

Weekender

Golden Gate Park



The ornate Conservatory of Flowers opened in 1879.

SAN FRANCISCO'S urban playground covers 1,017 acres and stretches from the tip of the Panhandle to the Pacific. Miles of garden paths, plus two world-class museums, make it a prime destination rain or shine.

■ Step into the elegant **Conservatory of Flowers** for a trip to the steamy tropics and peruse orchids, carnivorous pitcher plants, and other exotics. Through Apr. 10, a special exhibit features model trains zipping around re-creations of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

■ View Maori wood carvings, Maya figurines, and American paintings and sculpture at the **de Young Museum**. Opening Mar. 12: a world-premiere retrospective of work by fashion designer Oscar de la Renta.

■ At the **California Academy of Sciences**, the heavens glow in planetarium shows while butterflies, birds, and amphibians inhabit a walk-through rain forest. (AAA members receive up to \$7 off an adult ticket; discount available only at AAA branches.)

■ The wildlife is considerably tamer at the enclosed 1914 **carousel** in the

Koret Children's Quarter, where 62 brightly painted wooden creatures—including a dragon and a camel—circle a rousing German band organ.

■ Check out the **San Francisco Botanical Garden's** collection of nearly 100 rare and historic magnolia trees, at their flowery finest mid-January through March.

■ Microbrews and pub grub, such as a bacon-crab melt, come with ocean views at the **Beach Chalet**. The lobby is adorned with stunning murals of 1930s San Francisco by Lucien Labaudt.

■ At **Nopalito**, just outside the park on Ninth Avenue, a bowl of pozole rojo or a mug of Mexican hot chocolate warms you on a chilly day.

■ If the sun peeks out, head for **Avenue Cyclery** on Sanyan Street, one of several bike rental shops near the park. —CHRISTOPHER HALL

Between big cities, a sweet Nevada town

Find cool art, tasty beer, and star-filled skies worth a road trip stop.

You could drive from Reno to Las Vegas in a day, but then you'd miss spending time in **Tonopah**, about half-way between them. The once-bustling mining town, where Wyatt Earp opened a saloon and Jack Dempsey began his illustrious boxing career, brims with history and charisma.

Walk into a dimly lit tunnel and peer deep into the earth at the Tonopah Historic Mining Park. After sunset, drive a few miles in any direction and park the car along a designated star trail (see tonopahnevada.com/StarTrails) to gaze into skies that are just as dark and clear as they were a century ago.

Return to Main Street for creature comforts. There, the Mizpah Hotel merges fin de siècle ambience with boutique charm, and the Tonopah Brewing Company, opened in 2014, pairs a stout aged in bourbon barrels with its smoked brisket.

Just south of Tonopah, in the ghost town of Goldfield, an art installation emerges from the desert. The 40-plus vehicles of the International Car Forest of the Last Church, many half buried in the ground, make a fitting coda to your road trip. —JEFF BENSON



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