ROAD TRIP · UNITED STATES

California's Highway 1

San Francisco to Los Angeles along the Pacific, with Big Sur as the high point.

Length	13 days, 12 nights
Distance	750 km, 7 driving days
Behind the wheel	10 h 10 min
Travellers	2, 1 room, 1 car
Hotels	Comfort: a good hotel (3 stars)
Flights	Amsterdam – San Francisco (SFO), Los Angeles (LAX) – Amsterdam

CONTENTS

San Francisco	Days 1–3	**8**
Monterey	Days 4–5	**10**
Big Sur	Day 6	**12**
San Luis Obispo	Day 7	**14**
Santa Barbara	Days 8–9	**16**
Los Angeles	Days 10–12	**18**

Day by day

DAY	DATE	NIGHT	KM	DRIVE	°C
1		San Francisco	20	20 min	
2		San Francisco			
3		San Francisco			
4		Monterey	180	2 h 20 min	
5		Monterey			
6		Big Sur	50	50 min	
7		San Luis Obispo	170	2 h 30 min	
8		Santa Barbara	150	2 h	
9		Santa Barbara			
10		Los Angeles	150	2 h	
11		Los Angeles			
12		Los Angeles			
13		Flight home from LAX	30	30 min	

750 km · 10 h 10 min behind the wheel · on average 110 km a driving day

Kilometres and drive times by road (OSRM, OpenStreetMap), without stops: plan generously.

The route



Map: US Census Bureau (public domain) · roads © OpenStreetMap contributors

ON THE ROAD

Day 1	Land at San Francisco (SFO), drive to San Francisco · About 20 km (10 mi), 20 min
Day 4	San Francisco, drive to Monterey · About 180 km (110 mi), 2 h 20 min
Day 6	Monterey, drive to Big Sur · About 50 km (30 mi), 50 min
Day 7	Big Sur, drive to San Luis Obispo · About 170 km (110 mi), 2 h 30 min
Day 8	San Luis Obispo, drive to Santa Barbara · About 150 km (90 mi), 2 h
Day 10	Santa Barbara, drive to Los Angeles · About 150 km (100 mi), 2 h

Well prepared

ESTA

Dutch and Belgian travellers need no visa for a holiday of up to 90 days, but do need an approved ESTA before boarding. It costs about $40, is valid for two years (or until your passport expires) and is applied for online. Apply at least 72 hours before you fly, and only on the official site.

esta.cbp.dhs.gov

Passport

An electronic passport (with the chip symbol), valid for the whole stay. Children need their own passport and ESTA.

nl.usembassy.gov

Driving licence

Your Dutch driving licence is accepted for renting and driving a car as a visitor. An international driving permit next to it helps with police and some rental desks.

anwb.nl

Renting a car

The renter is the main driver and pays with a credit card in their own name (no debit or prepaid card); the deposit is held on it. Usually from 21, and from 21 to 24 you pay a young-driver fee of about $25 a day. Book from home with insurance included (CDW/LDW and extra liability, SLI) and an extra driver if you want to take turns. Returning the car elsewhere (a one-way trip) costs extra. Fuel is sold by the gallon (3.8 litres); fill it up yourself before you bring it back.

Driving in the USA

Keep right; speeds are in miles an hour (65 mph is 105 km/h). Turning right on red is allowed after stopping, unless a sign says no. At a 4-way stop, whoever stopped first goes first. For a stopped yellow school bus with flashing lights you stop in both directions. Toll roads are often electronic only: ask your rental company about its toll pass. On remote stretches (parks, desert) there's little signal and a long way to the next pump: fill up at half and download the map.

Renting an RV

You can rent an RV from about 21 with an ordinary car licence. On top of the rent, count on mileage (often per mile), a kit with bedding and kitchen things, cleaning and the campsite: in the popular parks you book those months ahead on recreation.gov. Big RVs aren't allowed on every park road. Take photos of the RV when you pick it up: damage and missing items are the most heard complaint.

recreation.gov

National parks

Most big parks charge per car. Visitors from abroad pay $100 a person extra at 11 popular parks; the annual pass for non-residents is $250. Some parks need a timed-entry reservation in high season.

nps.gov

Money and tipping

Prices are without sales tax, which is added at the till. In restaurants a tip of 15 to 20% is usual. Cards are accepted almost everywhere; at the pump you may be asked for a ZIP code, so pay inside.

Travel insurance and health

Care in the USA is very expensive: take travel insurance with worldwide medical cover, and check whether your health insurance covers the USA. Cancellation insurance covers the trip if you can't go; insure the rental car with the rental company (see Renting a car). Take medicines in their original packaging, with a prescription in English. Emergency number: 911.

Power, phone and time

110 volt with flat two-pin plugs (type A/B): bring an adapter. A US eSIM is cheaper than roaming. The mainland has four time zones, Arizona mostly without daylight saving time.

Customs

Fresh food, meat and fruit may not be brought in. Declare food you carry.

Packing list

- [ ] Passport (valid for the whole trip)
- [ ] ESTA, printed
- [ ] Driving licence (and an international one)
- [ ] Credit card in the driver's name
- [ ] Travel and cancellation insurance
- [ ] Confirmations: flights, car, hotels
- [ ] America the Beautiful pass for the parks
- [ ] Plug adapter for type A/B (110 volt)
- [ ] Car charger and phone holder
- [ ] eSIM or offline maps
- [ ] Sunscreen, sunglasses and a cap
- [ ] Water bottles for the desert
- [ ] Hiking shoes
- [ ] Layers: the coast and the nights get cold
- [ ] Medicines, in your hand luggage
- [ ] A pen, for this booklet

DON'T FORGET

Notes



DAYS 1–3

San Francisco CA

Golden Gate Bridge and the cable cars

Land at San Francisco (SFO), drive to San Francisco: about 20 km (10 mi), 20 min

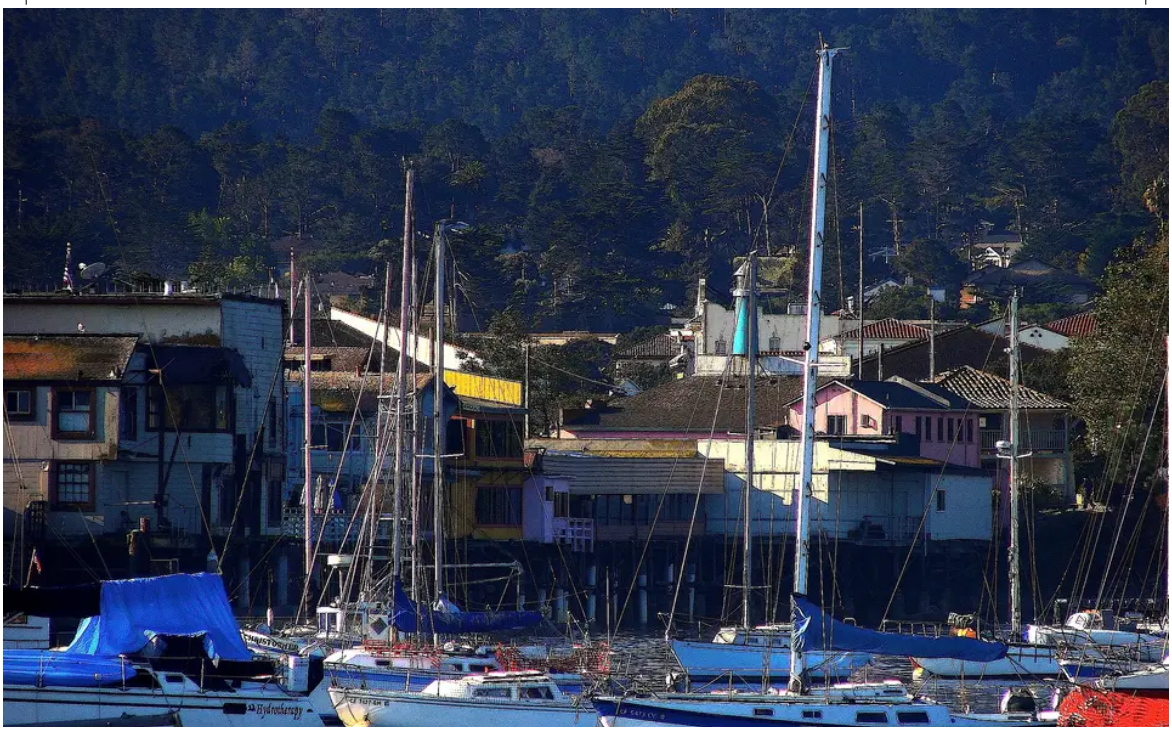
3 nights

SAN FRANCISCO · DAYS 1–3

HOTEL

- [ ] Inn at Union Square · 3★
  440 Post St
- [ ] Chancellor Hotel on Union Square · 3★ — roughly €120
  433 Powell St
- [ ] White Swan Inn · 3★ — roughly €150
  845 Bush St
- [ ] Petite Auberge · 3★ — roughly €190
  863 Bush St
- [ ] Hyatt Place San Francisco/Downtown · 3★ — roughly €190
  701 3rd St

NOTES



DAYS 4–5

Monterey CA

17-Mile Drive and the aquarium

San Francisco, drive to Monterey: about 180 km (110 mi), 2 h 20 min

2 nights

MONTEREY · DAYS 4–5

HOTEL

- [ ] Spindrift Inn · 3★ — roughly €270
  652 Cannery Row
- [ ] Victorian Inn · 3★ — roughly €200
  487 Foam St
- [ ] Stage Coach Lodge · 3★ — roughly €130
  1111 Tenth Street
- [ ] Hampton Inn Monterey · 3★ — roughly €220
  2401 Del Monte Ave
- [ ] Ramada by Wyndham Monterey · 3★ — roughly €120
  2058 N. Fremont Street

NOTES



DAY 6

Big Sur CA

Bixby Bridge and McWay Falls

Monterey, drive to Big Sur: about 50 km (30 mi), 50 min

1 night

BIG SUR · DAY 6

HOTEL

- [ ] Big Sur Campground and Cabins · 3★
  California 1
- [ ] Big Sur River Inn · 3★
  46800 Highway One

NOTES



DAY 7

San Luis Obispo CA

Hearst Castle nearby

Big Sur, drive to San Luis Obispo: about 170 km (110 mi), 2 h 30 min

1 night

SAN LUIS OBISPO · DAY 7

HOTEL

- [ ] Lofted Bedroom Teal Tiny Home with Creek Views · 3★
  2994 South Higuera Street
- [ ] Peaceful Tiny Home Loft and Sauna · 3★
  2994 South Higuera Street
- [ ] The BEST Tiny Home Loft and Private Yard · 3★
  2994 South Higuera Street
- [ ] La Quinta by Wyndham San Luis Obispo · 3★ — roughly €130
  1845 Monterey St.
- [ ] TownePlace Suites by Marriott San Luis Obispo · 3★ — roughly €170
  1301 CALLE JOAQUIN

NOTES



DAYS 8–9

Santa Barbara CA

Spanish missions and wine country

San Luis Obispo, drive to Santa Barbara: about 150 km (90 mi), 2 h

2 nights

SANTA BARBARA · DAYS 8–9

HOTEL

- [ ] Avania Inn of Santa Barbara · 3★ — roughly €210
  128 Castillo St
- [ ] Harbor House Inn · 3★ — roughly €300
  104 Bath Street
- [ ] Pacific Crest Hotel Santa Barbara · 3★ — roughly €130
  433 Corona Del Mar Drive
- [ ] Marina Beach Hotel · 3★ — roughly €240
  21 Bath St
- [ ] The Eagle Inn · 3★
  232 Natoma Avenue

NOTES



DAYS 10–12

Los Angeles CA

Hollywood, Santa Monica and Malibu

Santa Barbara, drive to Los Angeles: about 150 km (100 mi), 2 h

3 nights

LOS ANGELES · DAYS 10–12

HOTEL

- ☐ FOUND Hotels, Santa Monica, Series by Marriott · 3★ — roughly €200
  12311 Santa Monica Blvd
- ☐ Residence Inn by Marriott Los Angeles LAX/Century Boulevard · 3★ — roughly €150
  5933 W Century Blvd
- ☐ Holiday Inn Express Hollywood Walk of Fame by IHG · 3★ — roughly €220
  1921 N Highland Avenue
- ☐ Holiday Inn Express West Los Angeles by IHG · 3★ — roughly €350
  11250 Santa Monica Blvd
- ☐ Residence Inn by Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE · 3★ — roughly €190
  901 W Olympic Blvd

NOTES

What it costs

DAY	PLACE	HOTEL	TOURS	CAR	TOTAL
1	San Francisco	€160	–	€60	**€220**
2	San Francisco	€160	–	€60	**€220**
3	San Francisco	€160	–	€60	**€220**
4	Monterey	€160	–	€60	**€220**
5	Monterey	€160	–	€60	**€220**
6	Big Sur	€160	–	€60	**€220**
7	San Luis Obispo	€160	–	€60	**€220**
8	Santa Barbara	€160	–	€60	**€220**
9	Santa Barbara	€160	–	€60	**€220**
10	Los Angeles	€160	–	€60	**€220**
11	Los Angeles	€160	–	€60	**€220**
12	Los Angeles	€160	–	€60	**€220**
13	Flight home from LAX	–	–	€60	**€60**

Flights	€1,700
Hotels	€1,920
Excursions	€0
Car hire	€780
Total	**€4,400**
	€2,200 a person

An estimate to plan with (prices of 2026-10): hotels, the ticked excursions, car hire and flights. No fuel or meals.

Notes

About this booklet

Made on rondreis.expert. Your trip is still there, to change and print again: usa.rondreis.expert/en/tours/california-highway-1/

PHOTOS

From Wikimedia Commons, all free of rights (public domain or CC0).

San Francisco	Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, California LCCN2013633353.tif · Carol M. Highsmith, Public domain
Monterey	MontereyWharf&Harbor.jpg · Smatprt, Public domain
Big Sur	Big Sur June 2008.jpg · Calilover, Public domain
San Luis Obispo	Beautiful scenes along Route 46 in California LCCN2013632571.tif · Carol M. Highsmith, Public domain
Santa Barbara	Garden pathway, Montecito, California LCCN2013634652.tif · Carol M. Highsmith, Public domain
Los Angeles	Aerial views of residential Los Angeles, California LCCN2013632611.tif · Carol M. Highsmith, Public domain

MAP AND TYPE

Map: US Census Bureau (public domain), roads © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL). Type: Playfair Display and Inter (SIL Open Font License).