

Your Weekend Getaway Guide For Northern and Southern California

The idea of a “getaway” suggest it’s something quick, it’s affordable, and you’re going to maximize the most out of this adventure. Because of the time crunch, most getaways aren’t going to include theme parks, all-inclusive resorts, or a jaunt to the closest National Park. Let’s get in, get out, and getaway. Throw a few outfits in the travel case and we’re off. If only weekend getaways were that easy. In all seriousness, there are some small travel tweaks you can do which will make a huge difference in how successful your California weekend getaway is.



Manhattan Beach, Los Angeles

5 Tips to Get the Most Out Of Your California Weekend Getaway

1. Keep Everything Simple

There are thousands upon thousands of adventures waiting to be explored in northern and southern California. It is unique in the sense that California has something to offer everyone: hiking, camping, swimming, surfing, relaxing on the beach, theme parks, spelunking, bird-watching, National Parkin’ it, roller coasters and zombie scavenger hunts (no lie...this is a thing in San Francisco). Each of these activities are fun and exciting in their own way; however, that doesn’t mean you need to do all of them. The most common mistake people make on a weekend getaway is doing too much in such a short amount of time. With that in mind, remember this: Pack simple. Do simple. Keep your budget simple.

2. Create a Budget

Having a budget planned out for a weekend getaway is really important, but some important words of advice: Don’t be married to it. Some of the best moments you will have on a weekend trip will be

the spontaneous moments and most likely will push you out of what you had planned for your budget. On the flip side, if you don't have a budget in mind, it can be rather easy to overspend. You want to avoid "getaway-regret," which is the feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when you look at the credit card bill the week after your trip.

3. Find Deals

Simply because you can't find a deal for your weekend getaway, doesn't mean you need to cancel your plans. It's not a deal-breaker (no pun intended). Deals are everywhere. You just need to know where to look. Finding the best California weekend getaway deal using [Southwest Vacations](#) is easy. Here are some simple, effective tips for getting everything you need to begin planning your northern or southern California weekend getaway. Through a simple process of plugging in your departure and arrival locations and dates, then selecting the hotel or resort, you can begin to plan and prepare for your weekend trip.

One of the best features of the vacation package tool is the search filters. Drill down by hotel, price, rating, hotel amenities, the type of experience, and geographically-centered points of interest which means you can select intriguing points of interest anywhere in northern and southern California. Inside each of these filters are a plethora of weekend getaway options. Simply put, you can create one of the most customized California weekend packages without all the complex organizing.

Another tip is to check out [Southwest's low fare calendar](#) when you're planning your trip to get the best prices on airfare. If you use airfare comparison sites you will not see fares from Southwest in the comparison matrix because Southwest doesn't make flights available through those websites.

4. Plan

Ask yourself these questions: 'Do I know where I want to go? Do I have a theme for the weekend trip? Do I have an idea of what I want to do? Do I have a main goal?' It's important to sketch what you want to do throughout each day. As stated above (and it bears repeating), one of the biggest weekend getaway mistakes we make is trying to cram so many things into such a short amount of time. One effective planning hack (after you know where you want to go) is to prioritize a list of what you want to do. Keep the list to only ten things. Cut that list of ten things in half. Those

remaining top five items are your plan. Organize them any way you want (romantic, recreational, etc.) from there. What do you do with those other five things you cut out? Keep them handy, because you may want to swap one of them out because it fits the vibe of the weekend getaway.

Another vital, crucial tip in terms of planning a weekend getaway: make sure the life you leave home has a plan too. While you are out relaxing, soaking in the sun on Huntington beach, you don't want to be worried about your home, pets, plants, or kids. An hour of planning will save you days of remorse and regret.

5. Enjoy!

What's the best way to enjoy a weekend getaway? Block out the noise. Don't bring your laptop. Set your phone on airplane mode (because you still want to take pictures). And unplug! The emails, the chores at home, your daily social media fix, the tasks your boss wants you to do, and all those things you worry about are going to be there for you come Monday. Your ultimate goal for a weekend getaway is to do just that: getaway!

What Are The Best Weekend Getaways Northern California?

San Francisco, fly into Oakland (OAK) or San Francisco Airport (SFO)

Urban hikes, fairs, museums, national monuments, aquariums and more. San Francisco is the top spot for a weekend getaway in northern California because of all the diverse options. Looking for an action-packed adventure, romance, entertainment, culture, or maybe some much-needed R&R? San Francisco has more than enough potential to fulfill that getaway itch.



Bay Bridge, San Francisco

Napa Valley, fly into Sacramento Airport (SMF)

If you're looking for a romantic weekend getaway in the northern regions of California, Napa Valley is your destination. Wine, fine-dining, scenic views, and plenty of extravagant activities to excite the senses and set the mood is what you can expect with this sought-after destination. Some of the top activities to do in Napa Valley: take a cruise on the Napa Valley Wine Train, visit a winery, explore the vineyards, bike on the Napa Valley Vine Trail, or take in stunning views in a hot air balloon ride.

Bodega Bay, fly into San Francisco Airport (SFO)

Just an hour north of San Francisco, sits one of northern California's most relaxed weekend getaway spots. There are sailboat rides, whale watching, art galleries, kayaking, horse-back riding, hiking, golfing, bird watching on coastal trails, and more. You can easily turn your northern California weekend getaway into something romantic, adventurous, or a mixture of both in one location.

What Are The Best Weekend Getaways Southern California?

Los Angeles, fly into Los Angeles Airport (LAX)

Don't let the travel bloggers fool you, it is possible to enjoy a weekend getaway in an urban setting. Be careful not to confuse "weekend getaway" as code for "away from people." The idea behind the best getaway is simplicity. Los Angeles delivers a simplistic approach to a weekend trip because it has so much to offer travelers (beaches, museums, entertainment, and everything in between) within close proximity of each other. You can squeeze a lot or squeeze just a little out of a Los Angeles getaway.

"I'm a southern California guy and love quick trips to Los Angeles. Avoid the crowds and hassle of LAX and fly into BUR, which will instantly make you feel like you've gone back in time to the old Hollywood glory days. My faves include catching a baseball game at Dodger Stadium, eating some great tacos in the downtown area, and doing some hiking in Griffith Park. Downtown LA has really improved recently and includes many great restaurants and places to stay." [@DancingDavidE](#)
Southwest Rapid Rewards Member



Griffith Observatory, Los Angeles

San Diego, fly into San Diego Airport (SAN)

Perfect weather? Check. Perfect beaches? Check. Perfect... you can fill in the blank with anything and it's going to get a check. For the weekend traveler, San Diego checks all the boxes. Since there is so much to do here, we recommend these top weekend activities: Mission Beach, Balboa Park, Cabrillo National Monument, San Diego Zoo, Gaslamp Quarter, Sunset Cliffs, a cruise in San Diego Bay, SeaWorld, and La Jolla. A casual warning if you do find yourself spending a weekend here: You may want to plan a trip here when you can squeeze in an extra day because of how enjoyable San Diego is.

Catalina Island, fly into Los Angeles Airport (LAX)

One of the most underrated weekend getaways in Southern California is Catalina Island. You can start your trip with either a 15-minute helicopter ride to the island or an hour-long high-speed ferry via Los Angeles. Both options are the perfect start to a relaxing and memorable weekend. The atmosphere you are aiming for will determine where you want to stay; however, because of its size, choices are limited. Two Harbors is small, quaint, and quiet. Avalon is much larger has restaurants, shops, and more things to do.

Catalina is ripe with culture, history, and beauty. It's also loaded with fun activities: an aerial park (rope bridges, zip lines, etc.), parasailing, kayaking, snorkeling, scuba diving, helicopter tours, museums, eco-tours, golfing, spas, botanical gardens, and ghost tours are just a handful of the things you can expect to fill your weekend retreat with fun and engaging memories. Even though Catalina Island may be small (about 70 square miles), you can easily make big plans and organize the weekend retreat theme of your choice.

Laguna Beach, fly into Orange County Airport (SNA)

Looking for the best beach for a quick southern California weekend trip? Laguna is one of the best options for weekend getaway warriors. One of the best getaway features is hotel accommodations. A lot of hotel options mean a variety of prices. There's also a wide range of activities: golfing, art

festivals, art museums, art tours, state parks, trolley rides, beach walks, tide pools, sunset strolls, music after dark, farmer's market, and more. A weekend trip to Laguna Beach is the ideal, eclectic southern California experience.

California National Parks

If you're up for a hustle, you can absolutely enjoy the California National Parks for a quick weekend getaway—there are NINE of them after all! Take a look at [our guides to the California National Parks](#), we've got a southern California edition and a northern California edition and there is something there for everyone.

If you could spend a weekend in California, what would your dream itinerary look like? Tell us in the comments!

You can visit our Discussion Forums to get more advice and information from travelers like you—there's even a section devoted to [Travel Inspiration!](#)

