

The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

Our top 15 Insider Tips



INSIDER TIP Views from a steep slope

At *Glacier Point* you're standing nearly 3,280ft above the valley bottom of Yosemite National Park (photo above). Many visitors shy away from the long drive in, but it's well worth it → p. 71

INSIDER TIP The desert is alive!

See kangaroo rats and snakes in the cactus gardens of the *Living Desert*, Palm Springs. In the late afternoon the animals become active → p. 94

INSIDER TIP The wildest rollercoasters

In *Knott's Berry Farm* near Anaheim it's a long way down, in freefall. The lights of big neighbour Disney might shine a little brighter, but these rides are well worth a try → p. 89

INSIDER TIP Fancy some tacos?

The stalls at Los Angeles' vibrant *Grand Central Market* serve the best Mexican snacks – and you'll probably be the only gringos here → p. 77

INSIDER TIP Pure America

Traditional – and very American: fairs such as the *San Diego County Fair* (photo right) seem so retro that they appear stuck in the 1960s. Fabulously kitsch, and often there's a parade thrown in as well → p. 120

INSIDER TIP A latte with a view

The Saturday morning *farmer's market* of Northern California's organic producers at San Francisco's Ferry Building is a popular meeting point. The shores of the Bay offer pretty views of the Oakland Bay Bridge → p. 41

INSIDER TIP Deep in the "Red Man's Country"

With flashy signs and huge figures, the *Trees of Mystery* attraction in Redwood National Park seems like a tourist trap. But the small, rather old-fashioned *museum* dedicated to the history of the "First Americans" is definitely worth a visit – and it doesn't cost a cent → p. 47

INSIDER TIP Stroll on the Plaza

In *Sonoma* folk meet on the municipal square, which oozes pioneer-era charm → p. 53

INSIDER TIP Welcome to the wine tasting

The *Edna Valley* near San Luis Obispo might just be the new Napa Valley – the wines from the still fairly unknown local wineries are excellent → p. 67

INSIDER TIP Avant-garde art

Bergamot Station in Santa Monica: a fun mixture of eccentric trendy shops, cafés and Californian art, a bit off the beaten tourist track → p. 80

INSIDER TIP Stargazing

They might be a few years away from stardom still, so for the time being young hopefuls are still waiting tables at the retro-eccentric *Mel's Drive-In* eatery on Sunset Boulevard in LA or propping up the bar → p. 82

INSIDER TIP Sheer adrenaline

As part of a *tandem flight*, even non-flyers can float in the air above Santa Barbara and enjoy vistas that very few visitors to California will get to see → p. 115

INSIDER TIP Canter through the dunes

Can there be anything more beautiful than riding out on the beach on a clear morning? The *Salinas River State Park* near Monterey provides a magnificent backdrop → p. 114

INSIDER TIP Love and Peace

Explore *Haight-Ashbury* in San Francisco in the footsteps of the flower children, listening to fascinating stories about Janis Joplin and the Grateful Dead → p. 39

INSIDER TIP Steaks on the highway

The *AJ Spurs* steakhouse in Buellton serves up a western flair and the best steaks only 100 yards from the US 101 heading to Santa Barbara → p. 69



BEST OF...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

● *Giant wheels in the Cable Car Museum*

While a trip on the rattling cable cars (photo) in San Francisco is not cheap, the *Cable Car Museum*, a squeaking, hissing and spitting relic of the industrial age where massive wheels power the miles-long cables, is free – and impressive → p. 35, 117

● *Be on TV – for free*

The star roles might be taken, but in Hollywood you can get *on TV* as a spectator without too much hard work. TV studios are always looking for claqueurs for game shows and so on. Who knows, a few years later that very series might appear on a network at home → p. 78

● *Victorian delights*

A locality like *Ferndale* really should charge to get in, it's that cute. They don't however, so feel free to enjoy the Victorian architecture built by the lumber barons for free → p. 47

● *Art for free – in Los Angeles*

The spectacular architecture and the works on display in the best art museum in California are indeed available free of charge – all thanks to Mister Getty. The billionaire founder of the *Getty Center* wanted to give everybody access to art. Equally stunning: the panoramic view across L.A. → p. 77

● *Free trip into the Wild West*

Camera at the ready? *Highway 49* snakes through the most authentic gold-rush western towns of Gold Country. In Jamestown or Columbia it feels like stepping back straight into the time of the pioneers – if it wasn't for the souvenir shops → p. 58

● *Gaudy show*

The traditional *Pride Days* of the gay and lesbian community are an experience, with the fabulously imaginative costumes fit for any stage – all without paying a penny. The most atmospheric parades are the ones in late June in San Francisco and West Hollywood → p. 120

●●● Dots in guidebook refer to "Best of..." tips

ONLY IN CALIFORNIA

Unique experiences

● *Pedal across the Golden Gate*

Only by taking a tour by bike (or on foot) across the *Golden Gate Bridge* will you truly perceive the dimensions of the famous structure. The roadway lies over 260 ft above the Sound, and there's a howling wind. Still a great experience! → p. 37

● *Powder and Brylcreem*

How is it that actors always look so good on camera? The *Hollywood Museum* allows you deep insights into the work of makeup artists – and the life of famous stars → p. 78

● *Holy Mountain*

You won't get more esoteric in California than this: *Mount Shasta* is a meeting point for ashram followers, interstellar visitors and philosophers of nature. If you're not interested in the extraterrestrials that are supposed to land at the foot of the snow-covered volcano (photo), just bag the summit → p. 49

● *Sightsea-ing on Highway 1*

Many reckon California's coast to be the world's most beautiful. We bet you'll agree if you drive on *Highway 1* around the cliffs of Big Sur. Every bend reveals a new panoramic view, another dramatic slope, another rock-rimmed beach → p. 60

● *The mother of all aquariums*

Head for the Californian underwater world: in the *Monterey Bay Aquarium* you'll find yourself at eye level with sharks, deep-sea creatures and glow-in-the dark jellyfish. Also: a three-storey forest of sea kelp! → p. 63

● *Valley of Death*

Over 50 degrees centigrade (122 °F) in the shade, 90 (194 °F) in the sun are par for the course in the deepest part of *Death Valley*. The shimmering salt desert of Badwater lies nearly 330 feet below sea level and guarantees a hot natural experience → p. 90

● *The perfect wave*

Tanned girls and athletic beach boys, a colourful scene in brewery pubs and cafés: *Huntington Beach* forms the pierced navel of the Californian surfing scene. The waves roll in evenly – just perfect for a practice class → p. 93, 115



ONLY IN



DISCOVERY TOURS

1

CALIFORNIA AT A GLANCE



START: ① San Francisco

END: ① San Francisco

Distance:

3,000 km/1,864 miles

16 days
Driving time
(without stops)
50 hours



COSTS: fuel costs total approx. \$ 240, rental bikes in Santa Barbara \$ 36–\$55 per day, rafting \$ 75–\$150, National Park Pass \$ 80

WHAT TO PACK: hiking boots, swim gear, sun protection

IMPORTANT TIPS: The Tioga Pass is closed from late October to mid May, which means that you will have to take the detour over Lake Tahoe.

Discover the many facets of California on this ideal route for first-time visitors to the “Golden State”. It covers the prettiest coastal stretches on the Pacific plus the

Every corner of the earth has its own special charm. If you want to explore all the many different facets of this region, head off the beaten track or get tips for the best stops, breathtaking views, hand-picked restaurants or the best local activities, then these customised discovery tours are just the right thing. Choose the best route for the day and follow in the footsteps of the MARCO POLO authors – well-prepared to navigate your way to all the many highlights that await you along the tour.

deserts, mountains and vineyards to the west. The state’s two most exciting cities, San Francisco and Los Angeles, are also on the agenda – and you won’t miss out on a swim in one of California’s cool beach towns.

Plan on spending two days exploring ① **San Francisco** → p. 32: ride a cable car, stroll through Chinatown and along Fisherman’s Wharf, tour Alcatraz and sail around the harbour. Then hit the road: **head south on US 101** to Silicon Valley → p. 43 and then **follow Highway 17 from San Jose** towards the surfer and student town of Santa Cruz. Turn

DAY 1–2

① San Francisco



(170 km/106 mi)

DAY 3

