Headline: Let roads lead you to paradise in California

Deckhead: State Highway 1, others take you on wondrous journeys

Few states in the U.S. have as many personalities as California.

Wine country, national parks, major-metropolitan cities, enormous redwood forests and small towns comprise much of a state built for sunshine and raining with stars. This vast state is waiting to be explored.

Perhaps the best way to see California is by vehicle. Road trips are synonymous with the Golden State. Miles of roads hug the Pacific shoreline and other locations. Unique destinations are waiting to be discovered.

State Highway 1 – aka Pacific Coast Highway – is arguably one of the world’s most famous roadways. It’s made countless appearances on the big and small screens. It covers nearly 700 miles from Mendocino County in the north to Orange County in the south.

Ocean waves crash into rocky beaches. Winding roads uncover stunning sights, forests provide lush settings and territories are waiting to be uncovered.

The Big Sur Highway is the road’s most iconic stretch. It runs 72 miles between San Luis Obispo and Pebble Beach. Traveling this wondrous path will take you past some of the state’s most epic scenery and destinations like Morro Bay, Hearst Castle, McWay Falls, the Bixby Creek Bridge and Big Sur.

Highway 1 leads to the 17-Mile Drive, a private-toll road that has entertained visitors for more than a century. Circle through Pebble Beach and Pacific Grove. Absorb the stunning landscapes and homes, as well as the famous Lone Cypress – a Monterey cypress tree that has been trademarked.

Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex is a short detour away on the Oceano and Nipomo Loop, south of San Luis Obispo. Towering, shifting sand dunes populate the area. And the Monarch Butterfly Grove is one of the largest colonies in the U.S.

Highway 1 traces the magnificent coastline and sites like Point Reyes National Seashore just north of San Francisco. It’s celebrated lighthouse and Fort Ross State Historic Park – a former 19th-century Russian outpost – highlight the location.

Orange County offers a trip through the heart of California’s surf culture along Pacific Coast Highway. Huntington Beach – aka Surf City USA – Newport Beach and Balboa Island join hands with romantic Laguna Beach and Dana Point. Experience the epitome of the SoCal beach lifestyle along the famous roadway.

In search of tranquility on a southern California beach? Try Highway 75. Better known as Silver Strand Highway, it runs nine miles down the isthmus of Coronado to Imperial Beach in San Diego County. Take advantage of the upscale beach town of Coronado and witness the amazing San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge.

And don’t forget L.A. Take a road trip through Los Angeles on Sunset Boulevard. It runs 22 miles across the city, from downtown to the Pacific Palisades and Pacific Coast Highway. Visit the hipster districts like Echo Park and Silver Lake, the legendary Sunset Strip and ritz Beverly Hills and Bel-Air.

Highway 2 runs north of Los Angeles and offers travelers the opportunity to enjoy the Angeles Crest Scenic Byway. It meanders along the spine of the San Gabriel Mountains, splitting the Mojave Desert and L.A. Basin.

A drive through the Avenue of the Giants is a 31-mile trip through a cathedral of towering coastal redwoods in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. The world’s tallest trees reside there. Many are more than 2,000 years old.

Don’t hesitate to hit the highway in California. It’s a golden opportunity you don’t want to pass up.

Cutline: PRETTY PICTURE – A colorful ocean sunset lights up the sky while taking a ride on Pacific Coast Highway near San Francisco. Image: Tunatura. Adobe Stock.