



*Sunset*

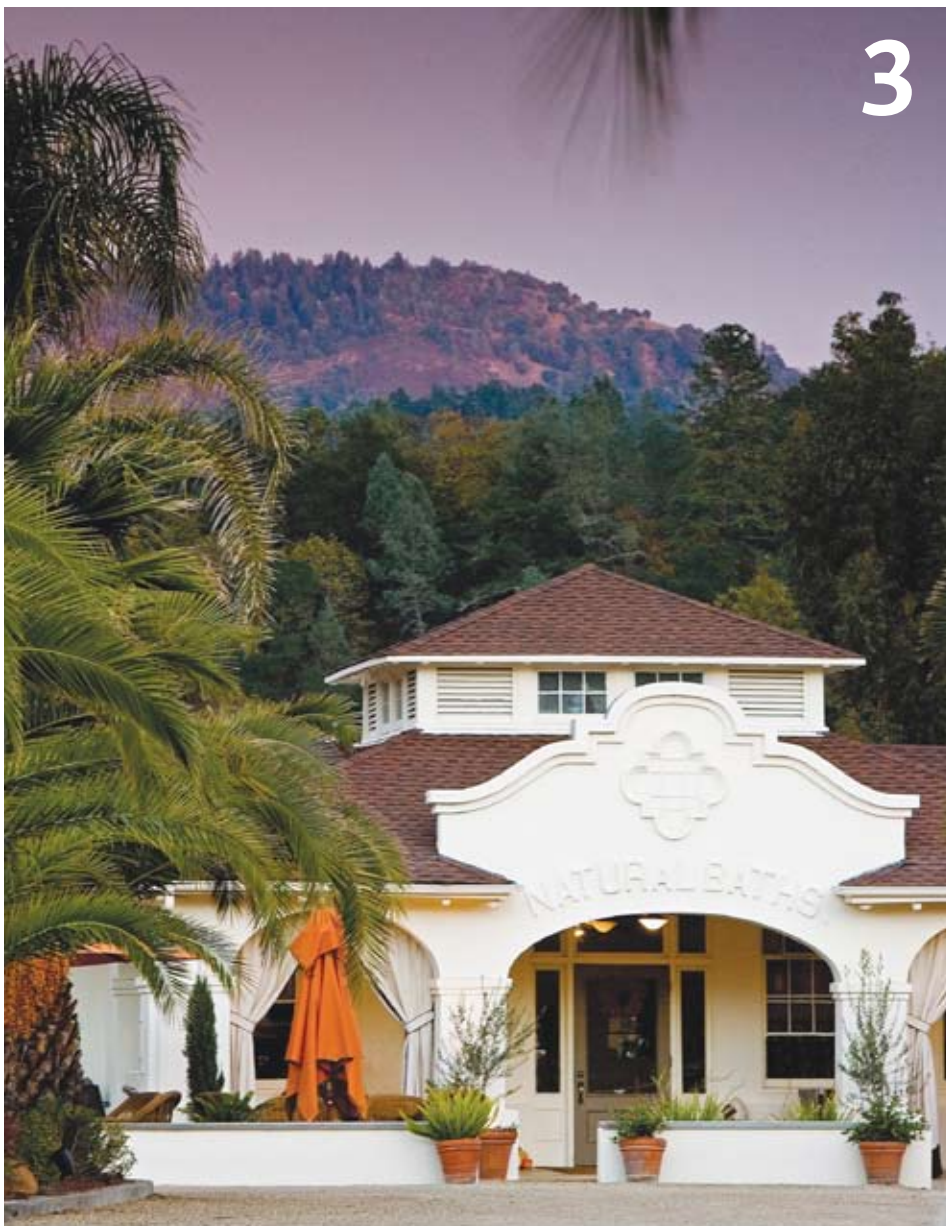
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# Travel Guide

California Travel Deals 2010



# Sunset Travel Guide



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## Your Golden State adventure, on a budget

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COVER: THOMAS J. STORY, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: IAN SHIVE, J. PAUL GETTY TRUST, CHRISTINE GUSTAFSON



Poolside bliss in the desert at the Horizon Hotel **RIGHT** Serenity at Glendeven Inn



that delivers drinks to you in the lobby, the jungle of palm trees, the nightly sangria tastings. An afternoon in a cabana floating above an elevated dipping pool transports us to the tropics. *From \$159; [hotelmayalongbeach.com](http://hotelmayalongbeach.com).*

### Retro-cool in the desert, Palm Springs

Celebs flocked to the **Horizon Hotel** back in the 1950s, when it was the sprawling residence for a big-wig TV producer. And that Hollywood hideaway glamour lives on. Camp out Marilyn-style by the palm-dotted poolside to soak up the 80° temps and postcard views of the mountains. Each of the 22 minimalist rooms has a patio—and for an extra splurge, you can book a room with a private outdoor shower. *From \$139, two-night minimum on weekends; breakfast included; [thehorizonhotel.com](http://thehorizonhotel.com).*

### Off the grid on the coast, near Mendocino

At **Glendeven Inn**, just south of Mendocino in Little River, your cell signal obligingly vanishes when you pull in the drive, and there's not a remote control in sight. Which means you'll have all the time in the world to hike along the headlands of surrounding Van Damme State Park, scatter some corn for the inn's chickens (it's only fair—you'll be eating their eggs come morning), and introduce yourself to the resident llamas. If you just want to hide out in your room—for decor, think Down East meets Sea Ranch—that's fine too. Your breakfast basket will be delivered to your door, along with a newspaper ... which we encourage you to ignore. *From \$156, including breakfast; [glendeven.com](http://glendeven.com).*

### Exotic flair, Palm Springs

Grab the glass of mint tea that awaits you in your Moroccan- or Mediterranean-style room at **Korakia Pensione**, then head out through

# CA dream trips

Glorious getaways to fit your mood—all under \$250

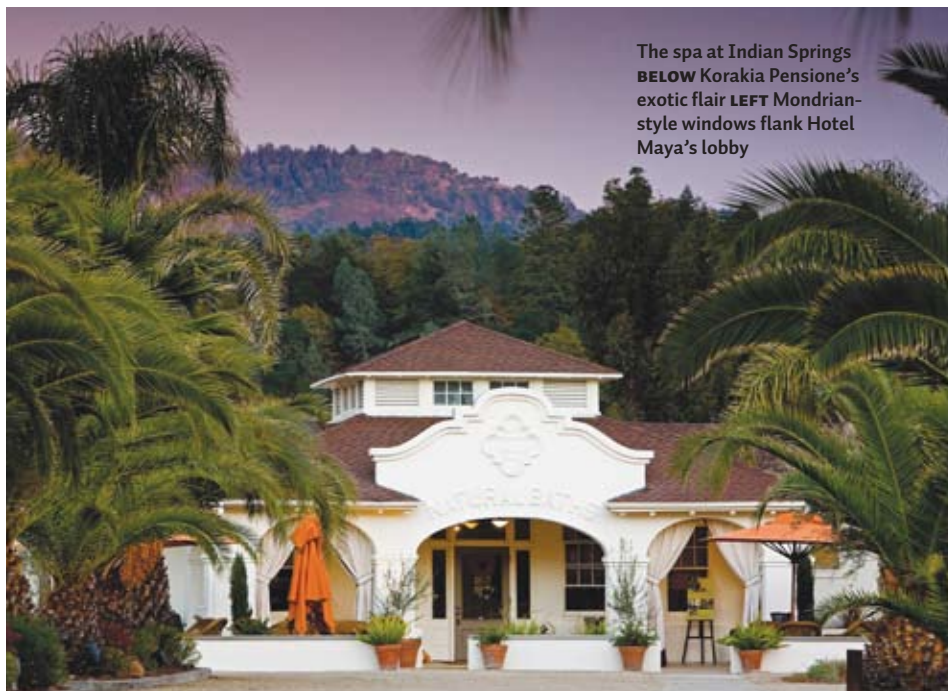
### Stylish beach pad, Venice

So comfortable are the oceanfront studios at **Venice Breeze Suites** that you might feel like you're coming home after a night out, rather than returning to a hotel. The high-design 1930s building of 27 mod units is right on the beach. Kitchens are fully loaded, the rooftop deck—with barbecue, wet bar, and ocean views—is a primo spot for a sunset soiree, and you're steps from the sand. Free parking

(at a premium in this hood) is an added bonus. And considering that the Santa Monica hotels within walking distance are about three times the price, this place is a steal. *From \$135 (from \$155 for ocean view); two-night minimum; [venicebreezesuites.com](http://venicebreezesuites.com).*

### Mod waterfront resort, Long Beach

To the stylishly revamped **Hotel Maya**, we say: Yes, please. Bring on the dumb-waiter



The spa at Indian Springs **BELOW** Korakia Pensione's exotic flair **LEFT** Mondrian-style windows flank Hotel Maya's lobby



French doors onto your bougainvillea-edged patio to sip and stare at the San Jacinto Mountains. Later, go for a swim in one of the inn's two torch-lit pools under clear desert skies, or catch an outdoor movie. For a bonus adventure, take a 2½-hour guided hike to scenic Tahquitz Canyon (\$12.50 entrance fee; 760/416-7044). From \$169, including breakfast; two-night minimum on weekends; korakia.com.

### Bayview bliss, Tiburon

At **Waters Edge Hotel**, throw open the bayside door of your tranquil coffee- and cream-colored room to hear the clang-clang of rigging knocking against masts on boats

below. Look across the sparkling bay to San Francisco and think about how nice it is to be here, out of reach. For an added twist, arrive by boat instead of driving. A ferry ride from San Francisco drops you a few doors from the hotel. The salty air on deck lets you know you're really getting away (\$11 one-way; blue-and-goldfleet.com). From \$184, including continental breakfast; jdvhoteles.com/waters\_edge.

### Urban oasis, Los Angeles

Humphrey Bogart would fit right in at the **Figueroa Hotel**, a cinematic Moroccan oasis in the middle of downtown's flurry. For a fun night on the town, catch a concert at the L.A.

Live entertainment complex (lalive.com) before you head back to North Africa. From \$148; figueroahotel.com.

### Redwood retreat, Big Sur

At **Deetjen's Big Sur Inn**, each of the very rustic cottages, which are grouped around a redwood-shaded ravine on a gorgeously untamed coastline, has a name—Grandpa's, Faraway—and each contains a journal in which visitors have bared their souls, sometimes happily, sometimes not. But when the rains lash the redwoods, there's no better place to snuggle and listen to the crackling of a fire in the woodstove. From \$80 with shared bath, from \$140 with private bath; deetjens.com.

### Get steamy in Napa Valley, Calistoga

There's no better way to warm up, literally and figuratively, for an amorous evening than at **Indian Springs Spa** with a soak in steamy water so rich with minerals it feels like silk—especially when your private cottage is just footsteps away. Cottages from \$195; indianspringscalistoga.com.

### Orchid romance, Santa Barbara

At **The Orchid Inn**, orchid blossoms appear on your pillow each night, the beach is just a short walk away, and rooms have wood-burning fireplaces and private entries. Continuing on the orchid theme, visit Santa Barbara Orchid Estate nursery, 15 minutes away, featuring orchid species and hybrids from around the world (sborchid.com). From \$219, including breakfast; orchidinnatsb.com

### Check out a famous hotel, San Diego

No need to stay at San Diego's sublime but pricey Hotel del Coronado (aka the Del, from \$425) to enjoy all that it has to offer. Instead, stay nearby at one of a handful of less-expensive nonwaterfront hotels and visit the Del for playtime on the beach, drinks at Eno Wine Tasting Room (where you can splurge on a wine-and-cheese flight for \$28), a massage at the spa, or a bike ride along the beach with a cruiser from the on-site rental shop. For lodging, try **Glorietta Bay Inn**, across the street from the Del. From \$185; www.gloriettabayinn.com or 800/283-9383.

### Sleep next to a lighthouse, Montara

At **Point Montara Lighthouse**, on California's wild and uncrowded San Mateo County coast, two ten-buck bills and three singles let you sleep just feet from the ocean, right on a



At Asilomar, stroll from your door to a perfect Northern California beach

pristine beach. The downside: It's a youth hostel, which means you may have to share your room with strangers. But in this location, who cares? Or, indulge in a worthwhile splurge: Spend \$63 per couple for a private room. *From \$23; [norcalhostels.org/montara](http://norcalhostels.org/montara).*

### Communal comfort by the sea, Half Moon Bay

An hour south of San Francisco, **Costanoa's** gathering of cheery white tent bungalows dot the rolling bluffs like so many covered wagons crossing the tallgrass prairie. The mood here's breezy and wholesome—kids riding bikes, communal cook-it-yourself barbecues, and ocean-watching from Adirondack chairs perched on the bluff. Inside, simplicity reigns, with cute plaid comforters and comfy metal camp beds. A bonus for

garden lovers: The resort's idea-filled landscaping features whimsical driftwood sculptures and native plants. *From \$139; [www.costanoa.com](http://www.costanoa.com).*

### Coastal pleasures, Pacific Grove

Find yourself smack in the middle of some of California's most pristine coast at **Asilomar**, a Julia Morgan–designed retreat on swanky Monterey Bay. Accommodations are basic but surrounded by the luxuries of nature—tidepools, coastal wildflowers, and a sandy beach. An extra \$10 gets you a cozy fireplace room. *From \$120; [www.visitasilomar.com](http://www.visitasilomar.com).*

### Yurt so lovely, Big Sur

The gorgeous wood-floored yurts at **Treebones Resort** offer the kind of views that fetch major bucks elsewhere on this stretch

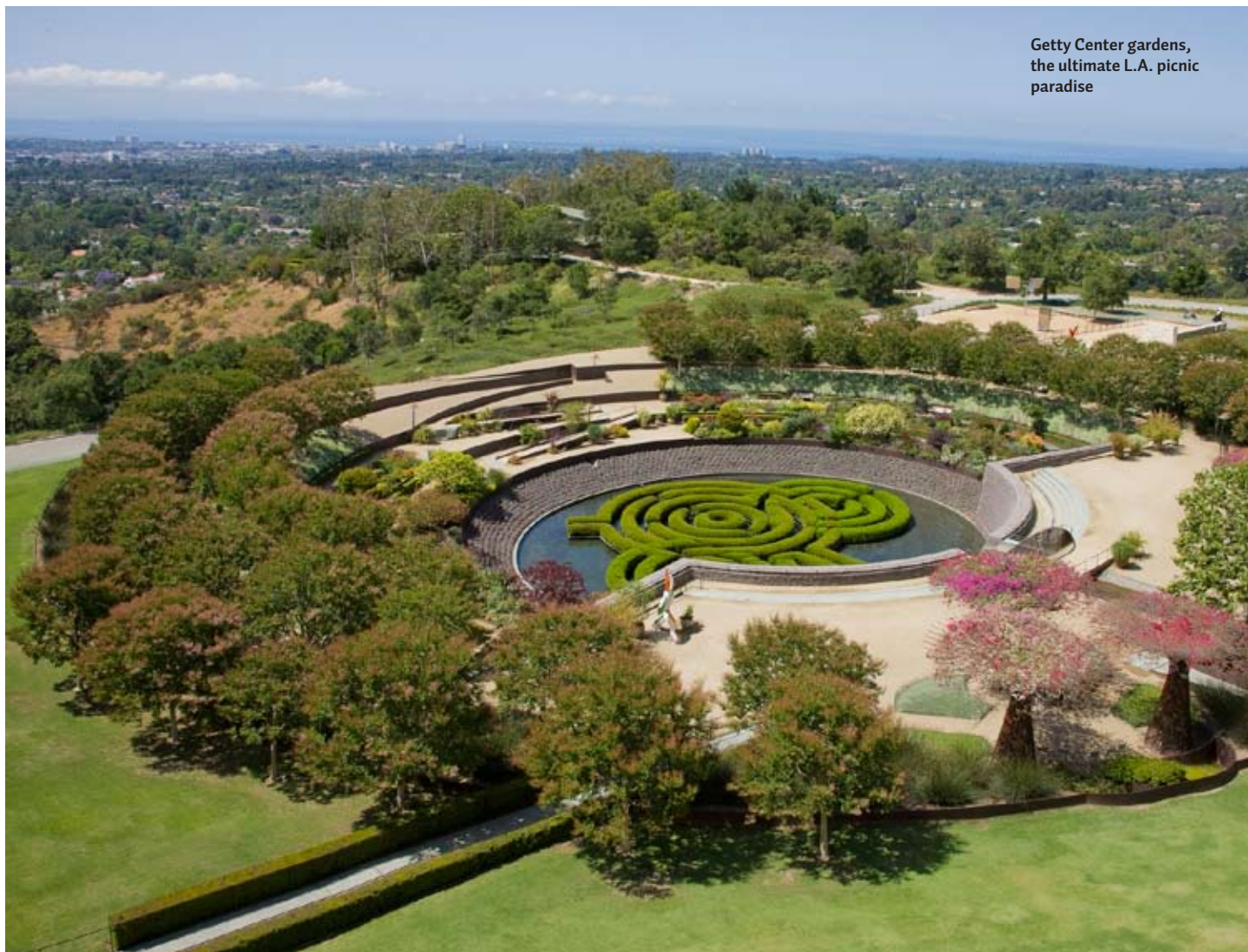
of coast. Sure, there are only communal bathrooms and showers—but there are also barbecue dinners and complimentary morning waffles. And with a swimming pool and hiking trails that launch right into the heart of Big Sur, this is sleepover camp as it should have been. Space books quickly here, especially yurts 15 and 16, which are the most private. *From \$155; [www.treebonesresort.com](http://www.treebonesresort.com)*

### Bliss on the beach, Ventura

**Inn on the Beach:** Straightforward name, straightforward premise—three floors and 24 neat, simple Victorian-style rooms with fireplaces, parked smack-dab on the sand, facing Santa Cruz and Anacapa Islands. A favored getaway for locals—who know that third-floor rooms with patios and views can be had for right around \$100 midweek. Ask about the dunes if you're booking a first-floor room; built-up sand can block some views but does offer extra privacy. *From \$99.95; [www.innonthebeachventura.com](http://www.innonthebeachventura.com).*

### SoCal charms, La Jolla

Strike up the band. Located a block and a half from the beach, **The Bed and Breakfast Inn at La Jolla** is the onetime home of composer John Philip Sousa. But it's not only the inn's pedigree that makes it special—it's the details: sherry and fresh flowers in each of its traditionally styled rooms. The lower-priced rooms are a bit small, but you can stretch out in the inn's gardens and deck if you need a little extra space. *From \$199; [www.innlajolla.com](http://www.innlajolla.com).*



Getty Center gardens, the ultimate L.A. picnic paradise

# S.F. & L.A. on the cheap

Oysters, art, picnics, and pampering—secret city bargains

## San Francisco

**Hog Island Oyster Co.** Drop in at the Ferry Building's lively raw bar with a bay view for twice-weekly happy hours, when oysters on the half-shell (usually Hog Island's Sweetwaters) are from \$1 each and any beer is \$3.50. Now that's the kind of raw deal we like.

11:30–8 Mon–Fri, 11–6 Sat–Sun (happy hour 5–7 Mon and Thu). Ferry Building Marketplace, Embarcadero at Market St.; 415/391-7117.

**Rosamunde Sausage Grill.** If a sausage heaven

exists, it must be here. The French roll wrapped around a gourmet bratwurst—like wild boar, chicken with cherries, and vegan—is outstanding, and costs only \$6. Lunch and dinner daily. 545 Haight St.; 415/437-6851.

**Kamei Housewares & Restaurant Supply.** Stock up with quirky finds from the Richmond district's favorite import shop. Shelves are stacked with rice cookers, cake stands, and drawer organizers. Small discoveries are big bargains—like wooden sake cups for \$4.

525 and 547 Clement St.; 415/666-3688.

**Ooma.** Otherwise known as Objects of My Affection, the North Beach boutique is full of surprises for stylin' ladies. Make your way straight to the back of the store, where the sale rack offers big-time discounts. Closed Mon. 1422 Grant Ave.; 415/627-6963.

**Lyon Street stairs.** Start at the top, on Broadway in Pacific Heights, and soak up a gorgeous vista of the Palace of Fine Arts and Angel Island before making your way down the 288 steps. Or go the other way and really feel the burn. Lyon St. between Green St. and Broadway.

**Anchor Brewing Company.** On weekday afternoons, the brewery in Potrero Hill opens its doors for free tours. The best comes last, when you're led into the sunlight-filled tasting room for... free beer! Make reservations one month in advance. 1705 Mariposa St.; [www.anchorbrewing.com](http://www.anchorbrewing.com) or 415/863-8350.



The S.F. MoMA's stately entrance **RIGHT** Fresh from the raw bar at Hog Island



**San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.** Hit the Mario Botta building on Thursday nights, when admission is half-price, or on the first Tuesday of the month, when it's free. Not a bad fee for catching the best contemporary art around. \$15; 11–5:45 Mon–Tue and Fri–Sun (until 8:45 Thu). 151 Third St.; [www.sfmoma.org](http://www.sfmoma.org) or 415/357-4000.

**Musée Mécanique.** In this wacky collection of antique arcade games in touristy Fisherman's Wharf, you can watch naughty old-time film vignettes or let the Career Pilot chart your course, from Love Pirate to Fish Peddler. Free entrance, most attractions 25 cents. Pier 45, Embarcadero at Taylor St.; 415/346-2000.

**F Market Streetcar.** Forget crowded cable cars. For less than half the cost (\$2), you can catch a Muni F-line car—the colorful restored vehicles hail from many different parts of the world—on Market Street, then

cruise the waterfront, passing Pier 39 and glimpsing Coit Tower. And the cars still go “ding ding.” For schedules and maps, visit [www.sfmuni.com](http://www.sfmuni.com) or call 415/673-6864.

## Los Angeles

**Cora's Coffee Shoppe.** The tiny gem has the same owners as neighboring Capo, a foodie haven that runs close to \$100 a head. Instead, pop into Cora's for a bite; the food is often prepared by Capo chefs. Closed Mon; \$\$; 1902 Ocean Ave.; 310/451-9562.

**Abbot's Pizza Company.** Swing over to Venice and grab a monster slice of gourmet pizza for only \$2.95. Toppings from feta, red onions, and olives to wild mushrooms are piled onto bagel crusts seasoned with poppy seeds, garlic, and other goodies. \$\$; lunch and dinner daily. 1407 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice; 310/396-7334. 1811 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica; 310/314-2777.

**Papa Cristos.** On Thursday nights, revelers

here raise a glass to “My Big Fat Greek Family-Style Dinner.” A banquet of Greek appetizers (with a wine tasting), entrées, nonalcoholic drinks, and desserts is \$19 per person. Entertainment—including belly dancing—no extra charge. \$; breakfast, lunch, and dinner Tue–Sat, breakfast and lunch Sun. 2771 W. Pico Blvd.; 323/737-2970.

**L.A. Fashion District.** The 90-block area surrounding downtown Olympic Boulevard is packed with showrooms open for wholesale only (business license required). However, many sell direct to the public on Saturdays and during sample sales, usually the last Friday of the month. Details and dates at [www.fashiondistrict.org](http://www.fashiondistrict.org) or 213/488-1153.

**Fred Segal Melrose.** With a labyrinth of high-end boutiques under one roof, Fred Segal has the biggest sartorial buzz in the city. Duds aren't cheap, but the payoff here is free celebrity spotting. (And for sizzling bargains, wait until October for the once-a-year 50-percent-off sale.) 8100 Melrose Ave.; 323/655-3734.

**Picnic at the Getty Gardens.** Admission to the museum is free (thanks, J. Paul). Don't overlook the Getty Gardens—the perfect spot for a romantic picnic or just relaxing. \$8 parking. 1200 Getty Center Dr.; 310/440-7300.

**Center Theatre Group.** The Center has a top reputation, producing shows at the Mark Taper Forum and the neighboring Ahmanson Theatre, where it offers \$20 tickets, if available, on the day of the performance (cash only; two tickets per person). Box office window closed Mon; phone orders daily. 135 N. Grand Ave.; [www.centertheatregroup.com](http://www.centertheatregroup.com) or 213/628-2772.

Elk Cove Inn's perfect seaside perch **RIGHT** Cozy in Carmel at Mission Ranch



### Hike out, sleep inn on a DIY tour

Dad-and-daughter duo Tom and Emily Courtney realized you don't have to get behind the wheel to get away—that's why they created California inn-to-inn hiking maps

**THE AHA! MOMENT** Standing atop the highest point of the Marin Headlands, staring out at Point Reyes, UC Berkeley instructor Tom Courtney wondered if he could hike all the way there. With a map and a lot of research, Walkabout California was born.

**HOW IT WORKS** With an itinerary from [walkaboutcalifornia.com](http://walkaboutcalifornia.com) (\$4.99 per download), you can start your inn-to-inn vacation by walking out your front door with a day pack.

## B&Bs by the sea

The only splurges here are on scenery and romance

Sand between the toes isn't a pleasure exclusively reserved for summer. Neither are long walks on the beach or longer views of crashing surf from a rocky blufftop—especially when, at the end of the day, you don't have to go home.

Reserve a night (two-night minimum on weekends unless noted) at one of our favorite inns—all are right on a beach or bluff with rooms overlooking the sea—and even bad weather can't spoil your escape.

### Elk Cove Inn, Elk

The main house, a dainty Victorian, sits on the bluff, but check into one of the Arts and Crafts-style spa suites, and you can enjoy the sea breezes from your balcony. Ocean-front cottages boast cathedral ceilings and picture windows.

**SEASIDE EXPOSURE** It's a short walk down to a wind-sheltered cove and Greenwood State Beach.

**UNEXPECTED PLEASURE** Enjoy massages at the

inn's day spa, complete with a jetted tub and an aromatherapy steam shower and sauna; a full bar serves 25 types of martinis in the inn's signature Z-stemmed glasses.

**ON THE MENU** Breakfast favorites are hearty—think French toast and pasta-vegetable frittatas—and dinner is available Friday through Monday.

**NEARBY TREAT** Point Arena Lighthouse ([www.pointarenalighthouse.com](http://www.pointarenalighthouse.com) or 877/725-4448), 17 miles south of Elk on State 1. *From \$185 (includes breakfast).* [www.elkcoveinn.com](http://www.elkcoveinn.com), 800/275-2967, or 707/877-3321.

### Mission Ranch, Carmel-by-the-Sea

Established as a dairy ranch in the 1850s, the renovated bunkhouses and barn today offer quaint, period-styled rooms south of down-



Blue Lantern Inn's ocean view **RIGHT** Victorian elegance at Doryman's



town Carmel and overlooking Carmel River Beach. The marshy cove at the property's edge is a haven for wildlife, affording excellent winter bird-watching.

**SEASIDE EXPOSURE** The inn's Restaurant at Mission Ranch (831/625-9040) and surrounding patio offer the best view of the cove; not all rooms have ocean views.

**UNEXPECTED PLEASURE** Six tennis courts and a fitness center, which overlooks the cove. On the menu: Sunday brunch at the inn's well-known restaurant, formerly the ranch's creamery, features performances by local jazz musicians. Dinners of prime rib and local salmon are richly satisfying (*no dinner Sun*).

**NEARBY TREAT** Walk to Carmel Mission (831/624-1271) to see the romantic gardens and 207-year-old church.

*From \$120 (includes breakfast). www.missionranchcarmel.com or 831/624-6436.*

### Blue Lantern Inn, Dana Point

Cape Cod architecture isn't what you expect in Southern California. But the inn's New England style is actually a fitting design in a community named for Boston seaman Richard Henry Dana Jr. High on the bluffs that Dana celebrated in *Two Years Before the Mast*, the inn was recently updated. Airy and light, all but four rooms have ocean views. There are also touches to warm the body and soul: fireplaces, whirlpool tubs, and memorable sunsets.

**SEASIDE EXPOSURE** A somewhat strenuous walk to the beach has an uphill return, but the inn's location takes in an impressive coastal view.

**UNEXPECTED PLEASURE** Bicycles and a fitness room are available for guests.

**ON THE MENU** Homemade baked goods and granola complement main courses such as the inn's French-bread custard; free wine and

hors d'oeuvres are served 4:30 to 6:30 daily.

**NEARBY TREAT** Whale-watching trips leave from Dana Point Harbor; the inn offers packages that include whale-watching outings. *From \$185 (includes breakfast and afternoon wine). www.bluelanterninn.com or 800/950-1236.*

### Doryman's Oceanfront Inn, Newport Beach

Stepping from the action of a Southern California beach scene into the quiet, skylit mahogany recesses of this inn is a bit like going back in time. Dating to the late 1800s, when it was a commercial building, the inn is one of Newport Beach's oldest structures. But it's the thoughtfully selected design touches—including antiques, sunken Italian marble tubs in each room, and canopy beds—that nearly place Doryman's in the Old World.

**SEASIDE EXPOSURE** The inn sits just yards off the sand, and many rooms have ocean views. Unexpected pleasure: The Victorian style is romantic and evocative without being overdone.

**ON THE MENU** Fresh baked goods and continental breakfasts, plus crab legs for dinner at the inn's 21 Oceanfront Restaurant (949/673-2100).

**NEARBY TREAT** Head over to Newport Pier around 9 a.m. to watch the Dory Fishing Fleet bring in the catch.

*From \$199 (includes breakfast); www.dorymansinn.com or 949/675-7300.*

### Breakers Inn, Gualala

An inn with a twist—each room is furnished in a regional theme (the Denmark room has a steam sauna). Most have an ocean-view balcony. When it's stormy, just curl up by the fire—or in the spa tub by the window—and watch the sea foam. *From \$110 weekdays, from \$120 weekends (includes breakfast). www.breakersinn.com or 707/884-3200.*



# Tent-alizing

Go camping on the North Coast—or at 16 other top sites



Redwoods galore at  
Jedediah Smith

In California's northwest corner, the world's tallest trees preside over a wild and stunningly beautiful landscape. Rough and ruddy coast redwoods stand impossibly straight in the North Coast's fern-choked canyons and on ridgetops, inspiring generations of hikers to their own soaring thoughts. The trees grow only along a fog-draped strip from the California-Oregon border south to Big Sur. But the state's expansive northern parks are the best places to get an appropriately jaw-dropping look at forests of *Sequoia sempervirens*, made even more magical with their

understory of huckleberry and rhododendron and their proximity to the Pacific.

From Eureka to Crescent City, you'll find almost half of the state's remaining old-growth forests in parks and preserves. The 71,715-acre Redwood National Park is the southern anchor of this jointly managed constellation of parks; running south-to-north are Prairie Creek Redwoods, Del Norte Coast Redwood, and Jedediah Smith Redwood State Parks (the three state parks together come to 60,268 acres). All offer fabulous choices for pitching a tent and taking a hike. You can also camp on several of the area beaches, including Gold Bluffs Beach in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, where you might see herds of Roosevelt elk. The three-mile hike to the Tall Trees Grove in Redwood National Park once showcased the world's tallest tree—but a storm knocked off its top, and a new record-

DAVID FENTON, MIGUEL VIEIRA (ON FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)

Seclusion in the Sierras at Shaver Lake



setter (at 379 feet) was discovered in the park's remote backcountry in 2006. With so many parks, you've got a great chance of finding a secluded campsite. Summer campgrounds in Del Norte Coast Redwood State Park are close to Mill Creek, where wild salmon spawn. Driving along Howland Hill Road in Jedediah Smith Redwood State Park provides a good introduction to the primeval beauty of these ancient trees.

Sleeping underneath the quiet giants has plenty of pluses, not the least of which is the carpet of soft and springy needles providing a restful foundation after a long day of hiking. But if you'd rather sleep in luxury, a good base is Ferndale, a Victorian-era town about 60 miles south of Orick, with cute shops, dining options (including super-fresh seafood), and quaint B&Bs.

Check out more of our favorite California campgrounds:

**Big Basin State Park, north of Boulder Creek**

Your pick of four waterfalls is the payoff for tackling the roller-coaster trails that fan out under gargantuan old-growth trees in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

**INSIDER TIP** Consider the easy-to-get-to hike-in sites if you want more space and privacy.

**BEST FOR** Beating the heat.

**INFO** \$35; [bigbasin.org](http://bigbasin.org) or 831/338-8860

**BOOK IT** [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com)

**Camp Edison, Shaver Lake, northeast of Fresno**

Shaver is one of the Sierra lakes created as part of a Southern California Edison hydro-electric project, and Camp Edison's 252 campsites have electricity and cable TV. Half even

have Internet. But power down: This camp has great lake access and mountain views.

**INSIDER TIP** Campsites 119 and 121 have the best views but cost the most (\$60).

**BEST FOR** People who absolutely can't miss an episode of "American Idol"

**INFO** From \$32; 559/841-3134

**BOOK IT** Reservations by fax and mail only (details at [sce.com/campedison](http://sce.com/campedison))

**Cold Springs Campground, Sequoia National Park, east of Three Rivers**

A glacial-cut valley, Mineral King is surrounded by 12,000-foot granite and shale peaks. Pick a site alongside the Kaweah River or in the shade of aspens.

**INSIDER TIP** For homemade pie and a shower (\$5; bring your own towel), head to nearby Silver City Mountain Resort ([silvercityresort.com](http://silvercityresort.com)).

**BEST FOR** Intimate, RV-free escapes

**INFO** \$12 (plus \$20 park entrance fee per vehicle); no reservations; [nps.gov/seki](http://nps.gov/seki) or 559/565-3341

**D.L. Bliss State Park, Lake Tahoe**

It isn't easy (or cheap) to claim a spot along Tahoe's glorious west shore. But here you can swim and sunbathe at Lester Beach, marvel at Balancing Rock, or simply ogle Tahoe's famously blue waters.

**INSIDER TIP** Reserve ahead to nab beachside spots (\$35; sites 141-165).

**BEST FOR** Families

**INFO** \$35; [parks.ca.gov](http://parks.ca.gov) or 530/525-7232

**BOOK IT** [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com)

**Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, northeast of Crescent City**

Set beside emerald Smith River, this camp is lush with ferns and old-growth redwoods.

**INSIDER TIP** Walk to the 340-foot-tall Stout Tree and its mammoth brethren.

**BEST FOR** Beating the heat

**INFO** \$35; [parks.ca.gov](http://parks.ca.gov) or 707/458-3018

**BOOK IT** [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com)

**Kirk Creek Campground, Los Padres National Forest, Big Sur**

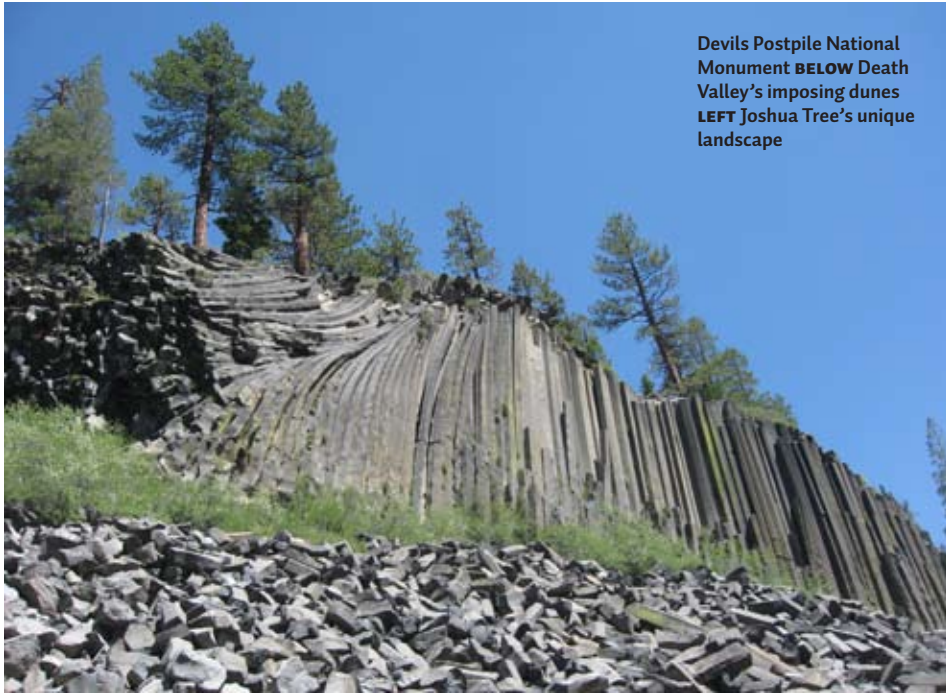
Scattered across a bluff, the sites are open to the stars and the sea.

**INSIDER TIP** Pack dress-up clothes and blow the money you saved on lodging with a prix fixe dinner at Post Ranch Inn's Sierra Mar (dinner from \$100; 831/667-2800).

**BEST FOR** Sunsets

**INFO** \$22; [campone.com](http://campone.com) or 805/434-1996

**BOOK IT** [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)



Devils Postpile National Monument **BELOW** Death Valley's imposing dunes **LEFT** Joshua Tree's unique landscape



## How to score the best site

**KNOW WHO'S IN CHARGE** The biggest campground reservation system is [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com), with public and private campgrounds in all Western states except Hawaii; it handles state park reservations for California (800/444-7275). Campgrounds in national parks, national forests, and other federal lands are booked via [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov) (877/444-6777), which is operated by ReserveAmerica. (Some campgrounds are on both sites.)

**MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR** Good campgrounds book up early, so know when reservations open for the spot you want. For California state parks, on the first of the month, [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com) allows reservations for the entire month that's six months out; that means on Dec 1, you can book a trip arriving Jun 1–30, and so on. But for most camps on federal land, sites can be reserved six months in advance to the day, so Feb 18 gets you sites through Aug 18.

**WATCH THE CLOCK** Some campgrounds sell out within minutes, so know when reservations open. For California state parks' on-sale dates (the first of the month), the call center opens at 8 a.m. Pacific time (9 a.m. mountain). Reservations for campgrounds on federal lands open at 10 a.m. eastern time (7 a.m. Pacific).

**WORK THE SYSTEM** Heart set on a specific camp? Pretend you're after Stones tickets: Try phone and online systems concurrently.

### Leo Carrillo State Park, Malibu

Campsites sit under the sycamores on the east side of State 1 and on a gorgeous beach on the west side, with access to tidepools.

**INSIDER TIP** Hike the Nicholas Flat Trail for coastal views.

**BEST FOR** First-timers

**INFO** \$35; [parks.ca.gov](http://parks.ca.gov) or 310/457-8143

**BOOK IT** [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com)

### Mesquite Spring Campground, Death Valley National Park, north of Furnace Creek

Set in the Grapevine Canyon wash, this is a great base for exploring northern Death

Valley. Tour the Spanish-Moorish mansion, Scotty's Castle (\$11; 760/786-2392), and walk the rim of Ubehebe Crater.

**INSIDER TIP** With a high-clearance car, you can take a day trip to Eureka Dunes, California's tallest sand dunes.

**BEST FOR** A desert adventure

**INFO** From \$12 (plus \$20 park entrance fee per vehicle); no reservations; [nps.gov/deva](http://nps.gov/deva) or 760/786-3200

### Minaret Falls Campground, Inyo National Forest, north of Devils Postpile National Monument

Riverfront sites overlook the Upper Middle

Fork of the San Joaquin River; some have views of Minaret Falls.

**INSIDER TIP** The short hike to the Devils Postpile lava formation is a must.

**BEST FOR** Hiking

**INFO** \$20 (plus \$7 transit fee); no reservations; [www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo) or 760/924-5500

### Refugio State Beach, northwest of Santa Barbara

Campsites sit along a crescent-shaped cove fringed by palm trees, where you can fish, swim, and snorkel.

**INSIDER TIP** On Fridays during the summer, the park staff offers free sea-kayaking



Classic Northern California forestland at Lassen

lessons at 9 or 11.

**BEST FOR** Groups

**INFO** From \$35 (from \$185 for group sites); [parks.ca.gov](http://parks.ca.gov) or 805/968-1033

**BOOK IT** [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com)

### Russian Gulch State Park, north of Mendocino

On the rugged Northern California coast, this campground offers an up-close look at Mendocino's natural beauty, like at Devil's Punch Bowl, where the ocean surges through a huge hole in the headlands.

**INSIDER TIP** Hike to Russian Gulch Falls.

**BEST FOR** Beating the heat

**INFO** \$35; [parks.ca.gov](http://parks.ca.gov) or 707/937-5804

**BOOK IT** [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com)

### Ryan Campground, Joshua Tree National Park, south of Twentynine Palms

Sites are tucked among jumbled piles of the quartz monzogranite boulders of Joshua Tree.

**INSIDER TIP** A couple of miles from camp, a trail leads 1.5 miles up to the 5,461-foot summit of Ryan Mountain.

**BEST FOR** A desert adventure

**INFO** \$10 (plus \$15 park entrance fee per vehicle); no reservations; closed early Jun–Sep 7; [nps.gov/jotr](http://nps.gov/jotr) or 760/367-5500

### Sabrina Campground, Inyo National Forest, west of Bishop

Bishop Creek flows past, and 2 miles away is trout-filled Lake Sabrina. Trails lead into the

John Muir Wilderness with access to mountain lakes and the Sierra crest.

**INSIDER TIP** Dine alfresco on hamburgers and homemade pie on the patio of the Lake Sabrina Boat Landing Cafe (\$; 760/873-7425).

**BEST FOR** Stargazing

**INFO** \$21; no reservations; [www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo) or 760/873-2500

### Saddlebag Lake Campground, Inyo National Forest, east of Yosemite National Park

At 10,000 feet, this is the highest drive-to campground in the state and has a dramatic, above-the-treeline feel.

**INSIDER TIP** Just  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the campground, you can hop a water taxi (\$10 round-trip) across Saddlebag Lake for an easy hike into the stunning 20 Lakes Basin.

**BEST FOR** Hiking

**INFO** \$19; no reservations; [www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo) or 760/924-5500

### Summerdale Campground, Sierra National Forest, south of Yosemite National Park's southern entrance

This campground is spread out under the shade of cottonwoods and pines less than 20 minutes from Yosemite (\$20 park entrance fee per vehicle) and its Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias.

**INSIDER TIP** Have breakfast at the park's historic Wawona Hotel (\$; 209/375-1425).

**BEST FOR** Hiking

**INFO** \$20; [www.fs.fed.us/r5/sierra](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sierra) or 559/877-2218

**BOOK IT** [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)

### Summit Lake South Campground, Lassen Volcanic National Park

Smack in the middle of the park, this campground lies at the southern edge of the tiny but picturesque Summit Lake.

**INSIDER TIP** Reserve early to snag site D9 or D10; both have great views and lake access.

**BEST FOR** Hiking

**INFO** \$16 (plus \$10 park entrance fee per vehicle); [nps.gov/lavo](http://nps.gov/lavo) or 530/595-4480

**BOOK IT** [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)

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L.A.'s Olvera Street

# Bargain hunting

High style and low prices—our 8 top shopping spots

## Flea markets & swap meets

**Rose Bowl Flea Market (Pasadena).** The second Sunday of the month, throngs of bargain hunters descend on roughly 2,500 vendors here. Browse for vintage frocks and crocodile purses, but also find kitschy G.I. Joe lunch boxes. Look for incognito celebs (hint: jeans and big sunglasses). **INSIDER TIP** A \$20 VIP preview pass lets you in at 5 a.m. (4 hours early). [rgcshows.com](http://rgcshows.com); 323/560-7469

**Kobey's Swap Meet (San Diego).** Classic wooden surfboard? Vintage furniture? Known as the largest garage sale in the state (it draws 30,000 shoppers a week), Kobey's, held Friday through Sunday on the parking lot of the San Diego Sports Arena, is all about the thrill of the hunt. **INSIDER TIP** At the entrance, pick up Kobey's Magazine and Directory (with map) to get oriented. [kobeyswap.com](http://kobeyswap.com); 619/523-2700

## Bargain shopping districts

**Alameda Point Antiques and Collectibles Faire (Alameda).** Some 800 vintage vendors dot the

Alameda Point runway (part of a former military base) on the eastern edge of San Francisco Bay near Oakland on the first Sunday of the month. All items are at least 20 years old, no reproductions allowed. Think shift dresses in day-glow colors, mid-century modern chairs, and hand-embroidered antique hankies. **INSIDER TIP** Order a smoked Dakota bratwurst from Lockeford Meats and Sausage or the shrimp salad sandwich at Taylor's Seafood. [antiquesbybay.com](http://antiquesbybay.com); 510/522-7500

**L.A. Fashion District and Santee Alley (Downtown L.A.).** Discover great deals in the 90 blocks of showrooms, tiny boutiques, and street vendors. Get the lay of the land by calling ahead to request a free map/guide or by downloading a walking tour of the Fashion District ([downtownlawalks.com](http://downtownlawalks.com)). On Santee Alley, street-side bargain shopping feels like a party. Remember: Not many dressing rooms here, so be prepared for public changing.

**INSIDER TIP** Many wholesale showrooms have sample sales (cash only) on Saturdays. [fashiondistrict.org](http://fashiondistrict.org); 213/488-1153

**E. Fourth Street (Long Beach).** Between Hermosa and Junipero Avenues, this fun street, otherwise known as "Retro Row," has superb vintage shops, making it the go-to destination for Hollywood set and costume designers. Try Vintage Collective (2122 E. Fourth) for Atomic-era finds and La Bomba (2222 E. Fourth) for the big-shouldered '40s through the big-haired '80s. **INSIDER TIP** The last Saturday evening of the month, the Saturday on Fourth event finds heaps of special promotions and vintage garments on sale; imagine \$20, \$10, \$5, or less. visit [longbeach.com](http://longbeach.com); 562/436-3645

## Great ethnic finds

**Olvera Street (Los Angeles).** The El Pueblo "birthplace of L.A." has Mariachi music, great enchiladas, and, most importantly, crafts and trinkets from Old Mexico at south-of-the-border prices. Look for hand-painted guitars, leather works, serapes, ceramics, and more.

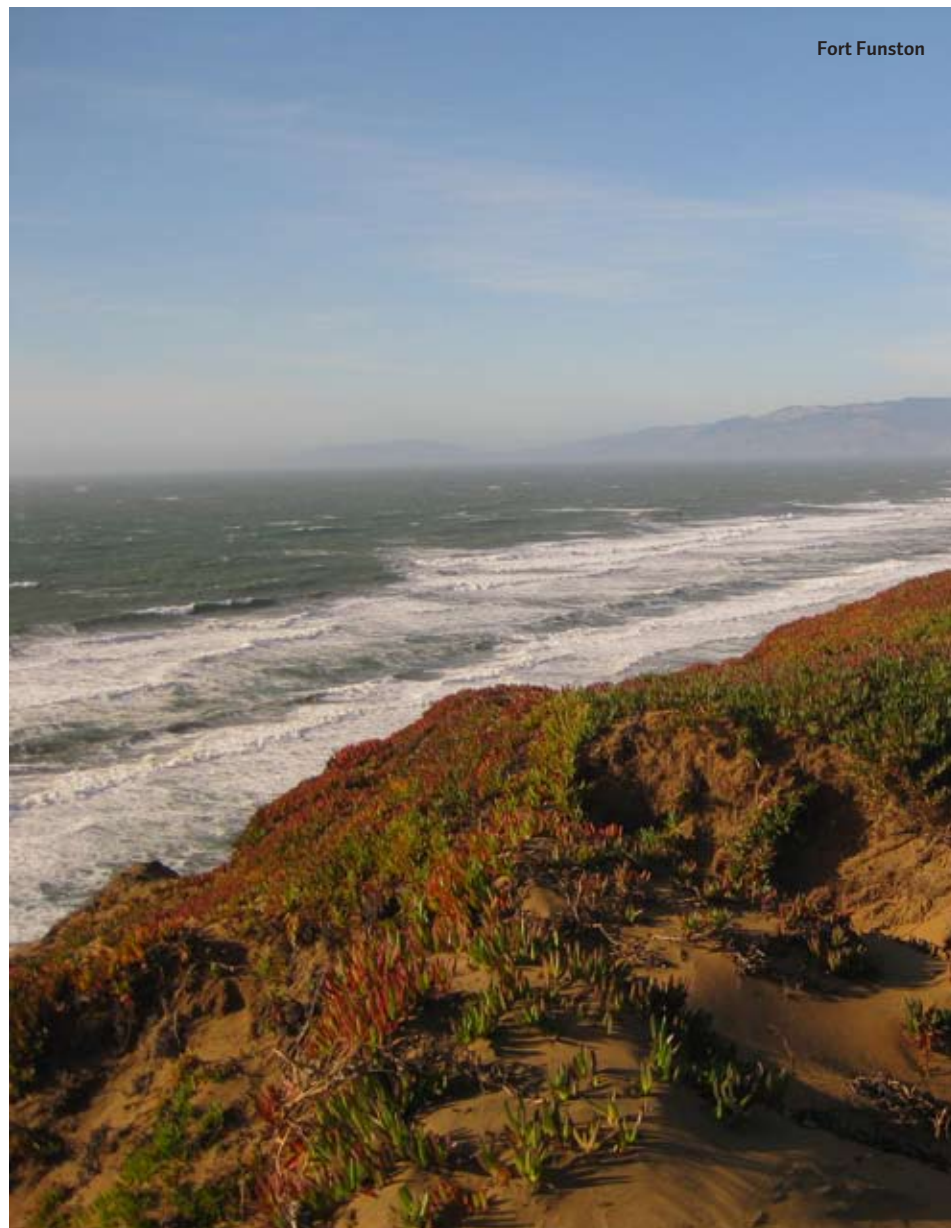
**INSIDER TIP** In search of the perfect walk-away taquitos with avocado sauce? Head for Cielito Lindo (east side of Olvera, on the corner at E-23), and nibble your way down the street. [cityofla.org/ELP](http://cityofla.org/ELP); 213/628-1274

**Clement Street (San Francisco).** Sure, Chinatown is lots of fun, but turn to this un-touristy, always bustling street in the inner Richmond District for irresistible trinket shops and a scattering of trendy boutiques. Scour iconic Green Apple Books & Music (506 Clement) for inexpensive reads on almost every topic, and find kitchen gadgets and beautiful dishes at rock-bottom prices at Kamei Household Wares (547 Clement). Don't miss Haig's Delicacies (642 Clement).

**INSIDER TIP** Parking gets a little nuts here, so aim for side streets and enjoy the stroll. Bring a sweater—the Richmond can be chilly. [onlyinsanfrancisco.com](http://onlyinsanfrancisco.com); 415/391-2000

## Assorted locations

**Chelsea Premium Outlets and Prime Outlets.** With names like Nike, Coach, Ralph Lauren, A/X Armani, and more, these massive outdoor malls with big discounts on designer brands make you wonder why people shop anywhere else. Mix local attractions and outlet shopping on a Shop California tour ([shopamericatours.com](http://shopamericatours.com)), offered throughout the state. **INSIDER TIP** The Prime Outlets mall in Pismo Beach is home to a California Welcome Center. [premiumoutlets.com](http://premiumoutlets.com), [primeoutlets.com](http://primeoutlets.com)



Fort Funston

# Perfect beaches

Finding bliss at these coastal spots barely costs a thing

**Fort Funston, San Francisco.** Human visitors can stroll the beach, explore Battery Richmond P. Davis, the World War II fortification built here in 1939, and watch hang gliders ride the updrafts along Funston's high, sandy cliffs, but the place is probably best loved by San Francisco's canines—you'll be amazed at the number of dogs and dog-walkers roaming the trails here. Skyline Blvd. at John Muir Dr. in the city's southwest corner.

*Free.* [www.nps.gov/goga/fofu](http://www.nps.gov/goga/fofu) or 415/239-2366.

**Kirby Cove, Near Sausalito.** Tucked just northwest of the Golden Gate Bridge, this pocket beach in the Marin Headlands is accessible only by a 1-mile downhill hike, which keeps away the crowds taking snapshots atop the headlands. The quiet coarse-sand beach is a good spot to watch ships passing under the Golden Gate Bridge—and you might even spy a whale. You'll also get a

great view of the bridge. There's also a 4-unit campground here (*from \$25; call 800/365-2267 for information and reservations*) if you're so inclined. *From U.S. 101, take the Sausalito exit and follow signs to the Marin Headlands. Take Conzelman Rd. to its end and hike 1 mile down the fire road to the beach. Free.* 415/331-1540.

**Pebble Beach State Beach, Near Pescadero.**

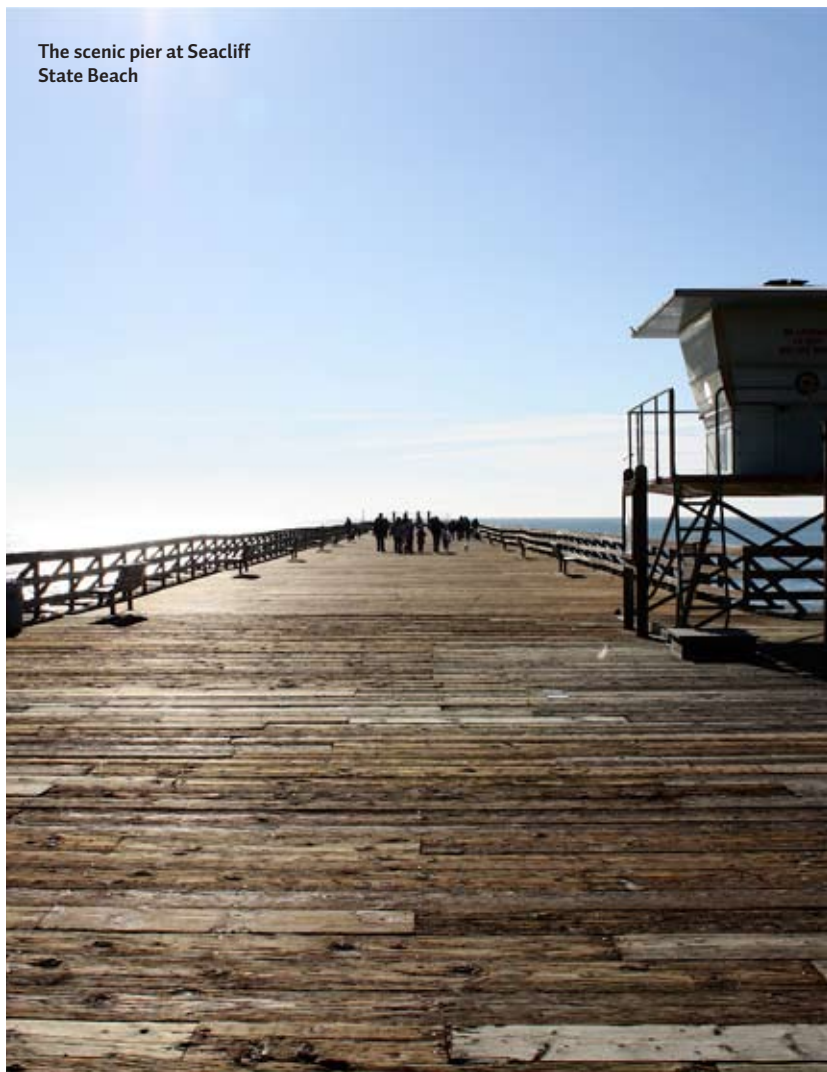
The big draws at this cove beach along the San Mateo County coast are the rocks. The bluff's golden sandstone has been worn down by water and wind into stunning sculptures and patterns. The beach's rock forms are called tafoni, a Sicilian term. Tafoni is created when water leaves behind mineral deposits that eat away at a rock with an inner layer that is softer than its exterior material. For a mealtime splurge, head to Duarte's Tavern (\$\$; 7 a.m.–9 p.m. daily; 202 Stage Rd., Pescadero; 650/879-0464), set in a ramshackle building with a classic bar, where they've served tasty fish for 110 years. *About 7 miles south of La Honda Rd. on State 1; park at pullouts or in the Bean Hollow State Beach lot.* [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or 650/879-2170.

**China Camp State Park, San Rafael.** Immigrants from the Canton district of China built a shrimping village on San Francisco Bay here in the 19th century, exporting the haul back home and selling to merchants in nearby cities. But after a few decades, prejudicial laws drove the community out. Today you can tour a small museum at quiet China Camp Village on the beach or picnic on the grassy bluffs, imagining the bustle of long ago as you gaze at the East Bay's golden hills. Dip a toe in the water; bay temperatures are as warm as you're likely to find. This is one of the few places in the Bay Area where oak woodland habitat still reaches, uninterrupted by development, to the bay shore. Trails—like the moderate 15-mile Oak Ridge to Ridge to Bay View to Shoreline loop—extend up into the hills for hiking and mountain biking. *From U.S. 101 in San Rafael, take the N. San Pedro Rd. exit and go east 5 miles to the park. \$5 per car.* [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or 415/456-0766.

**Seacliff State Beach, Aptos.** Built during World War I, when metal shortages made a cement ship a good idea, the SS Palo Alto was towed to Seacliff Beach as a short-lived floating dance hall in 1929. The beach offers miles of nice walking and great swimming. Several bluffs are full of swirly shaped marine fossils; call the visitor center (831/685-6444) to join free weekend guided fossil walks. Along with cottage charm, nearby Café Sparrow

COOLMKEOL (ON FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)

The scenic pier at Seacliff State Beach



(\$\$\$; 8042 Soquel Dr., Aptos; 831/688-6238) serves delicious seafood. From State 1, head west on State Park Dr. to park. \$10 per car. [www.santacruzstateparks.org](http://www.santacruzstateparks.org) or 831/685-6500.

**Trestles Beach, San Clemente.** The 2½-mile beach hike from San Clemente Municipal Pier south to the surfing shrine Trestles State Beach is both scenic and diverse, with trains zipping along coastal bluffs, dolphins swimming offshore, and the San Onofre nuclear plant eventually coming into view. Low tide offers the best walking. Indulge in seafood at nearby Fisherman's Restaurant & Bar (\$\$\$; 611 Avenida Victoria; 949/498-6390). From State 1, take Avenida del Mar west to the beach. Free. 949/492-1011.

**Rincon, Near Carpinteria.** Known as "The Queen of the Coast," Rincon has a right break that produces some of the finest surfing in the world. The surf starts picking up later this month and continues into the winter as west

and northwest swells develop, but there's almost always some action to check out, especially at low tide. Good rides can cover a mile and two counties. The point itself is private above the mean high-tide line; to walk along it, go during low tide and park east of Bates Rd. Off U.S. 101 at the Bates Rd. exit, 3 miles south of Carpinteria. To access the sandy public beach of Rincon Beach County Park, park to the west of Bates Rd. and take the stairs. Free. [www.sbparks.org](http://www.sbparks.org) or 805/568-2461.

**The Tin Fish, Imperial Beach.** Fish tacos, once a cult favorite of surfers and fishermen, may have become ubiquitous, but they still seem to taste better near the water and along the border. The Tin Fish, at the end of the 1,500-foot Imperial Beach Fishing Pier, offers what might be the definitive setting. After munching traditional fried-fish tacos—other taco choices include calamari, halibut, salmon, shrimp, and swordfish—take a walk

on this popular surfing beach, where the U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition is held every July (619/424-6663). From I-5, take Palm Ave. west, then turn left on Seacoast Dr.; the beach and pier are at the end of Evergreen Ave. The Tin Fish: \$\$; 8–8 daily; 619/628-8414. Access to the city's same-named beach is free; [www.ib-chamber.com](http://www.ib-chamber.com) or 619/424-3151.

**Beacon's Beach, Encinitas.** Sitting below the Leucadia neighborhood at the base of an unstable bluff, Beacon's Beach is a hideaway that recalls simpler times along the Southern California coast. This beach is full of friendly locals and is popular for both surfing and surf-fishing. Kelp beds and offshore reefs create habitat for a wide range of fish, with surfperch being the most common. Most people cast from shore, but you might also spot a few intrepid souls fishing from surfboards farther out. Bluff and beach erosion has long been a problem here, and a recent sand-replenishment program now makes it easier to explore the roughly 1½-mile stretch south to Stonesteps Beach, especially at low tide. Along the way, it's fascinating to see the measures taken to protect the bluffs. Nearby, Kealani's (\$; closed Sun; 137 W. D St.; 760/942-5642) serves Hawaiian plate lunch. Live music is offered Friday nights. From I-5, take Leucadia Blvd. west to its end, then look for the parking lot on Neptune Ave. Or park at Stonesteps Beach off Neptune Ave. at S. El Portal St.; street parking only. Free. [www.ci.encinitas.ca.us](http://www.ci.encinitas.ca.us) or 760/633-2740.

**Robert H. Meyer Memorial State Beaches, Malibu.** This chain of intimate coves—El Pescador, La Piedra, and El Matador—in Malibu is better suited for hanging out or picnics on the bluffs than beach walks. You get to the coves by hiking down steep bluffs via pathways or stairs. El Matador has the most dramatic sea stacks, which are havens for cormorants and other seabirds. For fish and chips or steamed shrimp, drive a few miles to Neptune's Net Seafood (\$; 42505 Pacific Coast Hwy., Malibu; 310/457-3095), a hangout for both bikers and surfers. About 12 miles west of Malibu Canyon Rd. on Pacific Coast Hwy. (State 1). \$4 per car. [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or 818/880-0363.

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