

Pines to Palms to Pines Again

This approximately 520-mile round trip offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy some of California's most spectacular and interesting scenery. Suggested time: 3 days.



START. LOS ANGELES. Take the Pomona Freeway/State Highway 60 east to...

>> **65 MI. (106 KM.) RIVERSIDE.** Take State Highway 60 to the San Jacinto turnoff (Gilman Springs Rd.). Continue south passing [San Jacinto Wildlife Area](#) to the west before joining State Highway 79, and drive south to...

>> **18 MI. (28 KM.) HEMET.** Turn left on State Highway 74, which is the...

>> **PALMS-TO-PINES SCENIC BYWAY.** This scenic driving tour climbs from the desert through the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, before descending again to the desert. The route passes through a series of areas preserved for animal habitat, ranging from desert oasis to snow-capped mountains, and parts of the [Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument](#) and San Bernardino National Forest. Drivers can pull off the winding and often steep road at a number of pull offs or lookout points. Continue around the 10,804-foot-high Mt. San Jacinto, one of Southern California's tallest peaks. Green pines give way to desert vegetation, the shimmering blue of Salton Sea, palm gardens, and the colorful rock mountains. Zigzag down the face, to reach the...

>> **55 MI. (88 KM.) COACHELLA VALLEY.** This area, at the junction with State Highway 111, begins at Palm Desert. The date palms here are descendants of date palms brought from Arabia and the Sahara around the turn of the century. The climate is also ideal for grapefruit, which grow below the date palms in what is called "two-story" agriculture. The valley, said to receive the most sunshine of any place in the U.S., is a year-round recreational paradise. Drive on to...

>> **18 MI. (30 KM.) PALM SPRINGS AND THE DESERT RESORTS AREA.** For a spectacular view of the valley, take the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway up 5,873 feet to Mt. San Jacinto and the [Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument](#). Return to the valley to State Highway 111 heading south, and turn left onto Ramon Rd.. Continue across Interstate 10 to...

>> **19 MI. (30 KM.) THOUSAND PALMS.** Visit [Coachella Valley National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Coachella Valley Preserve](#). For thousands of years, particles of sand from the San Bernardino Mountains and Indio Hills washed into the Coachella Valley, forming a system of dunes. Today, these dunes are part of the Coachella Valley Preserve System, a 20,000-acre sanctuary that is home to several species of increasingly rare wildlife. Return back via Ramon Rd. to State Highway 111 to...

>> **37 MI. (60 KM.) LA QUINTA.** Return to State Highway 111 south and travel through Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, and La Quinta. Turn right on Monroe St. go south to Ave. 58. Take a right on Ave. 58 and continue two miles to [Lake Cahuilla Park](#). It has a 135-acre stocked lake, centrally located showers, a dump station, equestrian and hiking trails and picnicking. Return back to State Highway 111 and continue south to...

>> **33 MI. (53 KM.) SALTON SEA.** Created early in the 1900s when a dike burst and the Colorado River plunged into the nearby desert, 234 feet below sea level. Two years later, when the break was finally repaired, a 35-mile-long, 15-mile-wide, landlocked sea had been formed. Through the years, the lake has leached salts from the ground and now is saltier than the ocean. The locale includes the [Salton Sea State Recreation Area](#), [Dos Palmas Preserve](#) and the 36,000-acre [Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge](#). Continue to...

>> **51 MI. (82 KM.) BRAWLEY.** Turn west on State Highway 78, which leads past [Ocotillo Wells State Vehicle Recreation Area](#) into the [Anza-Borrego Desert SP](#) and some of the finest desert wildflower fields in California. During the winter and spring, the valley and canyons are painted with a rainbow of color. Exit via State Highway 78 west. Proceed into the mountains and the Cleveland NF to reach ...

>> **73 MI. (117 KM.) JULIAN.** A quaint 1870s gold mining town. Continue northwest via State Highway 79 through Warner Hot Springs, Rancho California, and historic Temecula. At Temecula, turn north on Interstate 15 and west on State Highway 60 to ...

>> **153 MI. (245 KM.) LOS ANGELES.**