

# BRIDAL GUIDE



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## Top Places to Visit in California

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**Eureka! The prospectors are gone, but you can still find gold in California. Here are the must-see sights and best activities for honeymooners.**

By: Becca Hensley



### California Wonders

California glitters with geographical attributes that range from snow-covered mountains to buff-colored crescents of sand. Here stand towering forests of Redwoods, crystalline lakes and craggy clifftops. Stark deserts envelop palm-fringed resorts and valleys nestled within the hills boast endless vineyards.

Cozy hamlets and bustling cities hold every imaginable assortment of hotels and eateries. In the southern locales, the prevailing vibe leans toward Hollywood swank meets surfer dude. Up north, things feel earthier and more understated. The Golden State is a treasure.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Andreas Hub*



## **Beach Scene**

With 840 miles of coastline, the state has a boatload of beaches, but where to start? Have a marshmallow roast at La Jolla Shores (near San Diego), known for its firepits in the sand. Nearby Sunset Cliffs brings gazers in search of the elusive green flash as the sun hits the sea.

Malibu scenesters rendezvous at El Matador Beach, the forever see-and-be-seen locale for celebrities and their requisite paparazzi. For a more mellow day, go fly a kite at San Francisco's expansive Ocean Beach, a four-mile swath of sand adjacent to Golden Gate Park.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Andreas Hub*



## **Beach Scene**

Yearn to surf? Santa Cruz's Cowell Beach (about an hour north of San Francisco) has friendly-sized swells and instructors with lots of advice. Don't worry if your balance is off-kilter — you can keep active on one of 15 stellar volleyball courts.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Robert Holmes*



## Road Trip

Rent a convertible and tackle the spectacularly jaw-dropping Pacific Coast Highway — a.k.a. Highway 1. Ocean and cliff hugging, with twisting, exhilarating pass-throughs, this famous sightseeing route takes you from Monterey to Morro Bay, between Los Angeles and San Francisco, on a five- or six-hour ramble.

**Tip:** Pull over often to really appreciate the view.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Blaise*



## **Nature's Bounty**

Outdoor enthusiasts swoon over the abundance of state and national parks in California. See the tallest trees in the world at Redwood National Park, where the giants soar taller than Jack's beanstalk.

Across the state, Sequoia National Park touts the most colossal forest. Both spots offer campsites. For stargazing, otherworldly Joshua Tree Park can't be beat.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Blaise*



## Nature's Bounty

At Yosemite National Park, 200 miles east of San Francisco, hiking and biking trails abound and fishermen and rock climbers find plenty of fodder. Snow bunnies can cross-country ski here in the winter. A favorite trail is the Valley Floor Loop, a moderate 13-mile trek across verdant terrain.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Andreas Hub*



## Wild West

Cruise the dunes with Desert Adventures near Palm Springs. The San Andreas Fault Sunset & Stargazing Jeep Tour starts at dusk in a ghost town then bumps through palm oases, sand mounds and canyons beneath a tapestry of stars.

Cuddle at the intimate **Hotel Lautner in Desert Palm Springs**. Built in 1947 and once an artist's retreat, this boutique hideaway has just four rooms, all sleek, sexy odes to the surroundings (room rates start at \$295 a night; [hotellautner.com](http://hotellautner.com)).

*Photo Credit: Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism*



## Fruit Of The Vine

Sure, you've heard of Napa and Sonoma in the north, but these days there are vineyards sprouting up all over the state. Less than 60 miles north of San Diego lies southern California's wine country. Hover above it in a hot-air balloon at dawn. Take the ride with Grape Escape and you'll end at one of the local favorites, Europa Village winery.

Check into **South Coast Winery Resort and Spa**, where a horse-drawn carriage carries you from your villa deep into the vineyards and relax at the aptly-named Grapeseed Spa (room rates start at \$209 a night; [wineresort.com](http://wineresort.com)).

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Blaise*



## **City Of Angels**

Los Angeles is bustling, glittery, happening, yet diverse enough to offer everything from steamy nightclubs to quiet walks on the beach and bike rides along a boardwalk. The city has museums galore (try the J. Paul Getty or LACMA if you love art).

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Andreas Hub*



## City Of Angels

To channel some Hollywood heyday, check into the **Four Seasons Los Angeles**, tucked into a street that edges Beverly Hills. Its hip ambience, rooftop pool and chic Culina Restaurant attract the cool kids, but this hotel stays grounded with old-school Hollywood soul (room rates start at \$435 a night; [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)).

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Andreas Hub*



## **Golden City**

Love film noir? Step into an old movie in San Francisco, where hazy tufts of fog cast an opaque, gumshoe detective-mystery-like lowlight and render this modern city timeless.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Andreas Hub*



## Golden City

Narrow streets lined with Victorian row houses, ubiquitous hills, old-fashioned cable cars, far-reaching water views, Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf add to the city's cinematic allure.

Keep the mood theatrical when you dine in the Mission area's Foreign Cinema, famous for brunch (try Tropical French Baguette Toast) and its continual screening of esoteric film.

*Photo Credit: Visit California/Andreas Hub*

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## **Golden City**

Be pampered like a movie star at the Ritz-Carlton San Francisco, ensconced in a refurbished Greek Revival mansion near Union Square (room rates start at \$349 a night; [ritzcarlton.com](https://www.ritzcarlton.com)).

*Photo courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco*