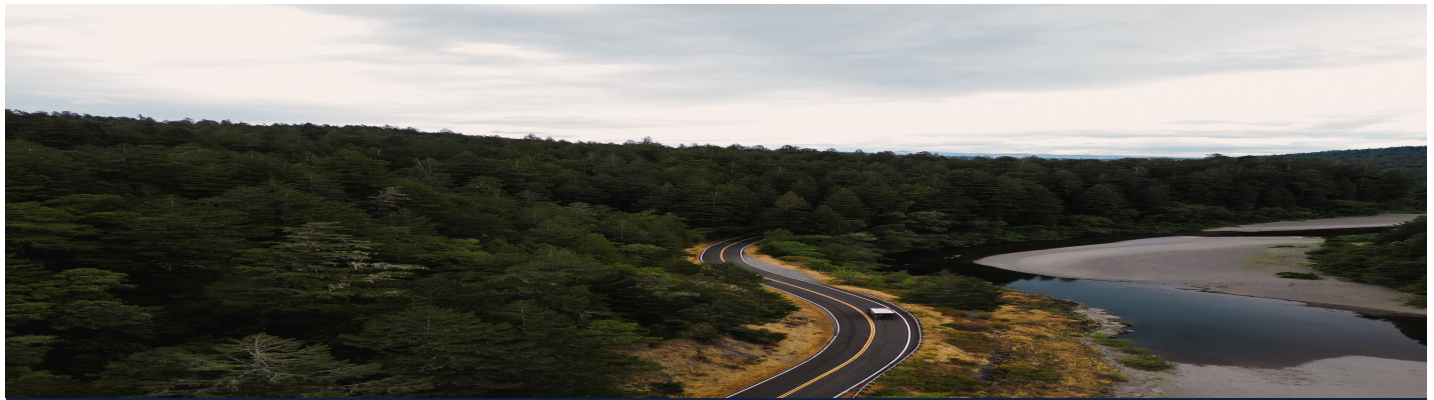




Drive-Thru Redwoods, Then a Canyon of Ferns — A 4-Day Redwood Coast Road Trip

DURATION

4 Days

Inland redwood groves along the Avenue of the Giants stay mild and mostly dry, 60–75°F (16–24°C), while the immediate coast runs cooler and foggy; Fern Canyon's day-use reservations also run heaviest May–September. Winter brings the heaviest rain and occasional Highway 101 slides.

BEST TIME TO GO

June–September

FROM

\$620 USD / person

for 2 people, incl. a rental car, 3 nights' lodging & park fees

San Francisco to the Oregon border in four days: a drive-thru tree and the tallest trees on earth along the Avenue of the Giants, Victorian Eureka for a night, a reservation-only hike through fern-draped Fern Canyon, a redwood-canopy gondola ride at Trees of Mystery, and a night in a motel built from a single redwood log — with real lodges, real park fees, and 2026 prices for every stop.

Day 1

San Francisco to the Avenue of the Giants

A morning drive north out of the Bay Area ends among the tallest trees on Earth, with a stop to drive an SUV straight through the trunk of a living redwood.

Self-Drive — San Francisco to Myers Flat

~4 hours, ~215 miles via US-101 N

The drive follows US-101 north through Santa Rosa and along the Eel River canyon; a rental car is the easiest way to do this route, since one-way drop-off fees from Bay Area airports are modest and the alternative is a long drive back south at the end.

Shrine Drive-Thru Tree

~20 minutes, self-guided · Small cash fee per vehicle

A living redwood on the Avenue of the Giants with a tunnel cut through its base wide enough for most cars and small SUVs — one of only three drive-through trees left in California, and a genuine roadside-America stop, not a reproduction.

Shrine Drive-Thru Tree · (707) 943-1975

Founders Grove Nature Trail

~45 minutes, self-guided • Free

A flat, half-mile loop off the Avenue of the Giants to the Founders Tree and the fallen Dyerville Giant, once one of the tallest trees ever measured — an easy first taste of old-growth redwood scale before dinner.

Overnight — Benbow Historic Inn

From \$260 USD / night, for 2 people

A 1926 Tudor-style inn on the banks of the South Fork Eel River just south of Garberville, with a wood-paneled lobby, afternoon tea service, and a golf course next door — the classic overnight base for the southern end of the redwoods.

Benbow Historic Inn • 1-800-355-3301 • benbowinn.com/

Day 2

Rockefeller Forest to Victorian Eureka

A short hike among the tallest trees in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, then north to a coastal town built on 19th-century lumber money.

Rockefeller Forest, Bull Creek Flat Trail

~1.5 hours, self-guided • Free (day-use parking fee may apply)

The largest contiguous old-growth coast redwood forest left on Earth, with a flat, easy trail winding among trees over 350 feet tall — measurably taller, on average, than the more heavily visited groves along the main Avenue.

Self-Drive — Garberville to Eureka

~1.5 hours, ~65 miles via US-101 N

US-101 climbs out of the redwoods and along the Eel River delta before dropping into Humboldt Bay, with roadside pullouts for the Victorian Avenue and Fernbridge, once billed as the world's longest concrete bridge.

Old Town Eureka & the Carson Mansion

~2 hours, self-guided • Free to walk

A restored waterfront district of Gold Rush-era storefronts, galleries, and the Carson Mansion, an 1885 Queen Anne timber-baron's house widely considered one of the most photographed Victorian homes in America (private club, exterior viewing only).

Overnight — Carter House Inns

From \$250 USD / night, for 2 people

A cluster of Victorian-style inns on Eureka's waterfront with an award-winning in-house restaurant and a walk to Old Town's galleries and shops — the top address in Eureka for a redwoods road trip.

Carter House Inns • (707) 444-8062 • carterhouse.com/

Day 3

Fern Canyon & the Trees of Mystery

A reservation-only hike through a canyon of hanging ferns, then a gondola ride over a redwood-canopy trail on the way to the Oregon border.

Fern Canyon, Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

~2 hours, self-guided · \$12 USD day-use permit (cash/check only, book on [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov))

A slot canyon with 50-foot walls draped floor to top in five species of fern, reached by a gravel road that fords two shallow streams — used as the setting for the dinosaur-filled jungle in Jurassic Park: The Lost World. A same-day or advance reservation is required and photo ID is checked at the gate.

Trees of Mystery & the SkyTrail Gondola

~2 hours, self-guided · \$30 USD / adult, includes gondola

A roadside attraction since 1946, anchored by 49-foot statues of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, with a gondola that climbs 100 feet into the redwood canopy for a ridge-top view over the Klamath River — kitschy, genuinely scenic, and a fixture of every Highway 101 road trip through here.

Trees of Mystery · treesofmystery.net/

Self-Drive — Klamath to Crescent City

~30 minutes, ~20 miles via US-101 N

The last short leg follows the coast past Wilson Creek Beach and the Klamath River overlook before dropping into Crescent City for the night.

Overnight — Curly Redwood Lodge

From \$115 USD / night, for 2 people

A 1957 motel built from the lumber of a single 18-foot-diameter redwood log, said to be enough wood to frame an entire house — the lobby's paneling and the guest-room doors all came from that one tree, and the story is documented at the front desk.

Curly Redwood Lodge · (707) 464-2137 · www.curlyredwoodlodge.com/

Day 4

Redwood National Park & Departure

A last grove of old-growth redwoods and a historic lighthouse before the drive back south.

Lady Bird Johnson Grove

~1 hour, self-guided · Free

An easy mile-long loop through old-growth redwoods dedicated in 1969 by the former First Lady, with interpretive signs on the redwood ecosystem — one of the most accessible old-growth walks in Redwood National Park, a short detour off US-101.

Battery Point Lighthouse

~45 minutes, self-guided · Small donation for tours, tide-dependent access

An 1856 lighthouse on a small tidal island just off downtown Crescent City, walkable across the rocks only at low tide — check tide tables before setting out, since the causeway floods at high water.

Departure Drive South

Self-guided

From Crescent City it's roughly a 5.5-hour drive back to San Francisco, or a shorter run to the regional airport in Arcata/Eureka (ACV) for a flight home — four days that ran from a tree you can drive through to a canyon out of Jurassic Park.

Built by I-Journey · i-journey.com · Prices and hours reflect 2026 research and can change — confirm directly with each operator before you travel.