

High, Low, and Old

This 695-mile trip includes some of California's most exceptional scenic sites.
Suggested time: not less than 4 days, preferably a week.



START. LOS ANGELES. Take Interstate 5 north to the junction with State Highway 14. Follow State Highway 14 for 115 miles east over Soledad Pass and then north through Palmdale and Lancaster (home of the [Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve](#), [Mojave Desert Information Center](#), [Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland SP](#), and [Saddleback Butte SP](#)). After passing Mojave on State Highway 14, watch for [Red Rock Canyon State Park](#), a colorful spot to rest and enjoy the scenic wonders of this area. At the US Highway 395 junction, continue north for 67 miles, just past now dry Owens Lake, to...

>> 210 MI. (337 KM.) LONE PINE. Interagency Visitor Center offers information about the natural attractions in Owens Valley. As you drive west from town on Whitney Portal Road toward Mt. Whitney (14,495 ft.), the highest point in the contiguous United States, you will pass through the Alabama Hills, the location of many Western movies and television commercials (road closed October-April). At Whitney Portal, west of Lone Pine, enjoy the breathtaking eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada. Return to Lone Pine, and take Hwy. 395 north to...

>> 10 MI. (16 KM.) MANZANAR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE. Manzanar War Relocation Center was one of ten camps at which Japanese American citizens and resident Japanese aliens were interned during World War II. Located at the foot of the imposing Sierra Nevada in eastern California's Owens Valley, Manzanar has been identified as the best preserved of these camps. Drive north on US Highway 395, note the highly varied vegetation and topography of the region, ranging from semi-arid desert to alpine forests. The mountains receive about 45 inches of snow, while the valley floor receives about six inches of rain a year. Drive north to...

>> 32 MI. (52 KM.) BIG PINE. Access to the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest is due east of the little town of Big Pine. Take State Highway 168 east about 12 miles until you reach the top of Westgard Pass, which is a long flat plateau rather than steep mountain pass. Turn left on the White Mountain Road, which is the only paved road turn off in this area; it is clearly signed to the Bristlecone Pine Forest. Follow this paved road 10 miles until you find the turn off and parking lot to the Schulman Grove Visitor Center and the...

>> 24 MI. (39 KM.) ANCIENT BRISTLECONE PINE FOREST. This area is the site of the oldest living things in the world, the Great Basin bristlecone pines. Within the forest is a tree estimated to be 4,766 years old. The visitor center has extensive information, and there are guided tours into the forest. Retrace the route back to Big Pine. Return south on US Highway 395; two miles past Lone Pine, turn southeast on State Highway 136 and then east on State Highway 190. Along the way you will pass [Inyo Mountains Wilderness](#), [Coso Range Wilderness](#), [Malpais Mesa Wilderness](#), [Darwin Falls Wilderness](#), and [Argus Range Wilderness](#). Continue to Stovepipe Wells in...

>> 147 MI. (236 KM.) DEATH VALLEY NP. Nowhere in California is nature's palette more vividly displayed than in the sweeping expanses of Death Valley NP. From Dante's View, 5,474 feet above sea level, is a vista encompassing virtually all of Death Valley. On the floor below is Badwater, 282 feet below sea level, the lowest point in the U.S. Rising beyond are the Panamint Mountains, with 11,049-foot Telescope Peak. Prepare for 100-plus degree summer heat, and carry plenty of water. In the northern part of Death Valley, via State Highway 190 (Death Valley National Scenic Byway), is Scotty's Castle. This Spanish-Moorish palace was the home of a flamboyant 1920s prospector. The Death Valley visitor center provides information on the area's attractions. Furnace Creek, in the heart of Death Valley, features deluxe and moderately priced lodging, campgrounds, restaurants, a general store, and swimming. For your return trip, turn left eight miles west of Stovepipe Wells on Wildrose Road with one very rough, unpaved section. Travel past Surprise Canyon Wilderness and Manly Peak Wilderness until the road becomes State Highway 178, and drive south to...

>> 71 MI. (114 KM.) TRONA. Roughly two miles past Trona, watch for the [Trona Pinnacles](#) National Natural Landmark turnoff on your left, the most impressive tufa towers in North America. Some of the 500 magnificent tufa spires reach up to 140 feet high and are featured in many television commercials and films, including Star Trek V. Follow the road to the "Y" and continue right until you reach [Trona Pinnacles](#). (Check road conditions and carry plenty of water.) Return to State Highway 178 to reach...

>> 20 MI. (34 KM.) RIDGECREST. Hub city for the northern Deserts region and home of China Lake Naval Weapons Center. From Ridgecrest, you can visit many points of interest nearby. Outdoor recreation opportunities include [El Paso Mountains Wilderness](#), [Rademacher Hills Trail](#), and [Spangler Hills Off-Highway Vehicle Area](#). A little farther away are the [Owens Peak Wilderness](#), [Kiavah Wilderness](#), [Short Canyon](#), and [Sand Canyon](#). Leaving Ridgecrest, proceed south on China Lake Blvd until it joins US Highway 395, and go south to...

>> 21 MI. (34 KM.) RANDBURG. A living ghost town and active mining camp. West from town, take the Red Rock-Randsburg Rd. Turn left off the Red Rock-Randsburg Rd., just before the junction with State Highway 14, on Neuralia Rd., and follow the road to California City Blvd. Go east (left), and follow California City Blvd. to Randsburg-Mojave Rd. This dirt road lead to the [Desert Tortoise Natural Area](#). A kiosk provides information about California's state reptile and self-guided tours. Desert tortoises are most active in the spring. Return by Randsburg-Mojave Rd. to California City. Continue west to the junction with State Highway 14. Continue south on State Highway 14 to Interstate 5 and return to...

>> 160 MI. (258 KM.) LOS ANGELES.