

TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

**lonely planet**  
MAGAZINE

July 2010

# Summer in America

California dreaming,  
from national parks to wineries

*plus!*

Four more classic  
US road trips

## Island escapes

Secret hideaways  
off Italy, Greece  
and Croatia

### LISBON

Balmy nights on  
soulful streets

### TIBET

Journey by train to  
a lost kingdom



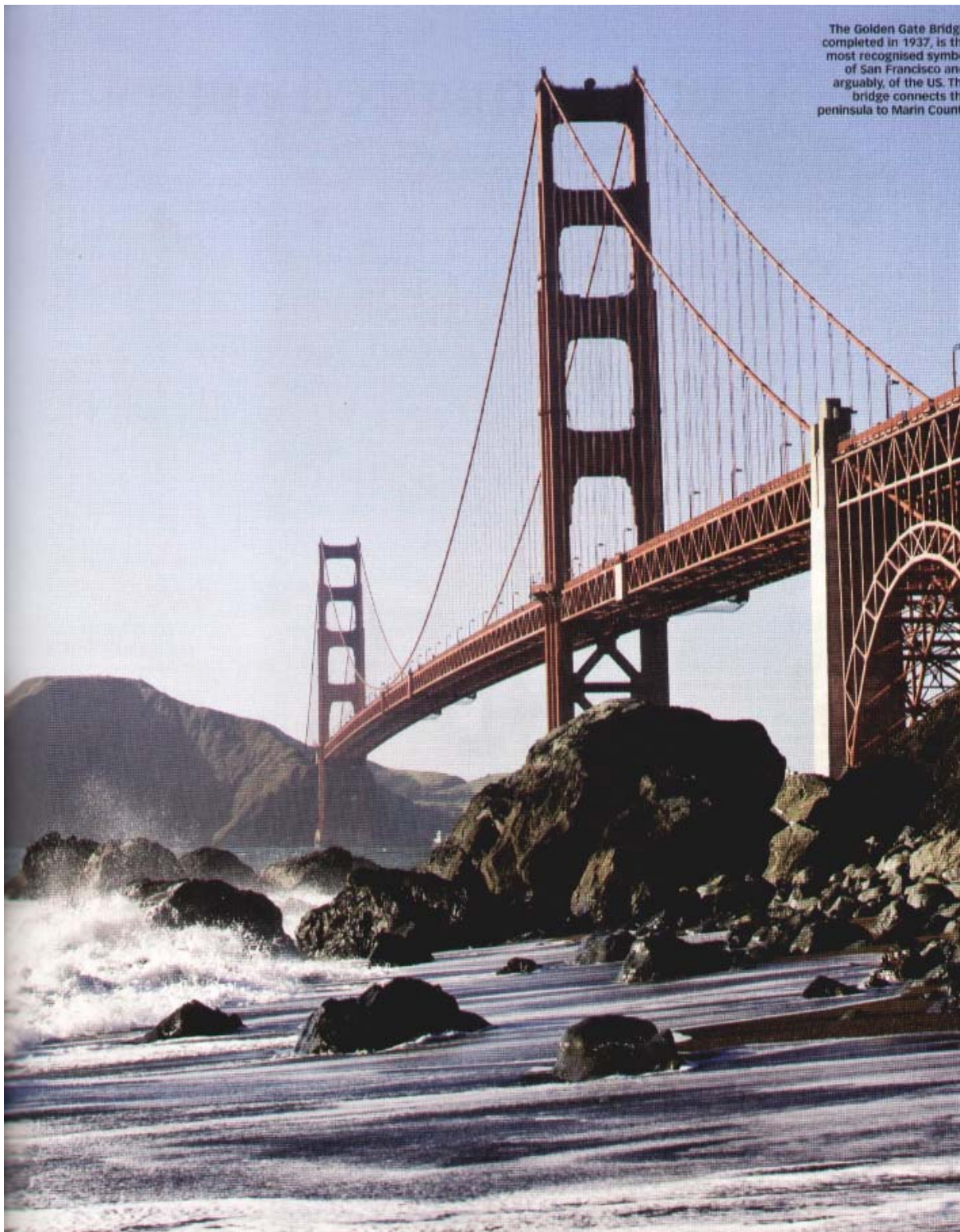
# *The Perfect Trip* **California**

This classic road trip showcases America's best natural assets, from Yosemite's granite domes and waterfalls to the giant redwood trees along the northern coast, and acres of vineyards and dramatic landscapes in between

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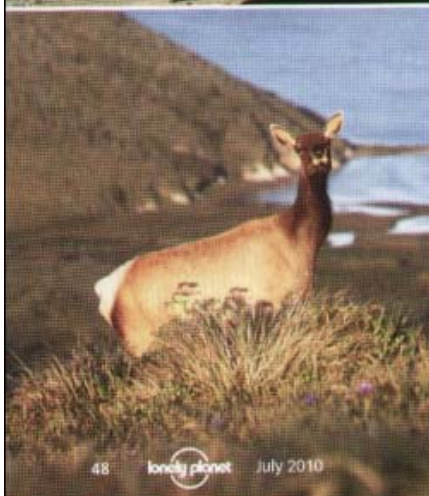
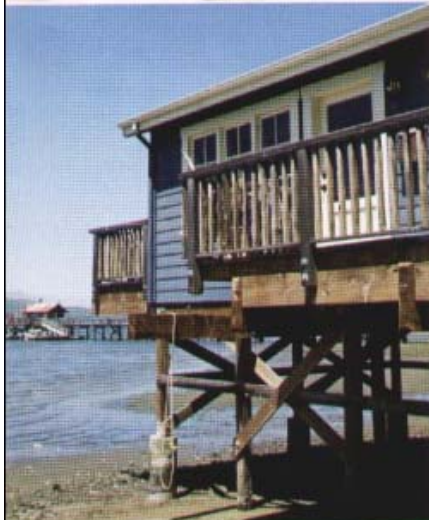
The Golden Gate Bridge, completed in 1937, is the most recognised symbol of San Francisco and, arguably, of the US. The bridge connects the peninsula to Marin County.



# Your trip mapped out

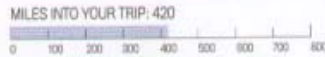
Take a couple of weeks, hit the road and explore the best of America's west, from nature's biggest, tallest and most powerful features to beautiful wineries, before finishing by heading back to San Francisco or north to Seattle





### 3 POINT REYES

#### Best for wildlife spotting



Point Reyes is about 230 miles northwest of Yosemite National Park, under 5 hours by car

When the 1906 earthquake struck San Francisco and levelled the city, Point Reyes Peninsula moved a whopping 6m northwestward. To prove it there's a broken fence along the Earthquake Trail near the Bear Valley Visitor Center. As the main road, Sir Francis Drake Blvd, crosses a short bridge connecting the mainland and the peninsula, it's hard to imagine that the little creek beneath sits atop such a massive rift zone.

Point Reyes National Seashore's western tip juts 10 miles out to sea and stands 183m high, with sea lions lazing on the rocks below. It's an ideal perch from which to see the January-to-May migration of California grey whales. Just east at Chimney Rock is a large elephant seal breeding colony, complete with a dedicated lookout spot.

'My favourite time of year is winter,' says park ranger Doug Hee. 'The migrating whales, the mating elephant seals, the profusion of wildflowers – everything comes alive in colour from January to April.'

Wintertime bird-watching is sensational, especially from a kayak on Tomales Bay. The Pacific Flyway, the route migrating flocks follow between the tropics and the Arctic, sits just overhead. 'Forty-five per cent of all North American bird species have been spotted at Point Reyes – there are great opportunities to see very rare birds,' says Hee.

The most thrilling spectacle is the herds of tule elk, a native-California species of 500-pound reindeer-like beasts, roaming the peninsula's northern finger, Tomales Point. Come rutting season, their bugling echoes across the valleys as the males spar and lock horns in a fight for dominance, wooing potential harem members. The footpath winds right through the 440-head herd, and on weekends from July through September, the parks service provides binoculars for a closer look. It's a little disconcerting hiking so close to these giant

LEFT, FROM TOP A curious elephant seal; low tide at Nick's Cove and Cottages; a native tule elk feeds at Tomales Point. OPPOSITE Elephant seals soak up the Californian sun at Chimney Rock

animals, but Hee assures, 'They're very tolerant of people on the trail, but if you step off it, the whole group can scatter and the bulls can lose their harems.'

Not that you'd want to step off the trail when you see what's ahead. Just beyond the elk, the wildflower-studded footpath tops out on high, windswept bluffs with superb vistas. On one side, the Pacific churns; on the other lies mellow Tomales Bay, whose stillness belies the staggering power of the San Andreas fault just beneath its surface.

#### FURTHER INFO

● [nps.gov/pore](http://nps.gov/pore)

#### WHERE TO STAY

● Nick's Cove and Cottages are an assembly of 1930s cottages on the edge of Tomales Bay. Nick's feels like a summer place that's been in the family for years. Refurbished in 2007 when famed local restaurateur Pat Kuleto took over, the cottages have luxury extras including high-thread-count sheets and heated marble bathroom flooring, but the decor remains decidedly folksy. The best rooms are on stilts, jutting out over the bay – come midweek for lower rates. Otherwise, Point Reyes is an easy daytrip from San Francisco (from £192; [nickscove.com](http://nickscove.com)).



#### WHERE TO EAT

### THE MARSHALL STORE

A roadside bar perched over Tomales Bay, the Marshall Store is the place to sample oysters. The store is not licensed to serve the alcohol it sells on the premises, so take your wine to the bay-side car park, a sandy strip lined with barrel tables. The speciality is barbecued oysters, but there's also a terrific clam chowder (mains from £8; [themarshallstore.com](http://themarshallstore.com)). ▶

*The Perfect Trip*  
CALIFORNIA

