DISCOVER VOYAGE CHRONICLES

USA West Coast + Las Vegas

Seattle → San Francisco → Yosemite → Monterey / Carmel → Los Angeles → Las Vegas

20 DAYS	A first-timer route mixing city icons, Pacific Northwest scenery, a California road trip and Las Vegas - without paying for a car in cities where you do not need one.
SMART ROUTE	Seattle (4N) → San Francisco (4N) → Yosemite (2N) → Monterey/Carmel (2N) → Los Angeles (4N) → Las Vegas (3N) = 19 nights / 20 days.

CURATED WITH CURRENT OFFICIAL TOURISM + PARK + TRANSPORT GUIDANCE

Research refreshed: 13 September 2026 • Always re-check attraction hours, park alerts, wildfire/road conditions and rental terms before booking.

The route at a glance

DAYS	BASE	NIGHTS	CAR?	WHY IT WORKS
1-4	Seattle	4	No	Downtown sights, ferry and neighborhoods work well by transit; use a guided Rainier day tour.
5-8	San Francisco	4	No	Muni/cable car/ferry are easier than city parking.
9-10	Yosemite	2	Yes	This is where the road trip begins; stay close to the park.
11-12	Monterey / Carmel	2	Yes	Coast access + Big Sur day, but route depends on current Highway 1 status.
13-16	Los Angeles	4	Yes / mixed	A car helps for coast / spread-out neighborhoods; use Metro or rideshare selectively.
17-19	Las Vegas	3	Usually no	Return the car after arrival unless doing your own canyon drive.
20	Depart	-	No	Keep departure day clean.

DVC route logic: Rent the car only on Day 9. Seattle and San Francisco are easier without it; this saves roughly eight days of parking, hotel valet charges and city-driving stress. Keep the car through LA, then compare one-way return at LAS versus returning in LA and flying to Vegas.

Big Sur reality check: Highway 1 is not a “book it and forget it” road. As of September 2026, Caltrans was reporting wildfire-related closure sections and one-way traffic in parts of Big Sur. Your PDF therefore treats Big Sur as a day loop from Monterey/Carmel and uses US-101 for the southbound transfer when needed.

DAY 1 Arrive Seattle - easy waterfront reset

OVERNIGHT: Seattle • TRANSPORT: No car

- Land at SEA; use Link light rail or rideshare to a downtown / Belltown hotel. Keep arrival day intentionally light.
- Late afternoon: Pike Place Market, Overlook Walk and the rebuilt Waterfront. Walk to Pier 62 / Elliott Bay sunset.
- Dinner: choose a downtown vegetarian-friendly spot; keep an early night for jet lag.

DAY 2 Seattle icons without a car

OVERNIGHT: Seattle • TRANSPORT: Walk + monorail + transit

- AM: Pike Place if you want a quieter second pass, then Seattle Center: Space Needle + Chihuly Garden and Glass.
- PM: MoPOP or Museum of Pop Culture; take the Seattle Monorail back toward Westlake.
- Evening: Kerry Park for the classic skyline view if weather is clear; rideshare is easiest after dark.

DAY 3 Seattle neighborhoods + water

OVERNIGHT: Seattle • TRANSPORT: Transit + ferry

- AM: Pioneer Square and the waterfront; optional Smith Tower / Klondike Gold Rush museum.
- PM: walk to Colman Dock and take the ferry to Bainbridge Island. The ferry itself is a scenic experience; stroll Winslow, then return before dinner.
- Evening: Capitol Hill or Belltown. No rental car needed.

DAY 4 Mount Rainier day OR flexible Seattle day

OVERNIGHT: Seattle • TRANSPORT: Day tour / rental for 1 day

- Best weather option: book a guided Mount Rainier day tour so you avoid mountain driving, parking and return fatigue.
- Backup urban day: Fremont + Ballard Locks + Gas Works Park. This is smart if Rainier is clouded out.
- Pack layers even in summer; mountain conditions can differ sharply from Seattle.

DAY 5 Fly Seattle to San Francisco

OVERNIGHT: San Francisco • TRANSPORT: Flight + BART / rideshare

- Take a morning nonstop SEA-SFO/OAK flight. Do not rent the road-trip car yet; parking in central SF is expensive and inconvenient.
- Check in around Union Square, Embarcadero, Fisherman's Wharf or Nob Hill depending budget/style.
- PM: Ferry Building - Embarcadero - Pier 39 / Fisherman's Wharf. Sunset at Pier 7 or along the waterfront.

DAY 6 Classic San Francisco

OVERNIGHT: San Francisco • TRANSPORT: Muni + cable car + walk

- AM: ride a cable car early, then Chinatown + North Beach on foot.
- PM: Lombard Street, Fisherman's Wharf; pre-book Alcatraz if it is a priority.
- Evening: Mission District / Dolores Park and vegetarian dinner at Shizen if you secure a reservation.

DAY 7 Golden Gate + Presidio + Sausalito

OVERNIGHT: San Francisco • TRANSPORT: Muni / Presidio GO + ferry

- Use Muni or free Presidio GO toward the Golden Gate Bridge rather than driving and hunting for parking.
- Walk part of the bridge, then explore Presidio / Crissy Field. Continue to Sausalito by bus or bike-and-ferry if comfortable.
- Return by ferry for a beautiful approach to the city skyline.

DAY 8 SF flex day: neighborhoods + viewpoints

OVERNIGHT: San Francisco • TRANSPORT: Transit

- AM: Painted Ladies / Alamo Square, Haight-Ashbury, Golden Gate Park.
- PM: California Academy of Sciences OR de Young / Japanese Tea Garden.
- Evening: Twin Peaks only if skies are clear; otherwise North Beach or Hayes Valley.

DAY 9 Pick up car - San Francisco to Yosemite

OVERNIGHT: Yosemite area • TRANSPORT: Rental car starts

- Pick up the car in the morning from a city location or SFO if the rate is materially cheaper. Photograph all existing damage before leaving.
- Drive to Yosemite area. Aim to arrive early enough for Tunnel View and a short valley walk before dusk.
- Stay inside Yosemite Valley if budget permits; otherwise El Portal is the practical fallback. In 2026 no vehicle entrance reservation is required, but lodging should be booked well ahead.

DAY 10 Full Yosemite day

OVERNIGHT: Yosemite area • TRANSPORT: Park + shuttle

- Park once early and use park shuttles / walking where practical. Start with Lower Yosemite Fall / Cook's Meadow; add Mist Trail segment only if fitness, weather and trail conditions suit.
- Afternoon: Yosemite Valley viewpoints, El Capitan Meadow and optional Glacier Point when seasonal road access is open.
- Dinner options inside the park include Base Camp Eatery, Degnan's, Curry Village and veggie choices at seasonal outlets.

DAY 11 Yosemite to Monterey / Carmel

OVERNIGHT: Monterey or Carmel • TRANSPORT: Rental car

- Leave after breakfast. Drive west toward Monterey; break the long drive with a lunch stop rather than trying to sightsee en route.
- Late PM: Monterey waterfront / Cannery Row, then Carmel-by-the-Sea for sunset and dinner.
- Sleep Monterey for easier parking/value or Carmel for atmosphere.

DAY 12 Big Sur day - drive only what is open

OVERNIGHT: Monterey / Carmel • TRANSPORT: Rental car - Highway 1 check required

- Before departure check Caltrans QuickMap / SR-1 status. As of Sept 2026, wildfire/construction closures have affected through-driving in southern Big Sur, so never build the day around an assumed full coastal through-route.
- If north Big Sur is open: Bixby Creek Bridge viewpoints, Point Sur area, Pfeiffer Big Sur / coastal overlooks, then return to Monterey/Carmel.
- Do not try to "push through" a closure. Use US-101 on the next transfer day when Highway 1 is not continuous.

DAY 13 Monterey to Los Angeles - practical inland route

OVERNIGHT: Los Angeles • TRANSPORT: Rental car

- If Highway 1 is not fully open, use US-101 south. This is the practical route and protects your LA arrival time.
- Optional stops depending pace: San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Malibu. Avoid stacking all three if you want daylight arrival in LA.
- Check in around West Hollywood / Beverly Grove for central sightseeing, or Santa Monica if beach time matters more.

DAY 14 Hollywood + Griffith + studio day

OVERNIGHT: Los Angeles • TRANSPORT: Rental / rideshare; Metro possible

- AM: Hollywood Boulevard briefly, then choose one: Warner Bros. Studio Tour OR Universal Studios Hollywood (fuller-day attraction).
- Late PM / sunset: Griffith Observatory. Parking can be stressful; DASH / rideshare is often easier near peak times.
- Dinner in West Hollywood; Crossroads Kitchen and Gracias Madre are strong plant-based options.

DAY 15 LA culture + Downtown

OVERNIGHT: Los Angeles • TRANSPORT: Metro + rideshare or car

- AM: The Getty Center OR Academy Museum depending interests. Keep only one major museum.
- PM: Downtown LA - Grand Central Market, The Broad (if booked), Walt Disney Concert Hall exterior, Arts District.
- Use Metro for point-to-point trips where convenient; current tap-to-pay supports contactless cards and two-hour transfers.

DAY 16 Santa Monica + Venice + Malibu

OVERNIGHT: Los Angeles • TRANSPORT: Rental car

- Morning: Santa Monica Pier and Palisades Park. Walk / bike south toward Venice Beach and Abbot Kinney.
- Afternoon: drive north toward Malibu for ocean views and a relaxed beach stop; return before peak evening traffic if possible.
- Keep valuables out of sight in the rental car, including at beach parking lots.

DAY 17 Los Angeles to Las Vegas

OVERNIGHT: Las Vegas • TRANSPORT: Rental car one-way OR fly

- Option A (recommended if you already have the road-trip car): drive I-15 to Las Vegas, allow generous buffer for traffic, fuel and breaks. Return the car at LAS or a Strip location after hotel check-in if you will not use it further.
- Option B: return car in LA and fly LAX/BUR-LAS; this can be easier if one-way rental pricing is high.
- Evening: Bellagio fountains, Strip walk, Venetian / Sphere exterior. Do not try to walk the entire Strip.

DAY 18 Las Vegas highlights

OVERNIGHT: Las Vegas • TRANSPORT: Walk + Monorail + rideshare

- AM: slow start / resort exploration; Bellagio Conservatory, Caesars, Venetian, Wynn area.
- PM: pool/rest or Area15 depending style. Evening: Fremont Street for old-Vegas contrast.
- Use Monorail / rideshare for longer Strip gaps. Crossroads Kitchen at Resorts World is fully plant-based; Wynn/Encore restaurants advertise vegetarian and vegan choices.

DAY 19 Grand Canyon South Rim - long day or overnight upgrade

OVERNIGHT: Las Vegas • TRANSPORT: Guided tour preferred

- For a true National Park experience choose Grand Canyon South Rim, not Skywalk. NPS lists Las Vegas to South Rim at about 278 miles / 447 km each way - a very long day.
- Best comfort choice: guided day tour so nobody has to drive 9-10+ hours total. Better still, convert this to an overnight at Tusayan / South Rim if your flight schedule allows.
- Inside the park, use free shuttles for viewpoints where operating; Hermit Road restricts private cars much of the year.

DAY 20 Depart Las Vegas

OVERNIGHT: - • TRANSPORT: Airport transfer

- Keep the final morning unscheduled. LAS is close to the Strip, but traffic, hotel checkout and airport security can still eat time.
- Rideshare/taxi to LAS unless you purposely kept a rental car. If you kept one, allow extra time for fuel and rental-center shuttle.
- Fly home / onward with a clean buffer instead of adding one last attraction.

Car rental + driving plan

The goal is not to have a car for 20 days. It is to have a car only when it adds value.

SEGMENT	BEST OPTION	PRACTICAL DETAIL
Seattle Days 1-4	No car	Use Link light rail / transit / ferry / rideshare. If visiting Rainier, a guided tour is less tiring than one-day rental logistics.
San Francisco Days 5-8	No car	Use BART from airport plus Muni, cable cars, ferry and Presidio GO. Hotel parking can be expensive; theft-from-vehicle risk also makes an empty car preferable.
Days 9-17	Rent car	Pick up SF morning of Day 9. Midsize sedan is enough unless luggage volume needs an SUV. Keep luggage concealed in trunk.
LA Day 17 decision	Compare one-way fee	Check total price for SF to LAS vs SF to LAX. Sometimes a one-way to Vegas is reasonable; sometimes LA return + flight wins.
Las Vegas Days 18-20	Usually no car	Strip hotels + Monorail/rideshare are simpler. Rent only if self-driving Red Rock / Grand Canyon.

For an Indian traveller: USAGov says rules vary by state and you may need an International Driving Permit (IDP) in addition to your home-country licence; the U.S. does not issue IDPs to foreign visitors, so obtain one before travel if required. Also confirm the rental company’s own document policy. Carry your physical driving licence, passport and booking/payment card.

Insurance checklist: understand Collision Damage Waiver / Loss Damage Waiver, third-party liability, roadside assistance, glass/tyres and whether your credit card already provides rental cover. Do not assume Indian motor insurance applies. Decline extras only after verifying coverage.

Tolls + fuel: ask the rental company exactly how electronic tolls are billed and what admin fee is added. Return with the contracted fuel level. Photograph fuel gauge + odometer + vehicle condition at pickup and return.

Parking: never leave passports, bags, electronics or shopping visible. In SF especially, keep the cabin visibly empty. In LA, read street-cleaning and permit signs carefully.

Vegetarian food cheat sheet

Seattle

Araya’s Place (Thai vegan), Plum Bistro / neighborhood vegan cafes; Pike Place and Capitol Hill also have easy vegetarian bowls, bakery and international options. Verify current hours.

San Francisco

Shizen Vegan Sushi Bar & Izakaya (reservations strongly advised); Greens is another classic vegetarian choice. Mission / Chinatown / Ferry Building are easy for casual veg meals.

Monterey / Carmel

Carmel independent restaurants are generally plant-friendly; Mediterranean and California farm-to-table spots are safest. Dametra / Yafa-style Mediterranean choices are practical.

Yosemite

Base Camp Eatery specifically lists vegetarian options; Degnan’s offers sandwiches/salads/pizza; Curry Village has pizza, salads, rice bowls and seasonal vegetarian choices.

Los Angeles

Crossroads Kitchen (plant-based fine dining), Gracias Madre (plant-based Mexican); LA is exceptionally easy for vegan/vegetarian dining.

Las Vegas

Crossroads Kitchen at Resorts World; Wynn & Encore state that vegan/vegetarian menus or options are available across their dining portfolio.

Jain / stricter vegetarian note: in the U.S., “vegetarian” can still involve shared grills, egg, onion/garlic or sauces with animal-derived ingredients. Ask clearly about egg, stock/broth, gelatin, fish sauce and cross-contact. Indian restaurants are usually easiest for Jain-style customization when contacted in advance.

What to pre-book

- International / domestic flights and your first 2-3 city hotels once dates are fixed.
- Alcatraz, Space Needle/Chihuly combo if desired, and major studio/theme-park tickets.
- Yosemite lodging first. NPS says no 2026 vehicle entrance reservation is required, but lodging/camping reservations remain strongly recommended.
- Rental car after comparing total one-way price including taxes, concession fees, additional-driver charges, fuel policy and insurance.
- Crossroads / Shizen and other destination restaurants if dining is important.
- Grand Canyon guided tour if you keep it as a Las Vegas day trip.

Reality checks that make this itinerary practical

Do not overpack cities

Seattle and San Francisco each get four nights because arrival/transit/weather can steal half-days. The route still leaves a meaningful road-trip section.

Yosemite deserves 2 nights

One night turns the park into a parking/drive-through exercise. Two nights gives one full day.

Big Sur is conditional

Wildfires, landslides and construction can change Highway 1 quickly. The route never relies on a continuous Highway 1 drive to reach LA.

LA needs geographic grouping

Hollywood/Griffith together; Downtown/culture together; Santa Monica/Venice/Malibu together. Crossing the city repeatedly is the fastest way to waste the trip.

Grand Canyon is the hardest day

NPS lists Las Vegas to the South Rim at roughly 278 miles each way. A guided tour is safer and less exhausting; overnight is better if you can spare it.

Las Vegas does not need a rental car

The airport rental center is convenient, but for normal Strip sightseeing, Monorail/rideshare/walking is more practical than hotel parking and repeated valet queues.

Best optional swaps

- Skip Mount Rainier if clouds are heavy; keep Seattle flexible instead of paying for a viewless mountain tour.
- If you dislike theme parks, swap Universal for Warner Bros Studio Tour + Griffith + West Hollywood.
- If Yosemite roads are snow-affected, keep valley sights and avoid forcing high-elevation routes.
- If Highway 1 is closed beyond the northern Big Sur section, enjoy Monterey/Carmel/Big Sur as an out-and-back and take US-101 south.
- If Grand Canyon day trip feels too punishing, use Day 19 for Red Rock Canyon + a relaxed Vegas evening.

Research sources

Priority was given to official tourism boards, transit agencies, Caltrans and U.S. National Park Service pages. Conditions can change, especially park roads, wildfire closures and attraction schedules.

Seattle itinerary + car-free ideas
Visit Seattle - visitseattle.org/things-to-do/sightseeing/how-to-spend-1-3-or-5-days-in-seattle/

San Francisco visitor planning / Golden Gate transit
SF Travel - sftravel.com and sftravel.com/things-to-do/attractions/iconic-sf/golden-gate-bridge

Yosemite reservations / transport / dining
NPS Yosemite - nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit ; nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/dining.htm

Highway 1 live status
Caltrans - roads.dot.ca.gov/?roadnumber=SR1 and quickmap.dot.ca.gov

Los Angeles itinerary + transit
Discover Los Angeles - discoverlosangeles.com ; LA Metro - metro.net/riding and metro.net/fares/how-to-pay

Las Vegas getting around / vegetarian dining
Visit Las Vegas - visitlasvegas.com/experience/post/getting-around-vegas/ ; Wynn Las Vegas vegetarian dining

Grand Canyon South Rim driving + shuttle rules
NPS Grand Canyon - nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/directions_s_rim.htm and grand-canyon-visitor-center.htm

Foreign visitor driving / IDP
USAGov - usa.gov/non-citizen-driving

This guide is a planning resource, not a booking guarantee. Reconfirm opening hours, tickets, road closures, visa/entry rules, driving documentation and insurance before paying.

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