

Relaxing California Vacations to Put the Ahhhhh in California

Let's be honest, not all California vacations are created equal. While there's no denying a Disneyland vacation or a trip to SeaWorld with the family is loads of fun, you don't exactly walk away from those trips feeling relaxed and rejuvenated. Not to worry, if rest and relaxation are on the agenda, California has plenty to offer! Retreats, spas, beaches, we'll round up the best options for every relaxation type.

Where can I go on a relaxing vacation in California?

If your goal is to come home from your favorite northern or southern California vacation spots and not need a vacation to recover from your vacation, then we have some great tips for you. While hitting up theme parks and ALL THE TOURIST ATTRACTIONS can be fun, sometimes you just want to kick back and enjoy the downtime. We get it.

That's why we put together a list of some of our favorite relaxing vacations in California to de-stress and unwind. So if rest and leisure are the only things on your agenda, and you've been asking yourself, "Where should I vacation in California?" take a look at everything from weekend beach getaways on the best beaches in California, to romantic beach getaways, and California destinations that have nothing to do with the beach. Gasp! And don't forget—finding the best relaxing California vacation deals using [Southwest Vacations](#) is easy.

Southern California Getaways

[The Inn at Laguna Beach](#), fly into Orange County Airport (SNA)

If a cliffside view of the ocean and a luxury hotel with shopping, great food, and art galleries is your thing, then this hotel is for you. Known for its picturesque views and high style, one of its best features is accessibility. You'll find yourself [within walking distance](#) of restaurants, nightlife, the

beach, surfing, tide pools, entertainment, and more. That means once you arrive, you can ditch the car, leave California traffic jams behind, and take your vacation at your own pace.

[The Chopra Center](#), fly into San Diego Airport (SAN)

For those seeking true rejuvenation, this resort and spa, founded in part by Deepak Chopra himself, is the ultimate spot. It's located just north of San Diego in Carlsbad and features a spa, mind-body medical group, a full schedule of yoga classes, and free 30-minute meditation sessions. You have the option of checking into the resort to attend a wellness program, or dropping in for a yoga class, spa session, or to take advantage of their other offerings.

[The Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort](#), fly into Burbank Airport (BUR)

Whether you're bringing the family along, want to relax, or looking to spend some time in the great outdoors without giving up your creature comforts, The Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort could be the place for you. It's tucked away in the heart of Santa Barbara wine country and features western-themed accommodations. But don't be fooled, in addition to horseback riding, archery, and a rodeo, you'll find tennis courts, a golf course, a lake, cycling, and world-class dining and spa experiences. There's truly something for everyone, making it the perfect place for a relaxing family vacation, reunions, corporate retreats, or couples getaway.

[Ojai Valley Inn](#), fly into Los Angeles Airport (LAX)

"Accessible seclusion" is what the Ojai Valley Inn has coined its vibe. This self-contained resort is 70 miles north of Los Angeles and 12 miles from the beach. You can settle in for the long haul and utilize the golf course, the 31,000 sq/ft spa village, several pools, shopping, artist cottage and apothecary, and seven dining options. There are plenty of [activities for adventurers and relaxation seekers](#) alike. It's no doubt one of the best vacation spots in California, as Condé Nast Traveler Magazine has consistently named it one of the "Top 100 Hotels in the World."

[Catalina Island](#), fly into Los Angeles Airport (LAX)

If you've ever wanted to spend time on a secluded island, but are afraid of being TOO secluded, then take a trip 22 miles off the southern California coast to Catalina Island. An hour-long ferry ride

will get you to Avalon, the main town on the island, which is one square mile. With a limited number of cars on the island, most people cruise the streets in golf carts. There is also plenty of entertainment to be had. From the famous mini-golf course, the historic Avalon Movie Theatre, tasty restaurants, spas, and the Descanso Beach Club, which features one of the prettiest beaches in California.



Catalina Island, California

[Newport Beach/Balboa Island](#), fly into Orange County Airport (SNA)

While others are spending time on the Santa Monica Pier, at Muscle Beach, or other famous beaches in California, you can skip the crowds for a more relaxing experience. The Newport Beach area features 13 beaches that are some of the best beaches near Los Angeles. They're easily some of the best beaches in Southern California. They take pride in taking care of their sand and keeping things clean, which means a better experience all around on these beautiful beaches in California. Plus, if you're looking for the warmest beach in California, this is it. The water temperatures are typically around 68-69° from July through mid-October.

After you've had your fill of the sand, you can walk along the boardwalk, or even hop on a fairy to nearby Balboa Island, where you'll enjoy strolling the quaint streets. Don't forget to grab a famous Balboa Ice Cream Bar before you head back to the mainland.

“Check into an ocean room view at the Pelican Hill Resort in Newport Beach. Start the day by lounging by the pool during the day and enjoy a relaxing spa treatment. For dinner, either dine in one of the posh restaurants or stay in your room and order Private Dining. When you check out of

the hotel, you will feel like a million bucks... and might have spent close to that too.



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Newport Beach, California

Encinitas/Carlsbad/Oceanside, fly into San Diego Airport (SAN)

Tucked about half an hour north of San Diego, you'll find a string of beach towns that are as charming as they are relaxing. Encinitas, Carlsbad, and Oceanside are all located side-by-side along the North Coast Highway 101. Each town features great shopping, amazing food, and boasts some of the best beaches near San Diego. Better yet, these top beaches in California are all easy-access and tend to be less crowded than some of their Southern California counterparts.

National Parks

If spending time in nature is what recharges your batteries, then you'll want to check out California's NINE National Parks. With everything from deserts to mountains and forests to islands, you'll find something that soothes your soul.

Northern California Getaways

Bath Houses

If you've never been to a bathhouse before, it's an experience you won't want to miss. Steam rooms, salt rooms, massages, facials, yoga, and cold and hot pools all provide a relaxing environment in these northern California bathhouses. Whether you go alone, with a spouse, or with friends, you'll leave feeling rested and rejuvenated. Some bathhouses of note are [Asha Urban Baths](#) in Sacramento, or [Onsen](#) or [Pearl](#) (for women only) in San Francisco.

Calistoga Motor Lodge and Spa, fly into Oakland (OAK) or San Francisco Airport (SFO)

Don't be fooled by the name, this hotel and spa are anything but rustic. The property itself was designed by a New York-based firm and plays off of the feeling of a nostalgic roadside hotel, but with an upscale twist. You can enjoy plenty of games like bocce ball, corn hole, and board games, jam out to live music, go on excursions to local wineries, or take classes like "Maker Mondays," which are taught by local artisans. The [on-site spa](#) takes a fun and social twist on a traditional bathhouse, which matches the overall feel of the property—playful relaxation.

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

Northern California is known for its wine country, and for good reason. This fertile part of the State boasts some of the country's best vineyards. With experiences varying from hip tasting rooms to drives down rural country roads lined with vineyards, the hardest task is deciding which experience is right for you. California's tourism board has outlined some of the great destinations on [its website](#) to help you narrow down your search.

"Fly into SFO, rent a car and drive to Napa. Stay in a posh cottage at one of the beautiful Napa Resorts. Experience the Wine Train and take in the sights of beautiful Napa. The next day start early, hire a car service to visit many of the local wineries for a day full of tastings. Make sure to end the night with dinner at The French Laundry. The dinner is an experience you will never forget. My wife would also add a spa treatment is a must while savoring on a glass of sparkling wine."

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Napa Valley, California

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

Visiting a big city may not sound relaxing, but if relaxing is the plan, there are many options available. Most people know to wander around Fisherman's Wharf, Pier 39, and the Golden Gate Bridge. But have you ever been to Golden Gate Park? This park is three miles long by half a mile wide (that's bigger than New York's Central Park!) and boasts a herd of buffalo, as well as flower gardens, museums, and more. You could spend days exploring and meandering here. Another relaxing adventure is to take a day trip to [Sausalito](#). Enjoy a ferry ride to this charming town and take in the unique houseboats, shopping, and dining experiences.

National Parks

California has more National Parks than any other State. That means more opportunities for you to find one that suits your taste. Or, make a bucket list and visit them all.

What is the warmest beach in California?

In southern California, Newport Beach serves up the warmest water along the California Coast. With water temperatures hanging out consistently around 68-69° from July through mid-October, a surfing session or a dip in the ocean is always a good idea.

What is the prettiest beach in California?

Newport Beach and Laguna Beach California are among some of the prettiest beaches in California. Both areas take great pride in keeping their beaches groomed and ready for visitors, which means less trash and washed up plant life, fewer bugs, and more opportunities to relax and enjoy the surf, sand, and sun.

If you're looking for a unique beach experience, you may want to travel to [Glass Beach](#) near Fort Bragg. While it's not a traditional beach, it's gotten its reputation as one of the best beaches in Northern California because of its uncommon ground cover. The site was once home to a trash dump, and the once discarded colorful glass bottles have now broken down and become worn and smooth from being churned by the water. The result is a colorful beach area that is fun for young and old to explore.

What are the top museums to visit in California?

If perusing paintings, pondering photographs, scrutinizing statues, or just generally absorbing the arts sounds appealing, California has plenty to offer in that department too.

No matter which relaxing destination you choose, you're sure to leave your California vacation feeling refreshed and like a brand new you.

What does YOUR relaxing dream vacation look like? Do you want to sit on a quiet beach or stroll museums all day? Tell us in the comments section!

Looking for more vacation ideas? Visit the [Travel Inspiration](#) section of our Discussion Forum to hear from other travelers—the forum is packed with great answers and advice to all of your travel questions.