ROAD TRIP · UNITED STATES

Southern California and the desert

Los Angeles, San Diego's beaches, Palm Springs and Joshua Tree.

Length	12 days, 11 nights
Distance	750 km, 6 driving days
Behind the wheel	9 h 50 min
Travellers	2, 1 room, 1 car
Hotels	Comfort: a good hotel (3 stars)
Flights	Amsterdam – Los Angeles (LAX), Los Angeles (LAX) – Amsterdam

CONTENTS

Los Angeles	Days 1–3	**8**
San Diego	Days 4–6	**10**
Palm Springs	Days 7–8	**12**
Twentynine Palms	Days 9–10	**14**
Los Angeles	Day 11	**16**

Day by day

DAY	DATE	NIGHT	KM	DRIVE	°C
1		Los Angeles	30	30 min	
2		Los Angeles			
3		Los Angeles			
4		San Diego	190	2 h 20 min	
5		San Diego			
6		San Diego			
7		Palm Springs	200	2 h 30 min	
8		Palm Springs			
9		Twentynine Palms	80	1 h 10 min	
10		Twentynine Palms			
11		Los Angeles	230	2 h 50 min	
12		Flight home from LAX	30	30 min	

750 km · 9 h 50 min behind the wheel · on average 130 km a driving day

Kilometres and drive times by road (OSRM, OpenStreetMap), without stops: plan generously.

The route



Map: US Census Bureau (public domain) · roads © OpenStreetMap contributors

ON THE ROAD

Day 1	Land at Los Angeles (LAX), drive to Los Angeles · About 30 km (20 mi), 30 min
Day 4	Los Angeles, drive to San Diego · About 190 km (120 mi), 2 h 20 min
Day 7	San Diego, drive to Palm Springs · About 200 km (120 mi), 2 h 30 min
Day 9	Palm Springs, drive to Twentynine Palms · About 80 km (50 mi), 1 h 10 min
Day 11	Twentynine Palms, drive to Los Angeles · About 230 km (140 mi), 2 h 50 min
Day 12	Los Angeles to Los Angeles airport (LAX), fly home to Amsterdam · About 30 km (20 mi), 30 min

Well prepared

ESTA

Dutch and Belgian travellers need no visa for a holiday of up to 90 days, but do need an approved ESTA before boarding. It costs about $40, is valid for two years (or until your passport expires) and is applied for online. Apply at least 72 hours before you fly, and only on the official site.

esta.cbp.dhs.gov

Passport

An electronic passport (with the chip symbol), valid for the whole stay. Children need their own passport and ESTA.

nl.usembassy.gov

Driving licence

Your Dutch driving licence is accepted for renting and driving a car as a visitor. An international driving permit next to it helps with police and some rental desks.

anwb.nl

Renting a car

The renter is the main driver and pays with a credit card in their own name (no debit or prepaid card); the deposit is held on it. Usually from 21, and from 21 to 24 you pay a young-driver fee of about $25 a day. Book from home with insurance included (CDW/LDW and extra liability, SLI) and an extra driver if you want to take turns. Returning the car elsewhere (a one-way trip) costs extra. Fuel is sold by the gallon (3.8 litres); fill it up yourself before you bring it back.

Driving in the USA

Keep right; speeds are in miles an hour (65 mph is 105 km/h). Turning right on red is allowed after stopping, unless a sign says no. At a 4-way stop, whoever stopped first goes first. For a stopped yellow school bus with flashing lights you stop in both directions. Toll roads are often electronic only: ask your rental company about its toll pass. On remote stretches (parks, desert) there's little signal and a long way to the next pump: fill up at half and download the map.

Renting an RV

You can rent an RV from about 21 with an ordinary car licence. On top of the rent, count on mileage (often per mile), a kit with bedding and kitchen things, cleaning and the campsite: in the popular parks you book those months ahead on recreation.gov. Big RVs aren't allowed on every park road. Take photos of the RV when you pick it up: damage and missing items are the most heard complaint.

recreation.gov

National parks

Most big parks charge per car. Visitors from abroad pay $100 a person extra at 11 popular parks; the annual pass for non-residents is $250. Some parks need a timed-entry reservation in high season.

nps.gov

Money and tipping

Prices are without sales tax, which is added at the till. In restaurants a tip of 15 to 20% is usual. Cards are accepted almost everywhere; at the pump you may be asked for a ZIP code, so pay inside.

Travel insurance and health

Care in the USA is very expensive: take travel insurance with worldwide medical cover, and check whether your health insurance covers the USA. Cancellation insurance covers the trip if you can't go; insure the rental car with the rental company (see Renting a car). Take medicines in their original packaging, with a prescription in English. Emergency number: 911.

Power, phone and time

110 volt with flat two-pin plugs (type A/B): bring an adapter. A US eSIM is cheaper than roaming. The mainland has four time zones, Arizona mostly without daylight saving time.

Customs

Fresh food, meat and fruit may not be brought in. Declare food you carry.

Packing list

- [ ] Passport (valid for the whole trip)
- [ ] ESTA, printed
- [ ] Driving licence (and an international one)
- [ ] Credit card in the driver's name
- [ ] Travel and cancellation insurance
- [ ] Confirmations: flights, car, hotels
- [ ] America the Beautiful pass for the parks
- [ ] Plug adapter for type A/B (110 volt)
- [ ] Car charger and phone holder
- [ ] eSIM or offline maps
- [ ] Sunscreen, sunglasses and a cap
- [ ] Water bottles for the desert
- [ ] Hiking shoes
- [ ] Layers: the coast and the nights get cold
- [ ] Medicines, in your hand luggage
- [ ] A pen, for this booklet

DON'T FORGET

Notes



DAYS 1–3

Los Angeles CA

Hollywood and Venice Beach

Land at Los Angeles (LAX), drive to Los Angeles: about 30 km (20 mi), 30 min

3 nights

LOS ANGELES · DAYS 1–3

HOTEL

- [ ] FOUND Hotels, Santa Monica, Series by Marriott · 3★ — roughly €200
  12311 Santa Monica Blvd
- [ ] Residence Inn by Marriott Los Angeles LAX/Century Boulevard · 3★ — roughly €150
  5933 W Century Blvd
- [ ] Holiday Inn Express Hollywood Walk of Fame by IHG · 3★ — roughly €220
  1921 N Highland Avenue
- [ ] Holiday Inn Express West Los Angeles by IHG · 3★ — roughly €350
  11250 Santa Monica Blvd
- [ ] Residence Inn by Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE · 3★ — roughly €190
  901 W Olympic Blvd

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DAYS 4–6

San Diego CA

La Jolla and Balboa Park

Los Angeles, drive to San Diego: about 190 km (120 mi), 2 h 20 min

3 nights

SAN DIEGO · DAYS 4–6

HOTEL

- [ ] Courtyard San Diego Airport/Liberty Station · 3★ — roughly €220
  2592 Laning Rd
- [ ] Homewood Suites by Hilton San Diego Airport-Liberty Station · 3★ — roughly €240
  2576 Laning Rd
- [ ] Hotel Z - Gaslamp San Diego · 3★ — roughly €100
  521 6th Avenue
- [ ] Homewood Suites by Hilton San Diego-Del Mar · 3★ — roughly €140
  11025 Vista Sorrento Pkwy
- [ ] SpringHill Suites by Marriott San Diego Downtown/Bayfront · 3★ — roughly €170
  900 Bayfront Court

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DAYS 7–8

Palm Springs CA

Mid-century modern and the aerial tramway

San Diego, drive to Palm Springs: about 200 km (120 mi), 2 h 30 min

2 nights

PALM SPRINGS · DAYS 7–8

HOTEL

- [ ] Hotel California - A Town & Desert Boutique Hotel · 3★ — roughly €250
  424 E Palm Canyon Dr
- [ ] Holiday House Palm Springs · 3★ — roughly €440
  200 W. Arenas Rd.
- [ ] Inn at Palm Springs · 3★ — roughly €130
  2525 North Palm Canyon Drive
- [ ] Del Marcos Hotel · 3★ — roughly €210
  225 W Baristo Rd
- [ ] The Monkey Tree by AvantStay – Mid-Century Modern Oasis with Pool · 3★
  2388 E Racquet Club Road

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DAYS 9–10

Twentynine Palms CA

Joshua Tree National Park

Palm Springs, drive to Twentynine Palms: about 80 km (50 mi), 1 h 10 min

2 nights

TWENTYNINE PALMS · DAYS 9–10

HOTEL

- [ ] Cali Desert Oasis w/ Hot Tub + Mtn Views! · 3★
  6244 Mojave Ave
- [ ] Chic Joshua Tree Pad w/ Mountain Views & Hot Tub · 3★
  72616 2 Mile Rd
- [ ] Cowboy Pool, Fire Pit, Backyard Chic Ranch Retreat Asteroid by Avantstay · 3★
  6929 Mantonya Rd
- [ ] Serene Home w/ Yard - 8 Mi to Joshua Tree! · 3★
  4435 Bullion Ave
- [ ] Twentynine Palms Desert Oasis w/ Pool & Hot Tub! · 3★
  80277 Wikieup Rd

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DAY 11

Los Angeles CA

Griffith Observatory at sunset

Twentynine Palms, drive to Los Angeles: about 230 km (140 mi), 2 h 50 min

1 night

LOS ANGELES · DAY 11

HOTEL

- [ ] FOUND Hotels, Santa Monica, Series by Marriott · 3★ — roughly €200
  12311 Santa Monica Blvd
- [ ] Residence Inn by Marriott Los Angeles LAX/Century Boulevard · 3★ — roughly €150
  5933 W Century Blvd
- [ ] Holiday Inn Express Hollywood Walk of Fame by IHG · 3★ — roughly €220
  1921 N Highland Avenue
- [ ] Holiday Inn Express West Los Angeles by IHG · 3★ — roughly €350
  11250 Santa Monica Blvd
- [ ] Residence Inn by Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE · 3★ — roughly €190
  901 W Olympic Blvd

NOTES

What it costs

DAY	PLACE	HOTEL	TOURS	CAR	TOTAL
1	Los Angeles	€160	–	€60	**€220**
2	Los Angeles	€160	–	€60	**€220**
3	Los Angeles	€160	–	€60	**€220**
4	San Diego	€160	–	€60	**€220**
5	San Diego	€160	–	€60	**€220**
6	San Diego	€160	–	€60	**€220**
7	Palm Springs	€160	–	€60	**€220**
8	Palm Springs	€160	–	€60	**€220**
9	Twentynine Palms	€160	–	€60	**€220**
10	Twentynine Palms	€160	–	€60	**€220**
11	Los Angeles	€160	–	€60	**€220**
12	Flight home from LAX	–	–	€60	**€60**

Flights	€1,700
Hotels	€1,760
Excursions	€0
Car hire	€720
Total	**€4,180**
	€2,090 a person

An estimate to plan with (prices of 2026-10): hotels, the ticked excursions, car hire and flights. No fuel or meals.

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About this booklet

Made on rondreis.expert. Your trip is still there, to change and print again: usa.roundtrip.expert/tours/southern-california/

PHOTOS

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San Diego	Dusk view of skyline, San Diego, California LCCN2013634794.tif · Carol M. Highsmith, Public domain
Palm Springs	The Hotel California, a boutique hotel in Palm Springs, California LCCN2013631304.tif · Carol M. Highsmith, Public domain
Twentynine Palms	190805-M-EH454-1075C.jpg · Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jose Gonzalez, Public domain
Los Angeles	Aerial views of residential Los Angeles, California LCCN2013632611.tif · Carol M. Highsmith, Public domain

MAP AND TYPE

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