



BEST OF CALIFORNIA

Unearth the treasures of the Golden State on this epic two-week road trip from the 'City by the Bay' to the 'City of Angels'.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



North America, USA



14 days from AU\$21,460 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Unearth the treasures of the Golden State on this epic two-week road trip from the 'City by the Bay' to the 'City of Angels'. Venture into majestic Yosemite National Park and motor down Highway 1 to Los Angeles along the dramatic Pacific Coast. Discover sunny beaches, quaint seaside towns, world class wineries, nature at its finest and vibrant cities with hand-selected lodgings along the way including a sweeping country ranch, mountain lodge and sophisticated city digs.

Journey Highlights

- Pedal across San Francisco's iconic Golden Gate Bridge
- Hike the trails of Yosemite National Park with a private guide
- Drive the dramatic Big Sur on Highway 1, California's most scenic drive
- Taste your way around Santa Barbara on a food tour
- Explore the Hollywood Hills and Griffith Observatory on a guided hike



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive San Francisco

Arrive into the charming coastal city of San Francisco and transfer privately to your hotel located within the historic Fisherman's Wharf precinct. The afternoon is at leisure to settle in.

Fairmont San Francisco

Day 2: San Francisco

Step aboard the ferry headed for infamous Alcatraz Island, located two kilometres offshore. Home to the abandoned prison which once housed gangster Al Capone, it became notorious for failed escape attempts, and the subject of many famous movies, such as *Escape from Alcatraz* and *The Rock*. Take a self-guided tour of the Cellhouse at your own pace with an award-winning audio presentation. Picture yourself in solitary confinement, hear the stories of doing time from real prisoners, and feel the intensity of a prison breakout as told by correctional officers who lived and worked on the island.

Later, indulge in the rich tapestry of San Francisco's culinary landscape. Join your knowledgeable local foodie guide at the iconic San Francisco Ferry Building for an exclusive culinary journey, sampling local, seasonal delights from artisans nestled within this cherished historic landmark. Immerse yourself in the vibrant Bay Area food culture as your expert guide leads you on a culinary adventure, unveiling the city's renowned culinary treasures and offering a fresh perspective on its celebrated landmark.

Fairmont San Francisco | Meals: B

Day 3: San Francisco

This morning meet your private biking guide for an up close and personal exploration of San Francisco by bike. Ride with your guide along the city's stunning waterfront, along a mostly flat bike path that will take you through the Fort Mason former military base and newly created arts enclave, the marina, Presidio National Park and onto the iconic Golden Gate Bridge. As you pedal across the mile-long suspension bridge, take in views of the bay and beyond and finish up in Sausalito with its brightly coloured houseboats and fishermen. Pick a waterfront spot for lunch.

Spend your afternoon at leisure. Consider visiting renowned city landmarks like Union Square, North Beach, Chinatown, Lombard Street (dubbed the "crookedest street in the world"), Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill, Fisherman's Wharf, the vibrant Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood, or the picturesque Victorian homes at Alamo Square.

Fairmont San Francisco | Meals: B

Day 4: San Francisco - Yosemite National Park

Pick up your rental car (not included) this morning and leave the coast behind on a road trip east to Yosemite National Park. Pause at a few wineries along the way, discover Oakdale's cowboy culture and a smattering of historic Gold Rush towns.

Tenaya Lodge | Meals: B

Days 5-6: Yosemite National Park

The next two days are spent amid Yosemite's incredible natural wilderness. Your private guide will introduce you to the best aspects of the park leading you on some short walks. Admire soaring cliffs, thundering waterfalls, grassy meadows, shimmering lakes and forested hillsides and relax in a peaceful spot with a picnic lunch. Your second day is at leisure. Perhaps continue exploring the surrounding wilderness on foot, head out on another hike, travel through alpine meadows and mountain streams on horseback (additional cost), indulge in a spa treatment or simply relax by the pool.

Tenaya Lodge | Meals: BL/B

Day 7: Yosemite - Monterey - Carmel Valley

This morning, head back to the coast in Monterey for an exciting expedition with an experienced naturalist aboard a custom Ranger Boat, exploring the diverse marine life of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Delight in the stunning coastal vistas and tranquil ocean ambiance as you learn about the fascinating lives of seals, seabirds, whales, otters, and other remarkable creatures.

Afterwards drive a short distance to your base for the next two nights.

L'Auberge Carmel | Meals: B

Day 8: Carmel Valley

Today you are free to explore the Carmel Valley and surrounding area at your own pace. The "greatest meeting of land and sea in the world", Point Lobos on the edge of Monterey Bay is well worth visiting. Considered the crown jewel of California's state parks, it is one of the state's richest marine habitats with hiking trails offering fabulous views over headlands, across Carmel Bay to Carmel-by-the-Sea and Pebble Beach. It is geologically unique and contains a rich and diverse plant and animal life both on shore and in the water. Keep an eye out for sea otters, seals and sea lions.

A little further north you can take the scenic '17-mile Drive' along the coast through Pebble Beach and Pacific Grove past snow-white beaches and famous golf courses. Then stroll the charming streets of sleepy Monterey, home to some historic adobe buildings and an original customs house. The setting for John Steinbeck's novel Cannery Row, is it is also well known for its aquarium and the annual jazz festival held in September.

Be sure to pause in Carmel-by-the-Sea and wander through its quaint streets. Explore the historic Carmel Mission, one of the original 21 California missions dating to 1770, see the quirky fairy-tale Comstock designed houses down by the beach and take in the small boutiques and relaxed vibe of this artist's colony that is also home to some Hollywood stars.

L'Auberge Carmel | Meals: B

Day 9: Carmel Valley - Big Sur - Santa Barbara

Take to the road again as you drive south along scenic Highway 1 as it hugs the Pacific coastline crossing the iconic Bixby Bridge and passing through Big Sur, one of the most rugged stretches of road. Be sure to keep an eye out for the California condors that live in the area and marvel at their incredible wingspans, some up to 3 metres, as they soar aloft. Stop along the way and take in the breathtaking coastal views, plunging ravines and dramatic cliffs. At Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park a short walk lets you view the slender but elegant McWay Falls crashing onto the beach and into the Pacific Ocean.

It is also worth taking time to visit Hearst Castle near San Simeon. Perched on a hill with sweeping views of the coast this impressively opulent 165-room mansion was created by the media mogul William Randolph Hearst and is filled with historic treasures.

Arrive into Santa Barbara and your Moorish inspired waterfront hotel later in the day.

Hotel Californian | Meals: B

Day 10: Santa Barbara

Take to the streets on foot with a private food tour starting on lower State Street where the Funk Zone neighbourhood is a showcase of the mouth-watering cuisine which Santa Barbara is known for. Savour bites of fresh seafood, gastropub creations, lashings of Mexican and Spanish cuisine, artisan beer, locally grown wines and hand-crafted spirits. Along the way, you'll hear interesting tales from your guide about each place you visit and learn easy-to-shoot photo tip. You'll soon be eating like a local and shooting insta worthy foodie pics like a pro'.

Hotel Californian | Meals: BL

Day 11: Santa Barbara

Tailor today your way. Relax on one of the American Riviera beaches, star spot in Montecito, visit the historic Old Mission or tuck into a seafood feast at Stearns Wharf. The choice is yours. Or, head into the San Ynez hills to sample some of the region's fabulous wines.

Hotel Californian | Meals: B

Day 12: Santa Barbara - Los Angeles

Continue your drive along the coast via world-famous Malibu whose houses perch on stilts above the sand. From here, head down to laid back Santa Monica and your oceanfront hotel. At your leisure head out to see the iconic ferris wheel at the pier jutting into the inviting waters of the Pacific Ocean. A little further along is bohemian Venice Beach filled with colourful characters, street performers and the Muscle Beach outdoor gym.

Viceroy Santa Monica | Meals: B

Day 13: Los Angeles

Head into the Hollywood Hills above Los Angeles this morning with a private guide and be amazed by the natural beauty and breathtaking views you'll encounter on this adventure up Mt Hollywood. Hear about the history of the 'City of Angels' as you hike to the summit where 360-degree views from the Griffith Park Observatory of the entire Los Angeles basin are jaw-dropping. Avoid waiting in line with expedited access to the observatory museum tour. Afterwards, head to a viewing point overlooking the infamous Hollywood sign, where your guide will narrate the fascinating evolution of this great American landmark. Delve into the world of blockbuster films and television series with an engaging interactive video presentation, showcasing scenes filmed at precise locations you'll visit.

Viceroy Santa Monica | Meals: B

Day 14: Depart Los Angeles

Drive to Los Angeles Airport and return your rental car before checking in for your departure flight.

Meals: B

Note

This journey is designed to tie in with car rental that needs to be organised separately. Alternatively, we can provide a vehicle with a driver/guide.

Contact us to discuss your requirements.

Map



Accommodation

Tenaya Lodge, Yosemite



Yosemite is the most popular national park within the US, millions of visitors coming from all over the world to view this spectacular scenery found here. If you are planning to spend more than a day exploring Yosemite Park, then booking your reservations at the Tenaya Lodge is an excellent choice. Tenaya Lodge is located just outside the park and is an all around joy any time of the year.

Tenaya Lodge was built in 1990. The 302 rooms at the lodge are decorated with Native American patterns, colours and artwork. The central sitting area at the lodge has high ceilings, a huge fireplace and comfortable leather chairs. Tenaya Lodge has many winter activities so when you visit here between the months of November-April you will find fewer people but just as many activities, a plus on both counts!

Why we like it

- Located just outside Yosemite national park
- 302 rooms lavishly furnished with cultural prints
- The perfect spot to relax and unwind with exceptional views
- Plenty of family style activities and events during summer
- Lodge cabin style, rustic yet charming

Hotel Californian, Santa Barbara



Stay on the American Riviera at family-friendly Hotel Californian, conveniently located in the centre of the Santa Barbara waterfront and only steps away from the beach.

The 121-room luxury beachside hotel features a rooftop pool where you can enjoy panoramic views of the rolling waves of the Pacific Ocean and Santa Ynez Mountains.

Hotel Californian, with its prime seaside location, Moroccan-inspired spa and top-class restaurants is the perfect destination to recharge after your road trip on the picturesque Pacific Coast Highway.

Incorporating the façade of the original 1925, the hotel rooms mix classic Spanish Colonial Revival architecture with Moroccan influences and furnishings from designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard. You can choose a suite with private balcony and views over the sea or the city's vibrant Funk Zone.

Classic meets contemporary at Hotel Californian's signature restaurant, Blackbird featuring Mediterranean-influenced cuisine and ocean vista. You can also dine at the more casual all-day Goat Tree and enjoy picnics on the beach and celebratory dinners.

From the comfort of this urban seaside resort you can explore the beautiful botanical gardens at Ganna Walska Lotusland, go wine-tasting in the mountains and surf Rincon, one of California's most famous waves.

Why we like it

- Family friendly hotel - located steps from the beach
- Enjoy a real taste of Santa Barbara cuisine in signature restaurant, Blackbird

- Relax in the Moroccan-inspired spa, Majorelle, named after the soothing blue found on Marrakech doorways
- The perfect urban retreat after a road trip on the Pacific Coast Highway

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