



Ultimate Best of the West

17 Night Self Drive Tour

Embark on a captivating fly-drive adventure from Las Vegas, exploring a diverse tapestry of iconic destinations across the American West. Begin amidst the dazzling lights of Las Vegas, then venture into the stark beauty of Death Valley and the majestic landscapes of Yosemite National Park. Travel westward to San Francisco, where you can immerse yourself in the city's vibrant culture and iconic landmarks. Follow the scenic California coastline southwards, discovering the charm of Los Angeles and the laid-back vibes of San Diego. Venture east to Monument Valley's striking desert landscapes and immerse yourself in the rich heritage of the Navajo Nation. Conclude your journey with a visit to the awe-inspiring Grand Canyon and Bryce Canyon before returning to Las Vegas, enriched by unforgettable experiences and stunning natural beauty.

Highlights:

- Drive through the Death Valley - the hottest, driest and lowest National Park
- Explore the Yosemite National Park
- Experience vibrant San Francisco, Los Angeles & San Diego
- Drive through the breath-taking California Coast
- Travel back in time in the Monument Valley's striking desert landscape
- Visit the awe-inspiring Grand Canyon
- Enjoy the dazzling lights of Las Vegas

What's included:

- Getting there: Return flights to Las Vegas
- Transport: Car hire
- Accommodation: 17 nights total duration (including one night on inbound flight) - 16 nights in various hotel accommodations
- Meals included: as per the meal plans available with the hotel when booking - most hotels will only offer on a room only or breakfast basis

Not included:

- Any meals, drinks, tips, expenses of personal nature
- Anything not mentioned in the "What's Included" column

Full Itinerary

DAY 1 - UK TO LAS VEGAS TO DEATH VALLEY

Fly to Las Vegas, then pick up your rental car and drive to your hotel in the Death Valley National Park area.

Known as the hottest, driest, and lowest National Park in the United States, Death Valley lies in a basin below sea level, characterized by persistent drought and record-breaking summer temperatures. However, within this extreme environment, there are remarkable contrasts: towering peaks dusted with winter snow, occasional rainstorms transforming the desert into fields of wildflowers, and lush oases providing havens for wildlife and people alike. Despite its ominous name, Death Valley supports a surprising diversity of life.

Make sure to stop at Zabriskie Point, offering a sweeping panoramic view of the vast valley. In the evening, take advantage of one of the best stargazing opportunities in the world, admiring the night sky in this remote and pristine location.

ACCOMMODATION: The Ranch at Death Valley or similar

DRIVING TIME: 2 hrs / 123 mi



DAY 2 - DEATH VALLEY TO YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

If you're traveling during the summer months, the most picturesque route from Death Valley to Yosemite is along Highway 395, running along the eastern side of the National Parks. This highway offers stunning vistas of the Sierra Nevada mountains to the west and the valley to the east. Highway 395 leads to Tioga Pass, the main entrance to Yosemite. Tioga Pass typically opens after all snow has been cleared, with the exact opening date varying each year. In 2024, it opened in mid-June and usually stays open until the end of October. If Tioga Pass is closed, access to Yosemite from the east is not possible. Therefore, if you're traveling before the pass opens, it's advisable to take the western route around the National Parks via Bakersfield, where roads are consistently open, and consider staying overnight in Fresno or Selma.

ACCOMMODATION: Mammoth Mountain Inn or similar

DRIVING TIME: 3.5 hrs / 209 mi

DAY 3 - YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Yosemite National Park boasts approximately 800 miles of trails, making it an ideal destination for walking, hiking, and experiencing nature.

If open, the famous scenic Tioga Pass on Highway 120 is a must-see. At 3,031 meters, it is the highest mountain pass in all of California. The drive through Tioga Pass is a scenic marvel, winding through rugged terrain adorned with alpine meadows, granite peaks, and pristine lakes. Each turn presents breathtaking views that epitomize the Sierra Nevada's majestic beauty. Note that there is an admission fee to use the pass.

ACCOMMODATION: Hotel Lumberjack, Sonora or similar

DRIVING TIME: 3.5 hrs / 145 mi



DAY 4 - YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK TO SAN FRANCISCO

Drive across California to one of America's favorite cities, San Francisco, and explore at your leisure. Maybe begin your adventure with a walk or bike ride across the iconic Golden Gate Bridge for stunning views of the bay. Take a ferry to Alcatraz Island to tour the infamous former prison. Head to Fisherman's Wharf for fresh seafood, a visit to Pier 39, and a chance to see the sea lions. Spend some time in Golden Gate Park, where you can visit the California Academy of Sciences, the Japanese Tea Garden, and the De Young Museum. Wander through Chinatown, the oldest and one of the largest in North America, and experience the unique thrill of driving or walking down Lombard Street, the most "crooked" street in the world.

ACCOMMODATION: Travelodge by Wyndham by the Bay, San Francisco or similar

DRIVING TIME: 3 hrs / 132 mi



DAY 5 - SAN FRANCISCO

Another free day to enjoy San Francisco. Maybe ride one of San Francisco's historic cable cars for a charming city tour. Or book an optional excursion to Napa and Sonoma Wine Country. In the evening, you could visit Union Square to dine and enjoy the vibrant nightlife.

ACCOMMODATION: Travelodge by Wyndham by the Bay, San Francisco or similar

DAY 6 - SAN FRANCISCO TO MONTEREY

Today, drive south to Monterey, where you can choose to explore the famous 17-Mile Drive. Following the red-dotted line of the 17-Mile Drive, you will enter an enchanting world of dramatic coastal cliffs, pristine white beaches, mystical forests, and iconic golf courses. Experience one of the most scenic drives in the world as you encounter the inspiring Lone Cypress, ponder the giant trees at Crocker Grove, and admire the untouched beauty of Fanshell Beach. Witness the raw power of the Restless Sea at Point Joe, and stroll the boardwalk above the beach at Spanish Bay. Admission to 17-Mile Drive is \$12 per vehicle at the time of writing, and the gates are open to the public from sunrise to sunset.

Later, discover the charming seaside town of Carmel-by-the-Sea. Enjoy a leisurely walk along the white-sand beach, admire the fairy-tale cottages and gardens, and explore the galleries and boutiques of the quaint downtown. Carmel's unique blend of natural beauty and artistic charm makes it a perfect complement to your visit to Monterey.

ACCOMMODATION: The Monterey or similar

DRIVING TIME: 2.75 hrs / 123 mi



DAY 7 - MONTEREY TO PISMO BEACH

A drive from Monterey to Pismo Beach offers an unforgettable journey along California's scenic coastline. Begin your adventure by heading south on the iconic Pacific Coast Highway, also known as Highway 1, which winds through some of the most breathtaking landscapes in the state. As you leave Monterey, you'll pass through the Big Sur, where rugged cliffs meet the Pacific Ocean, creating dramatic vistas that are perfect for photo stops.

Continuing south, you'll drive across the Bixby Creek Bridge, one of the most photographed bridges in California, offering stunning views of the coastline.

As you approach Pismo Beach, the landscape transforms from rugged cliffs to rolling hills and sandy dunes. Pismo Beach, known for its wide, sandy shores and laid-back vibe, offers a perfect spot to unwind. Enjoy a stroll along the Pismo Pier, try your hand at surfing or paddleboarding, or simply relax on the beach. The town is also famous for its clam chowder, so be sure to savour a bowl at one of the local seafood restaurants.

ACCOMMODATION: Hampton Inn & Suites Arroyo Grande/Pismo Beach Area or similar

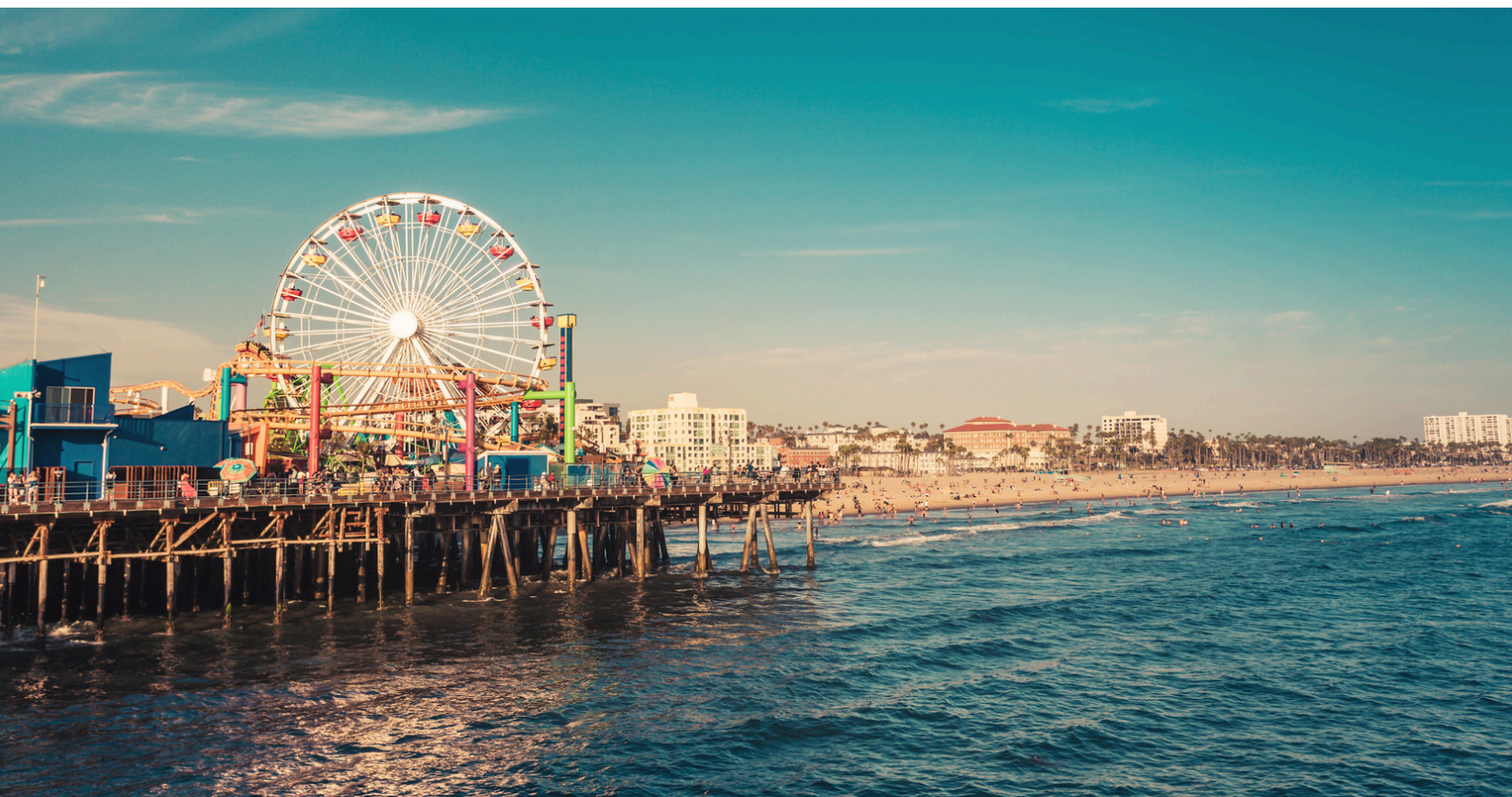
DRIVING TIME: 3.25 hrs / 147 mi

DAY 8 - PISMO BEACH TO LOS ANGELES

Starting your journey in Pismo Beach, head south on Highway 101. As you leave the charming seaside town, you'll pass through the rolling hills and vineyards of the Central Coast, offering a serene backdrop for the first leg of your trip.

Your first major stop could be Santa Barbara, often referred to as the "American Riviera." This beautiful city boasts Mediterranean-style architecture, pristine beaches, and a lively downtown area. You could spend some time exploring the historic Santa Barbara Mission, strolling along State Street, or relaxing on the sandy shores of East Beach.

As you approach the Malibu coastline, the scenery becomes even more spectacular. The drive along Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) offers stunning ocean views, with opportunities to stop at Zuma Beach, Point Dume, or the Getty Villa, which houses an impressive collection of ancient art.



As you near Los Angeles, you'll pass through the iconic beach towns of Santa Monica and Venice. In Santa Monica, you could take a stroll on the famous Santa Monica Pier, ride the Ferris wheel, or enjoy the bustling Third Street Promenade. Venice Beach offers a more eclectic vibe with its boardwalk, Muscle Beach, and unique shops and cafes.

Finally, as you enter Los Angeles, the city's skyline and vibrant energy welcome you. With its diverse neighborhoods, world-famous attractions, and endless entertainment options, Los Angeles offers something for everyone. Whether you're heading to Hollywood, exploring the museums in downtown LA, or relaxing in the upscale neighborhoods of Beverly Hills, the drive from Pismo Beach to Los Angeles is filled with memorable experiences and stunning coastal beauty.

ACCOMMODATION: Best Western Plus Meridian Inn Anaheim, Los Angeles or similar

DRIVING TIME: 4 hrs / 222 mi

DAY 9 - LOS ANGELES

With its diverse neighbourhoods, world-famous attractions, and endless entertainment options, Los Angeles offers something for everyone. You could head to Hollywood, exploring the museums in downtown LA, or relax in the upscale neighborhoods of Beverly Hills. Or join an optional excursion to Warner Bros Studio tour and Celebrity homes tour.

ACCOMMODATION: Best Western Plus Meridian Inn Anaheim, Los Angeles or similar



DAY 10 - LOS ANGELES TO SAN DIEGO

Today you'll drive through Southern California's diverse landscapes and vibrant cities. Head south on Interstate 5 (I-5) or take the scenic route along the Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) for a leisurely coastal drive passing through Long Beach, known for its bustling port and the historic RMS Queen Mary. And Orange County's beach communities like Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, and Laguna Beach, each offering their own unique charm and beach culture. Stop for a walk along the boardwalks, visit art galleries, or simply relax on the sandy shores.

As you approach San Diego County, the landscape transitions to rolling hills and scenic coastal vistas. Upon entering San Diego, you'll discover a city rich in history, culture, and outdoor activities. Explore Old Town San Diego State Historic Park to experience the city's early Spanish and Mexican heritage. Downtown San Diego offers a bustling waterfront area with the USS Midway Museum, Maritime Museum of San Diego, and Seaport Village, where you can shop, dine, and enjoy views of the bay. Head to the Gaslamp Quarter for nightlife, restaurants, and entertainment options.

ACCOMMODATION: Wyndham Garden San Diego or similar

DRIVING TIME: 1.5 hrs / 95 mi

DAY 11 - SAN DIEGO TO PRESCOTT

Today you'll drive to the high desert landscapes of Arizona. Start your trip by heading east on Interstate 8 (I-8) from San Diego. As you leave San Diego, you'll pass through the foothills and desert terrain of eastern San Diego County, where you can appreciate the rugged beauty of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. As you approach Prescott, you'll notice the landscape transition into pine forests and a cooler climate due to its higher elevation. Prescott, known for its historic downtown, Whiskey Row, and outdoor recreational opportunities, offers a charming destination to explore.

ACCOMMODATION: Days Inn by Wyndham Prescott or similar

DRIVING TIME: 6.25 hrs / 372 mi



DAY 12 - PRESCOTT TO GRAND CANYON

Begin your adventure by heading north through pine forests. Upon arriving at Grand Canyon National Park, enter through the South Entrance and proceed to Grand Canyon Village on the South Rim. Here, marvel at the awe-inspiring vistas of the Grand Canyon's vastness and depth. Visit iconic viewpoints such as Mather Point, Yavapai Point, and Hopi Point to witness the canyon's changing colours under the changing light.

All of the USA's national parks have been designed for self-drive visitors and as such have viewpoints everywhere. There are enough in the Grand Canyon that you can stop at one and be the only person there. To spend a few minutes on the edge of this enormous chasm, looking out across a crevasse so wide and so deep you cannot see the end or bottom, makes you feel very small in comparison.

Then drive to Flagstaff along Desert View Drive (State Route 64), a 25-mile stretch of road that runs along the canyon's edge, with views over the Colorado River. This scenic drive offers panoramic views of the canyon from different angles. Along the way, consider stopping at Desert View Watchtower for panoramic views and cultural exhibits.

ACCOMMODATION: Green Tree Inn, Flagstaff or similar

DRIVING TIME: 4.5 hrs / 235 mi

DAY 13 - FLAGSTAFF TO MONUMENT VALLEY

Today drive from Flagstaff to Monument Valley, traversing the Navajo Nation Reservation. Starting on Highway 89, head eastward towards Tuba City, where you'll catch glimpses of the breathtaking Painted Desert. This colourful landscape sets the stage for the awe-inspiring sights that await.

Continue on Highway 160 as you descend into Monument Valley, where the scenery transitions into what feels like a cinematic set or an alien world. This iconic 'red rock' country has served as the backdrop for numerous Hollywood films, spanning from sci-fi epics to classic Westerns. Access the Monument Valley Tribal Park via US163, with an admission fee of \$8 per person at the time of writing.

Begin your exploration at the visitor center, where you can embark on the Tribal Park loop, a 17-mile scenic drive known as the Valley Drive. This route offers stunning views of iconic landmarks, with plenty of opportunities to capture memorable photos, especially during sunset. After your adventure in Monument Valley, consider spending the night around Kayenta, a nearby town that provides convenient access to the park and its surrounding attractions.

ACCOMMODATION: Kayenta Monument Valley Inn or similar

DRIVING TIME: 2.5 hrs / 150 mi



DAY 14 - KAYENTA TO BRYCE CANYON

Today, embark on a journey to Bryce Canyon National Park, a captivating destination shaped over millennia by the forces of erosion. En route, consider a stop at Horseshoe Bend, where the Colorado River has carved a dramatic curve through the desert landscape. As you continue towards Bryce Canyon, you ascend to almost 8,000 feet, arriving at a place of extraordinary beauty.

Bryce Canyon awaits with its otherworldly scenery of delicately sculpted rock formations known as hoodoos. These multi-hued spires and pinnacles create a surreal landscape that is both exceptional and exotic, showcasing a uniquely fragile quality. Each viewpoint within the park offers breathtaking vistas, revealing the intricate details of this natural masterpiece. Prepare to be enchanted by the contrast of vibrant colours against the clear blue sky, especially during sunrise or sunset when the canyon comes alive with rich hues and long shadows. Bryce Canyon National Park promises an unforgettable experience, blending natural wonder with the allure of a truly unique and mystical terrain.

ACCOMMODATION: Quality Inn, Bryce Canyon or similar

DRIVING TIME: 4.5 hrs / 255 mi



DAY 15 - BRYCE CANYON TO LAS VEGAS

Today, your journey takes you back to Las Vegas, offering the flexibility to explore the stunning Valley of Fire State Park along the way or head directly to the bustling city.

If you choose to visit Valley of Fire State Park, located northeast of Las Vegas, you'll discover a landscape adorned with vibrant red sandstone formations that seem to ignite with color under the desert sun. The park features ancient petroglyphs, unique rock formations, and scenic vistas that make it a photographer's paradise.

Alternatively, if you prefer to head straight to Las Vegas, you'll have ample time to enjoy the city's world-class entertainment, dining, and nightlife options. Las Vegas offers everything from iconic casinos and live shows to gourmet restaurants and shopping experiences along the famous Strip.

ACCOMMODATION: OYO Las Vegas or similar

DRIVING TIME: 5 hrs / 291 mi

DAY 16 - LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas, known as the Entertainment Capital of the World, dazzles visitors with its vibrant nightlife, world-renowned casinos, and extravagant shows. Nestled in the Mojave Desert of Nevada, this bustling city is a playground for people seeking excitement. The iconic Las Vegas Strip stretches for miles, lined with themed hotels boasting elaborate architecture and opulent interiors. From the dancing fountains of the Bellagio to the pyramid-shaped Luxor and the replica Eiffel Tower at Paris Las Vegas, each resort offers a unique experience. Beyond the glamour of the casinos, Las Vegas offers a diverse culinary scene with celebrity chef restaurants, bustling bars, and gourmet buffets.

ACCOMMODATION: OYO Las Vegas or similar



DAY 17 - FLY BACK FROM LAS VEGAS TO UK

Today you fly back to the UK, dropping the car back at Las Vegas airport.

DAY 18 - ARRIVE HOME

Your overnight flight arrives back in the UK for you to make your journey home.

FAQs

BEST TIME TO TRAVEL

The best time to travel is from mid June to October. July and August are the busiest months but it's when the temperatures are very high. Avoid November to April as some of the National parks like Yosemite can receive a lot of snow and you are required to carry snow chains in the car. However putting snow chains on a hire car will invalidate your insurance. May is pleasant but the scenic Tioga Pass through the Yosemite National Park may be closed, in that instance you'd travel through a different route.

CAR HIRE

Please note to rent a car the lead driver must have a credit card on their name. Debit cards are only accepted in some cases. Please include a GPS in the rental of the car, as well as possibly multiple drivers, full tank and zero excess. Many of the roads are so vast and straight in the national parks you'd be forgiven for thinking it's okay to drive a little faster than you actually should. There are, however, a lot of police cars and speed checks along the roads so do ensure you stick to the speed limit, which can often be 50 or 55 miles an hour.

MAPS

Your car hire will have a GPS included so you can find your way; physical driving instructions are not included, in order to give you the flexibility to stop and change route at any time.

Please note, due to seasonal conditions and maintenance, some roads along the route may be temporarily closed. We advise checking local road conditions and planning alternative routes where necessary to ensure a smooth and enjoyable journey.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

The most scenic route from Death Valley to Yosemite is on the East, but this is only possible when the scenic Tioga Pass is open. The pass is usually open from mid June to end of October, but is weather dependant. If you are not travelling in Summer maybe take the safest West route, as that is always open.

ESSENTIALS

Some of the areas you'll be travelling are quiet remote, you may like to bring with you lots of water and snacks.

ACCOMMODATION

Around National Parks and near remote areas, the standard of accommodation is fairly basic. Treat them just as a place to sleep, as you won't be spending much time in them.

VISA

British citizens do not require a VISA to visit the US, but they do need to apply online for an electronic authorization (ESTA). <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>