The Giant Forest** (home the world's tallest tree), **Crystal Cave** (seasonal; tickets required), the **Drive Through Log** and **Grizzly Falls**.
- Overnight in one of the **parks** or nearby **Visalia**.

Day 8: Sequoia Kings Canyon to Death Valley

This will be one of the bigger driving days (313 mi/504 km) to reach **Death Valley National Park**, which looks closer on the map but requires driving around large swaths of protected forest lands. You'll be rewarded by dramatic changes in scenery and landscape along the way.

- Hit the road for Death Valley via CA-99 S, CA-178 E, CA-395 E and CA-190 E.
- Stretch your legs and take a fresh air break at **Lake Isabella**.
- Enter **Death Valley National Park** via CA-190 and hike to **Darwin Falls**.
- En route to Furnace Creek, other good road stops include **Panamint Springs**, a hike through **Mosaic Canyon** and the **Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes**.
- Overnight at **The Oasis in Death Valley**.



● Day 9: Death Valley National Park

Spend this day exploring the vastness of Death Valley National Park. Stop by the [Furnace Creek Visitors Center](#) for maps and personalized recommendations.

- Watch the sunrise from [Zabriskie Point](#).
- Check out [Badwater Basin](#), [Devil's Golf Course](#) and [Artists Drive](#).
- Hike the [Golden Canyon-Gower Gulch Loop](#).
- Overnight at [The Oasis in Death Valley](#).

● Day 10: Death Valley to Joshua Tree

Make your way to the southernmost portion of this grand national park tour, positioning yourself at the gateway to [Joshua Tree National Park](#) by day's end. (240 mi/386 km)

- Depart for Joshua Tree via CA-190 E and CA-127 S (detouring to [Kit Fox Café](#) in Tecopa if good coffee and a snack are needed).
- In Baker, take the route via [Mojave National Preserve](#) for miles of open road through Yucca Trees (also known as Joshua Trees).
- Stop to see the [Amboy Crater](#) and the Route 66 landmark [Roy's Motel & Café](#) on the way to the town of Joshua Tree.
- Overnight at [AutoCamp Joshua Tree](#).



Day 11: Joshua Tree National Park

Experience iconic Joshua Tree National Park, stopping by the **National Park Service Visitor Center** in Joshua Tree on your way into the park.

- Spend the day exploring **Joshua Tree National Park**, stopping for photo ops and scenic strolls at sites such as **Cholla Cactus Garden**, **Skull Rock**, **Key's View** and **Hidden Valley**.
- After a day in the park, browse the quirky vintage and gift shops in the towns of **Joshua Tree** and **Yucca**. Watch the sunset, have dinner and soak up more vintage vibes at **The Copper Room** in Yucca.
- Overnight at **AutoCamp Joshua Tree**.

Day 12: Joshua Tree to Ventura

Head to the sea, with the Central Coast surf town of **Ventura** as your destination and gateway to the **Channel Islands National Park**. (197 mi/317 km)

- Depart Joshua Tree via I-10 W, stopping in **Palm Springs** to check out the Mid-Century Modern masterpiece of a city.
- Continue heading northwest on I-10 W, 210-W and US-101 N to **Ventura**.
- Stroll along **Main Street**, browse the shops and tour the historic **Mission Basilica San Buenaventura**.
- Watch the sunset from **San Buena Ventura State Beach**.
- Overnight in **Ventura**.



● Day 13: Channel Islands National Park

Embark upon a memorable daytrip adventure to the “Galapagos of North America,” Channel Islands National Park, approximately 20 miles (32 km) offshore.

- Take the **Island Packers Cruises** ferry to Santa Cruz Island at **Channel Islands National Park** and join your group for a guided sea cave kayaking and snorkeling excursion with **Channel Islands Adventure Co.** (Must book ferry and kayak tour well in advance to ensure availability.)
- If time allows before the return ferry passage, hike the **Cavern Point Loop**.
- Upon return to mainland, enjoy dinner at one of the many eateries in **Ventura Harbor Village**.
- Overnight in **Ventura**.



● Day 14: Ventura to Pinnacles National Park

Travel north on the Pacific Coast Highway (225 mi/362 km) to reach the final destination of your two-week park tour, **Pinnacles National Park** in **Monterey County**.

- Hop on US-101 N towards **Santa Barbara** and stop for a wander around the seaside town.
- Continue north to your next road stop, the charming, easy-going college town of **San Luis Obispo**.
- Reach **Pinnacles National Park** and spend the afternoon exploring the dramatic landscapes forged by volcanic activity 23 million years ago. Pick up information on hikes and scenic spots at the **West Pinnacles Visitor Contact Station** in Soledad (open 9am-3pm daily).
- Overnight in **Salinas**, the agricultural town made famous by author John Steinbeck and located about an hour's drive north of the park. (SFO is 93 mi/150 km north)