

**OUR STATE BY THE NUMBERS**

-  **250** ADVENTURES ON THIS LIST  
How many can your family check off?
-  **840** MILES OF CALIFORNIA COASTLINE  
from redwood coves to surf breaks
-  **9** NATIONAL PARKS  
more than any other state
-  **14,505** FEET  
the summit of Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the Lower 48
-  **282** FEET BELOW SEA LEVEL  
Badwater Basin in Death Valley, the lowest point in North America.
-  **380** FEET TALL  
the height of the world's tallest tree, a coast redwood in Redwood National Park
-  **4800** YEARS OLD  
the age of the oldest bristlecone pines in the White Mountains, the most ancient living trees on Earth
-  **60** SPANISH MISSIONS  
along El Camino Real, including the Carmel Mission here in Monterey County
-  **2** MILES DEEP  
the Monterey Submarine Canyon, a Grand Canyon-scale gorge hiding just off our shoreline
-  **1855** POINT PINOS LIGHTHOUSE  
in Pacific Grove opens; it's been shining longer than any other West Coast lighthouse
-  **58** CALIFORNIA COUNTIES  
Start counting — how many will your family explore?

# 250 ICONIC CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCES

**YOU'VE LUCKED OUT WITH ONE OF THE BEST DUTY STATIONS IN THE COUNTRY. NOW WHAT?**

California is 163,000 square miles of national parks, beautiful coastline, redwood forests, world-class cities, and legendary food.

In honor of America's 250th birthday, the staff of *Monterey Bay Parent* put our heads together with members of our Facebook group to come up with 250 reasons to make the most of every day you're here.




**NATIONAL PARKS & NATURAL WONDERS**


1. Visit Yosemite Valley and photograph El Capitan.
2. Watch sunrise or sunset from Glacier Point in Yosemite.
3. Hike to Vernal Fall or Nevada Fall in Yosemite.
4. See giant sequoias in Sequoia National Park.
5. Climb Moro Rock for panoramic Sierra views.
6. Explore the deep canyon scenery of Kings Canyon National Park.
7. Hike among the world's tallest trees in Redwood National and State Parks.
8. Explore Joshua Tree National Park.
9. Explore Death Valley National Park.
10. Stand at Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America.
11. Watch sunrise at Zabriskie Point.
12. Experience Death Valley's world-class dark skies.
13. Visit Pinnacles National Park and watch for California condors soaring overhead.
14. Explore Lassen Volcanic National Park.
15. See the bubbling geothermal features at Lassen.
16. Hike, spot wildlife, and kayak through sea caves on the Channel Islands.
17. Visit Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.
18. Visit Mono Lake's otherworldly tufa towers via Highway 395 and Lee Vining.

**COAST & BEACHES**

19. Watch monarch butterflies in Pismo Beach.
20. Hike the trails at Point Lobos State Natural Reserve.
21. See elephant seals at Año Nuevo State Park.
22. Go whale watching in Monterey Bay.
23. Hike to Alamere Falls, one of California's rare beach waterfalls.
24. Dig for clams at Pismo Beach (fishing license and size limits apply).
25. Sea kayak among sea lions at La Jolla Cove.
26. Watch sunset from the cliffs of Mendocino.
27. Walk across the Golden Gate Bridge.
28. Watch surfers ride Steamer Lane in Santa Cruz.
29. Camp on the bluffs above the surf at San Elijo State Beach."
30. Explore the coastal bunkers and overlooks of Marin Headlands.
31. Witness bioluminescent waves along the Southern California coast.



**13. VISIT PINNACLES NATIONAL PARK AND LOOK FOR CALIFORNIA CONDORS.**  
*Once-in-a-lifetime*



**22. GO WHALE WATCHING ON THE MONTEREY BAY.**  
*Monterey County fun*



**78. EXPERIENCE FLEET WEEK IN EARLY OCTOBER IN SAN FRANCISCO**  
*Can't miss for military families*



**143. ATTEND A SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS GAME AT ORACLE PARK**  
*Fun for all ages*

32. Watch sea otters floating in Morro Bay.
33. Stroll the boardwalk at Venice Beach.
34. Walk Carmel Beach at sunset.

**HISTORY & CULTURE**

35. Tour Alcatraz Island and explore its layered history as a federal prison and former fort site.
36. Visit Mission San Juan Capistrano.
37. Walk a section of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.
38. Explore Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.
39. Visit Bodie State Historic Park, one of the best-preserved ghost towns in the U.S.
40. Experience Gold Rush life at Columbia State Historic Park.
41. Tour the California State Railroad Museum.
42. Explore Old Town San Diego State Historic Park.
43. Visit the California State Capitol Museum.
44. Walk through San Francisco's historic Chinatown.
45. Stroll Olvera Street in Los Angeles, the city's oldest surviving district.
46. Tour Hearst Castle and its early 20th-century opulence.
47. Visit Manzanar National Historic Site, a powerful WWII incarceration site.
48. Explore the architecture and art collections at Getty Villa.
49. Visit the San Diego Air & Space Museum.
50. Tour the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.
51. Visit the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.
52. Visit the historic gardens and museums of Golden Gate Park.
53. Explore California's Indigenous history at the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center.
54. Tour Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Río Carmelo (the Carmel Mission), final resting place of Junipero Serra.
55. Visit Colton Hall in Monterey, where California's first constitution was signed in 1849.



**233. WALK AMONG ANCIENT REDWOODS IN MUIR WOODS NATIONAL MONUMENT**  
*The beauty of California*

## MILITARY HERITAGE

56. Tour the Presidio of San Francisco, one of the oldest military posts in the U.S.
57. Explore coastal defenses at Fort Point National Historic Site beneath the Golden Gate Bridge.
58. Visit the USS Iowa Museum in San Pedro.
59. Tour the Fort MacArthur Museum overlooking the Port of Los Angeles
60. Explore the Marine Corps legacy at the Camp Pendleton history museums (base access required)
61. Visit the March Field Air Museum, one of the best aircraft collections in the West.
62. Attend an open house or aerospace event at Edwards Air Force Base (check public access dates).
63. See a rocket launch from Vandenberg Space Force Base from the public viewing areas near Lompoc.
64. Explore Cold War aviation history at the Castle Air Museum.
65. Visit the Beale Air Force Base Heritage Center, home to SR-71 Blackbird history (base access required).
66. Explore Air Force and airlift history at the Travis Air Force Base Heritage Center.
67. Walk among restored fortifications at Angel Island State Park, including immigration and Civil War-era military history.
68. Visit Fort Humboldt State Historic Park.
69. Attend the California Capital Airshow in Sacramento or the MCAS Miramar Air Show in San Diego.
70. Tour the USS Hornet Sea, Air & Space

Museum, an aircraft carrier docked in Alameda.

71. Visit the USS Midway Museum in San Diego.
72. Explore the Pacific War story at the Marines' Memorial Club & Hotel in San Francisco.
73. Pay respects at the San Francisco National Cemetery in the Presidio.
74. Visit the Flight Deck and exhibits at the Palm Springs Air Museum.
75. Explore Lower Presidio Historic Park overlooking Monterey Bay, with its Veterans Memorial and views of the Presidio of Monterey, home of the Defense Language Institute.
76. Discover the WWII home front story at Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond.
77. Attend a Memorial Day or Veterans Day ceremony at a California national cemetery.
78. Experience Fleet Week in San Francisco, with the Blue Angels roaring over the Bay, ship tours, and the Parade of Ships.
79. Tour the Estrella Warbird Museum in Paso Robles, home to restored military aircraft and vehicles.
80. Visit the Moffett Field Historical Society Museum at the old Navy airfield.



**76. DISCOVER THE WWII HOMEFRONT STORY AT ROSIE THE RIVETER HISTORICAL PARK IN RICHMOND**

## FOOD & DRINK

81. Eat a fish taco in San Diego or pretty much anywhere in the state.
82. Taste wine in Napa Valley.
83. Tour a winery in Sonoma Valley.
84. Eat sourdough bread and clam chowder at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco.
85. Try an Animal Style burger at In-N-Out Burger.
86. Eat a Mission-style burrito in San Francisco's Mission District.
87. Taste artisan olive oil in the Central Valley.
88. Eat fresh uni or poke at a coastal seafood market in Santa Barbara.
89. Visit a California farmers market (Santa Monica or Sacramento).
90. Try Santa Maria-style BBQ tri-tip on the Central Coast.
91. Tour the Jelly Belly Factory in Fairfield.
92. Pick strawberries in Watsonville.
93. Tour a working oyster farm and taste fresh oysters at Tomales Bay.
94. Sip craft beer in San Diego's Beer District (North Park / Miramar).
95. Eat dim sum in San Francisco's Chinatown.
96. Try Korean BBQ in Los Angeles' Koreatown.
97. Visit a Sonoma Coast wine tasting room.
98. Eat a Dungeness crab dinner in San Francisco, a seasonal winter tradition.
99. Taste wine in Paso Robles.
100. Sample artichokes in Castroville, the Artichoke Center of the World.
101. Taste wine along the River Road and Santa Lucia Highlands trail in the Salinas Valley.

## FAMILY & KIDS

102. Spend a day at Disneyland Park, the original Magic Kingdom.
103. Explore Disney California Adventure Park.
104. Tour Universal Studios Hollywood.
105. Explore the San Diego Zoo.
106. Visit LEGOLAND California.
107. Explore hands-on exhibits at the Exploratorium in San Francisco.
108. Visit the California Academy of Sciences.
109. Explore the Monterey Bay Aquarium.
110. Ride historic cable cars in San Francisco.
111. Walk the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.
112. Visit the California Science Center.
113. See the Space Shuttle Endeavour at Exposition Park in Los Angeles.
114. Explore the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.



115. Tour the Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose.
116. Visit the San Francisco Zoo.
117. Watch a live TV show taping in Hollywood or Burbank.
118. Tour the Walt Disney Family Museum.
119. Go tidepooling at Cabrillo National Monument or Point Lobos.
120. Play at Dennis the Menace Park in Monterey.
121. Explore the touch pools at the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History.
122. Explore the hands-on exhibits at MY Museum (Monterey County Youth Museum) in downtown Monterey.
123. Ride the Roaring Camp steam train through the redwoods in Felton.
124. Watch the sea lions pile up at Pier 39 in San Francisco.
125. Pick out a pumpkin in Half Moon Bay, the World Pumpkin Capital, in October.
126. Step into a storybook at Children's Fairyland in Oakland.
127. Play at the Bay Area Discovery Museum beneath the Golden Gate Bridge in Sausalito.
128. Take a safari tour among giraffes and rhinos at Safari West in Santa Rosa.
129. Go sledding at a Sierra snow park.
130. Pick apples and eat pie at Apple Hill near Placerville in the fall.
131. Ride the wooden coaster at Knott's Berry Farm.
132. Visit SeaWorld San Diego.
133. Explore the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach.
134. Ride the Ferris wheel over the ocean at Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier.

## SPORTS & ADVENTURE

135. Ski or snowboard in Lake Tahoe.
136. Mountain bike the trails in Marin County.
137. Go whitewater rafting on the American River.
138. Rock climb in Yosemite Valley.
139. Windsurf or kiteboard at Crissy Field in San Francisco.
140. Take a surfing lesson in Santa Cruz.
141. Hang glide at Fort Funston overlooking the Pacific.

142. Rent a houseboat on Lake Shasta.
143. Attend a San Francisco Giants game at Oracle Park.
144. Attend a Los Angeles Dodgers game at Dodger Stadium.
145. See the San Francisco 49ers at Levi's Stadium.
146. Cheer for the San Jose Sharks at SAP Center.
147. Attend a college football game at Stanford or UCLA.
148. Hike or run the Tahoe Rim Trail.
149. Go snowshoeing in the Sierra Nevada backcountry.
150. Attend the IndyCar season finale at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca.
151. Sail or kayak in San Diego Bay.
152. Go deep-sea fishing out of Monterey or Moss Landing.
153. Try desert off-roading or sandboarding in the Imperial Sand Dunes.
154. Attend a Golden State Valkyries game at Chase Center.
155. Bike the Monterey Bay Coastal Trail.

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

156. See the Hollywood Sign from Griffith Observatory or nearby trails.
157. Walk the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles.
158. Tour the Getty Center.
159. Attend a concert at the Hollywood Bowl.
160. Explore live performance at Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles.
161. Tour Warner Bros. Studio in Burbank.
162. Visit the de Young Museum in San Francisco.
163. Explore the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
164. Visit the Oakland Museum of California.
165. Attend the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio.
166. Hear the San Francisco Symphony at Davies Symphony Hall.
167. Explore the cultural exhibits at The Broad.
168. Visit the Hammer Museum in Westwood.
169. Tour the Palm Springs Art Museum.
170. See a film at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood.
171. Watch outdoor Shakespeare in the Park in San Francisco or Los Angeles.
172. Tour the Gamble House, a masterpiece of American Arts & Crafts architecture.
173. Visit the Watts Towers Arts Center.
174. Explore the Autry Museum of the American West.
175. Take in live music at the historic Golden State Theatre in downtown Monterey.

## OUR TOP 7 WEEKEND TRIPS

You can check off multiple entries with one of our weekend trip suggestions — each within 4–5 hours of Monterey and worth every mile.



### MARIN COUNTY

Muir Woods redwoods, sunset from Mount Tamalpais, a ferry to San Francisco, and Point Reyes for a lighthouse, tule elk, and gray whales.



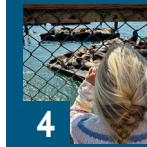
### NAPA/SONOMA

Wine country for the whole family: giraffes at Safari West and the Jelly Belly Factory for kids, tastings for parents.



### PASO ROBLES

California's friendliest wine region plus warbirds at the Estrella Warbird Museum, with Hearst Castle less than an hour away.



### SAN FRANCISCO

The Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars, Alcatraz, Chinatown dim sum, the Exploratorium — and a bunch of California sea lions on Pier 39.



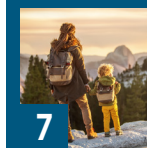
### SAN JOSE

A relaxed weekend anchored by the Children's Discovery Museum, a Sharks game, and the Moffett Field aviation museum.



### SOLVANG

A storybook Danish village that's pure magic during the holidays.



### YOSEMITE

El Capitan, Vernal Fall, and Glacier Point sunset at one of the world's great national parks.





### SCENIC DRIVES & ROAD TRIPS

- 176. Drive the full stretch of Pacific Coast Highway through Big Sur.
- 177. Stop and photograph Bixby Creek Bridge.
- 178. Take the Avenue of the Giants through towering redwoods. Drive the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway along Highway 395.
- 179. Explore the Alabama Hills near Lone Pine and watch sunrise beneath Mount Whitney. Drive the Lake Tahoe loop around the shoreline.
- 180. Cross Tioga Pass through Yosemite National Park (seasonal).
- 181. Take CA-49 through Gold Country historic towns.
- 182. Drive Highway 128 through Anderson Valley and redwood groves.
- 183. Explore the Lost Coast via the remote drive to Shelter Cove.
- 184. Climb the Palms to Pines Scenic Byway from Palm Desert to Idyllwild, rising from desert cactus to alpine forest in one drive.
- 185. Drive the Rim of the World Scenic Byway near Big Bear.
- 186. Explore Route 66 from Needles to Barstow.
- 187. Drive Highway 1 through Mendocino and the Northern California coast.
- 188. Take a wine country loop through Napa and Sonoma back roads.
- 189. Drive Highway 36 across Northern California from redwoods to volcanic peaks.
- 190. Drive the historic 17-Mile Drive through Pebble Beach.
- 191. Wind through Carmel Valley Road to the vineyards.



### CITY EXPERIENCES

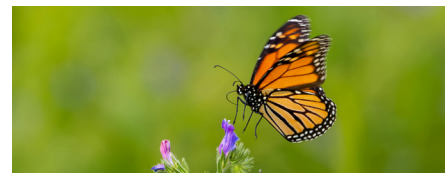
- 192. Walk through Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco.
- 193. Explore Little Italy in San Diego.
- 194. Stroll State Street in Santa Barbara.
- 195. Visit the Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego.
- 196. Walk Cannery Row in Monterey.
- 197. Explore the Old Sacramento Waterfront and historic district.
- 198. Wander the art galleries of Carmel-by-the-Sea.
- 199. Visit Old Pasadena's historic shopping and dining district.
- 200. Experience Solvang's Danish-inspired village, especially during the holidays.
- 201. Explore Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley.
- 202. Take the ferry from San Francisco to Sausalito and explore its waterfront.

- 203. Browse the Ferry Building Marketplace in San Francisco.
- 204. Tour Nob Hill and its historic hotels and cable car views.
- 205. Visit Japantown in San Francisco, one of the last remaining Japantowns in the U.S.
- 206. Walk the Embarcadero from the Ferry Building to Fisherman's Wharf.
- 207. Visit The Grove and Original Farmers Market in Los Angeles.
- 208. Explore Palm Springs' mid-century modern neighborhoods.
- 209. Walk the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica.
- 210. Stroll Ventura's downtown and coastal arts district.
- 211. Explore downtown San Jose's SoFA Arts District.
- 212. Stroll the wharf and waterfront of Old Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey.
- 213. Browse the shops and historic charm of downtown Pacific Grove.



### WILDLIFE & NATURE

- 214. Witness gray whale migration from California's coast, especially Point Reyes or Monterey.
- 215. Watch hummingbirds in a native coastal or canyon garden.
- 216. See wild dolphins riding waves off the Central Coast.
- 217. Visit a brown pelican roost along the Morro Bay or nearby estuaries.
- 218. Visit a monarch butterfly overwintering grove in Pacific Grove.
- 219. See bald eagles in winter at Lake Shasta.
- 220. Spot blue whales offshore near the Channel Islands.
- 221. Watch black bears foraging in Yosemite National Park.
- 222. Spot sea otters rafting in the wild around Monterey Bay and Moss Landing.
- 223. Watch tule elk grazing at Point Reyes National Seashore.
- 224. Explore tidepools at low tide at Asilomar in Pacific Grove.
- 225. Watch thousands of sandhill cranes descend on the Merced National Wildlife Refuge at dusk in fall and winter.
- 226. Take a wildlife boat tour through Elkhorn Slough to see harbor seals and otters.



**FOR MORE INFO:** To get even more info on the entries listed here as well as suggestions and resources for family life in Monterey County, check out our website at [MontereyBayParent.com](http://MontereyBayParent.com).



### UNIQUELY CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCES

- 227. Walk through the hollowed trunk of a fallen giant sequoia at Calaveras Big Trees State Park.
- 228. Explore the surreal rock formations of Vasquez Rocks Natural Area Park.
- 229. Explore lava tubes at Lava Beds National Monument.
- 230. Visit a working cattle ranch in California's Central Valley.
- 231. Walk through spring wildflower blooms in Carrizo Plain National Monument.
- 232. Watch sunset from the summit of Mount Tamalpais State Park.
- 233. Walk among ancient coast redwoods in Muir Woods National Monument.
- 234. See ancient bristlecone pines in the White Mountains.
- 235. Watch fog roll over the Golden Gate Bridge at sunrise.
- 236. Kayak through the tidal marshes of Elkhorn Slough.
- 237. Hike to the summit of Mount Diablo State Park for sweeping views.
- 238. See the sand dunes of Eureka Valley in Death Valley National Park.
- 239. Walk Monterey's adobes and California history sites along the Path of History.
- 240. Soak in natural hot springs in the Eastern Sierra.
- 241. See redwood forests reflected in calm stretches of the Eel River.
- 242. Visit the historic lighthouse at Point Sur in Big Sur.
- 243. Visit Point Conception, the westernmost turn of California's southern coast.
- 244. Hike the trails of Fort Ord National Monument, where generations of soldiers once trained.
- 245. Climb the Point Pinos Lighthouse in Pacific Grove, the oldest continuously operating lighthouse on the West Coast.
- 246. Watch a midnight grunion run, when tiny silver fish ride the waves onto Southern California beaches to spawn.
- 247. Walk the historic grounds of the Asilomar conference site.
- 248. Take the ferry to Catalina Island and explore the seaside village of Avalon.
- 249. Marvel at the sea glass at Glass Beach in Fort Bragg (look, but leave it — collecting is prohibited).
- 250. Ride the rotating Palm Springs Aerial Tramway from the desert floor to the pine forests of Mount San Jacinto.

# We MILITARY FAMILIES

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