

Taste of California

California's third and most bountiful resource, following sunshine and would-be starlets, has to be its cuisine. Taste of California is a five day, fournight tour of the best flavors and foodstuffs this side of the Mississippi. You'll travel from Napa, including a stop at the renowned French Laundry, then on to the oyster shoals of Hog Island, and visit the aromatically bracing Gilroy, garlic capital of the world. To top it all off, a visit to the vast Alemany Farmers' Market in San Francisco, where you can collect everything from globe artichokes, blushing apples, blood oranges, to homemade candied apple sausages and clover and sage honey, to recreate the taste of California at home.

A Brief History of California's "Roots"

Almost as eagerly as the prospectors, farmers plowed west following the Gold Rush of the 1850s. They found the temperate climate and rich soil well suited for a wide variety of crops, most famously, citrus. So-called citrus barons were crowned in the early 1900s, but it all started with two small trees from Brazil that the US Department of Agriculture sent to a Ms. Eliza Tibbets, who volunteered as a test grower. These two trees led to widespread irrigation projects and even the founding of such dubious institutions as the Citrus Experiment Station.

To bacchanalians' delight, grapes flourished in the coastal areas. Vintners set up stakes and carved out California's famous wine trails in areas such as Napa

TOUR INFO

Duration: 2 Weeks

Cost per person:
\$5000 (based upon double occupancy)

Departure Dates: March 10, June 15, September 24.

Included: All meals and lodging.

Not included: Travel insurance, travel to and from departure city.

Valley and Paso Robles in the central coast. Currently, California produces 90% of American wines, falling only behind France, Italy and Spain in production.

Other less famous crops were established, artichokes, garlic, avocados, strawberries, apples, and for almost every food, there is a festival. Indio leads with its bellwether Date Festival in February and Carpinteria brings up the rear with the Avocado Festival in October.

The Tour

This five-day, four-night package starts in San Francisco. Lodgings are conveniently located nearby the famous Ghirardelli Square and Fisherman's Wharf. Take a cable car to Chinatown and walk through the Chinatown Gateway. Enjoy dim sum, a traditional variety of delicate dishes, such as fluffy pork dumplings and egg tart, alongside the ritual tea. In the evening, catch a ferry around the bay and take in spectacular views of the Golden Gate Bridge.

The next day includes travel to Central Napa, a short hour's drive from the bay. The next two night's lodgings are provided at a world-class winery, where you can survey the estate from your private balcony. The package includes two tickets to a guided winery tour, by bus or by bicycle. On the second day, have a massage, facial, or other service from any one of the world-class spas. After relaxing, enjoy a four-star meal — no less than nine courses — at the French

Wineries offer a glimpse into California's rural past.





Laundry, called “the most impetuous restaurant in the world” by critic Buck LeSabre. Try the “oysters and pearls,” a silky sabayon of pearl tapioca with oysters and sevruga caviar.

From Napa, it’s a hop, skip and a jump to Gilroy, “you’ll know it when you smell it,” California. The Garlic Festival is held in July, but this town sports year-round treats such as garlic ice cream, garlic gator on a stick, and a local favorite, the Gilroy Martini. Burn off the burn with a round of golf on any one of the three courses and enjoy shopping in the quaint downtown.

One night in Gilroy and you’re back to San Francisco. Visit one of the area’s 15 Farmers’ Markets, most famously, the Alemany Farmers’ Market, established in 1943.

Pack a picnic with your edibles and drive an hour north to visit the Hog Island Oyster Company. Take a tour of the sustainable aquaculture harvesting techniques. Enjoy the pristine Marshall beaches and pick up some oysters to go from the farm. Or stay and shuck them or grill them at Hog Island’s bayside picnic area.

Spend the waning hours wandering the beach, or you can return to San Francisco to pickup some last minute gifts for the foodies in your fold, such as a loaf of San Francisco sourdough or a special bottle of brew from the Anchor Steam Brewing Company.

FACT FILE

Fact: California is the number one dairy state. Moo!

www.california-wine.org The California Wine Institute. An excellent source of information.

Dim Sum is translated as “to touch your heart.”

Fact: California’s leading export crop is almonds.

E. & J. Gallo winery, the world’s largest and located in California, produces 75 million cases of wine a year.

The navel orange was the first citrus to be planted in California.

www.beachcalifornia.com/california-food-wine-festivals.html An alphabetical listing of 25 California food and wine festivals

