

# Plan A — The Full North

11-16 Aug 2026 · LA → Napa → Benbow → Crescent City ×2 → Napa → LA · two of us, two dogs  
5 NIGHTS    ~1,800 MILES    ~7 HR LONGEST DAY    4 STOPS    ~\$4,450 EST. TOTAL

★ Don't miss

WED AUG 12

☐ Avenue of the Giants

THU AUG 13

☐ Fern Canyon

☐ Cal Barrel Road

FRI AUG 14

☐ Howland Hill Road

☐ Stout Grove

☐ Boy Scout Tree Trail

☐ Myrtle Creek Trail

☐ Swim the Smith

| Where we sleep |                                                           |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Tue Aug 11     | Napa — Napa River Inn                                     |
| Wed Aug 12     | Benbow — Benbow Historic Inn, 1926 Tudor lodge on the Eel |
| Thu Aug 13     | Crescent City — the Airbnb, whole house                   |
| Fri Aug 14     | Crescent City — the Airbnb, second night                  |
| Sat Aug 15     | Napa again                                                |
| Sun Aug 16     | Home                                                      |

| To book · call sheet                                                    |                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| The Airbnb                                                              | book online · \$1,883 total / ~\$940 per night |
| Benbow Historic Inn                                                     | book online · 1926 Tudor lodge                 |
| Napa River Inn                                                          | — · Historic inn                               |
| Vet / boarding, Crescent City: (707) 465-0111 · 26 Paws: (661) 301-9140 |                                                |

## Day by day · ★ = don't miss

01 Tuesday Aug 11 — Los Angeles to Napa

~6.5 hrs · ~430 mi · I-5 → Wine Country  
Sleep · Napa — Napa River Inn

|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Morning · 8-9am out    | North on I-5. We stretch our legs at Buttonwillow and Kettleman City like we always do. Check Caltrans QuickMap before we roll. The Central Valley is hot in August, so park in shade at the long stops and keep water up front. If we're out of LA by 9am we get to Napa mid-afternoon. Leave after noon and we're arriving in the dark. · IN THE CAR |
| Lunch · on the road    | Kettleman City or Santa Nella. Neither one is special. If we'd rather keep moving we can pack a cooler and eat at a shaded rest area. · IN THE CAR                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Mid-afternoon · arrive | Check in, then walk the Napa River Trail from the Oxbow district. Everyone gets to stretch properly for the first time all day. Nothing is scheduled between arriving and dinner. That gap is there in case traffic goes badly. If it doesn't, we nap. · ON LEASH                                                                                      |
| Evening · dinner out   | Dinner on a patio. California law lets dogs sit in outdoor dining areas and Napa makes the most of it. Visit Napa keeps a pet-friendly list that covers restaurants and the wineries that welcome dogs. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                                     |
| Pack today             | Water jug and bowls up front, towels, and something decent to wear to dinner. · DOGS OK                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## 02 Wednesday Aug 12 — Avenue of the Giants & the Eel

~4 hrs · ~230 mi · Napa → Benbow via US-101  
Sleep · Benbow — Benbow Historic Inn, 1926 Tudor lodge on the Eel

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Morning · slow start      | We could do a dog-friendly tasting before we leave. It's the shortest driving day of the trip, so there's room for one. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Late morning · drive      | North on 101 through Santa Rosa and Ukiah. Somewhere around Willits the vineyards give way to conifers. We eat lunch in Garberville, either grabbing supplies at Ray's Market or sitting down in town. Fill the tank before the Avenue. · IN THE CAR                                                                 |
| ★ Early afternoon         | Drive the Avenue of the Giants on the way in, all 31 miles. We can stop as often as we want, because dogs are legal at every turnout and parking area. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                    |
| Afternoon                 | Founders Grove and Rockefeller Loop are both in Humboldt Redwoods SP, so the dogs can't come on the loops. One of us walks while the other waits, or we skip both and walk the turnouts together. If we'd rather everyone got in the water, Women's Federation Grove is nearby and dogs are allowed there. · NO DOGS |
| Late afternoon · downtime | Check in at Benbow and then stop moving. This is the afternoon where we do nothing. There's tea and scones, a pool, bikes to borrow, and a swimming hole on the Eel below the lawn. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                       |
| Evening · dinner in       | Dinner in Benbow's dining room, or outside at the tables under the redwoods. We don't have to drive anywhere. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Pack today                | Swimsuits and towels for the Eel, a full tank before the Avenue, and something to wear in the dining room. · DOGS OK                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## 03 Thursday Aug 13 — Fern Canyon, Elk & Cal Barrel Road

~3.25 hrs driving alone · ~180 mi · Benbow → Crescent City via Prairie Creek  
Sleep · Crescent City — the Airbnb, whole house

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Morning · 8am out       | North on 101 past Eureka, about two hours to Orick. We can get coffee and stretch in Eureka's Old Town, or go to Sequoia Park if the dogs need a real walk. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| ★ Late morning          | Fern Canyon, and our dates need a permit. Dogs are prohibited in the canyon, so one of us walks it while the other keeps them on Gold Bluffs Beach. The whole stop takes about 2.5 hrs, and most of that is driving Davison Road. · NO DOGS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Lunch · picnic          | Picnic on Gold Bluffs Beach. We have to bring it, because there's no food out here. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ★ Early afternoon       | Walk Cal Barrel Road with the dogs. It runs off the Newton B. Drury Parkway. We stop at Big Tree Wayside and look for elk at Elk Prairie on the way through, with the leashes kept short. · ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Late afternoon · arrive | North to Crescent City, about an hour. We can unpack properly, because we're here two nights. If we're cooking, the Safeway on Northcrest has the groceries. · IN THE CAR                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Evening                 | Watch the sunset at Crescent Beach, then eat at SeaQuake Brewing. Dog Town is the fenced off-leash park right across the way. · OFF-LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| If the day feels long   | Drop Fern Canyon and keep Cal Barrel, Big Tree and Elk Prairie. That gets us to Crescent City by 3pm with a free afternoon. Other things we could swap in on the way are Arcata Community Forest (dogs on all trails), Elk River Trail at Headwaters (dogs on the first 3 mi of old growth), Ferndale, Moonstone Beach, Clam Beach / Luffenholtz, Trinidad State Beach, Hammond Trail, Lady Bird Johnson Grove, Trees of Mystery in Klamath, Klamath River Overlook and the Coastal Drive. · ON LEASH |
| Pack today              | Water shoes for the canyon, \$12 cash for the kiosk, the permit confirmation downloaded, and a picnic lunch, because there are no services at Gold Bluffs. · DOGS OK                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## 04 Friday Aug 14 — The big day at Jedediah Smith

No repositioning · ~20 min from town to Howland Hill  
Sleep · Crescent City — the Airbnb, second night

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ★ Dawn · with the dogs      | Drive Howland Hill Road at first light, going in from Crescent City on Elk Valley Road. It's emptiest at dawn, and we can check the parking for later while we're out there.· ON LEASH                                                      |
| ★ Early morning             | Stout Grove. One of us walks it while the other keeps the dogs, then we swap. We could also come back late in the afternoon instead, when it glows.· NO DOGS                                                                                |
| ★ Mid-morning               | Twenty minutes back to the house to settle the dogs, then Boy Scout Tree Trail. It's three to four hours out and back, so lunch will be late. Worth confirming the trail is open before we drive out.· NO DOGS                              |
| Lunch · late                | Historic Hiouchi Cafe, five minutes from the trailhead end of Howland Hill. The dogs can sit with us at the outside tables.· ON LEASH                                                                                                       |
| ★ Afternoon · dogs back on  | Myrtle Creek Trail with the dogs, about an hour. The trailhead is a mile east of Hiouchi on Hwy 199. Check both dogs for ticks afterwards.· ON LEASH                                                                                        |
| If we want more             | We could do Craig's Creek Trail instead. It's 3.5–4 hrs with the dogs, so it replaces the afternoon rather than adding to it.· ON LEASH                                                                                                     |
| ★ Late afternoon · downtime | Swim in the Smith off the gravel bars along South Fork Road. If we want more of Jed Smith there's Walker Road (3 mi, flat, dogs allowed), the Simpson-Reed Trail off 199, or kayaking and rafting with the outfitters in Hiouchi.· ON LEASH |
| Evening                     | Dinner in town, either the Chart Room on the harbour or Enoteca's patio.· ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                          |
| Pack today                  | Real shoes, because it's muddy year round. A downloaded map, because there's no cell signal. Water shoes and towels for the river. A tick key.· DOGS OK                                                                                     |

## 05 Saturday Aug 15 — Crescent City to Napa, the long drive

~7 hrs · ~380 mi · 101 South  
Sleep · Napa again

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early morning              | One last beach run at Crescent Beach, South Beach or Point St. George before we pack. If we burn their energy now they'll sleep the whole way.· ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                    |
| Morning · 9am out          | South on 101. Mill Creek Day Use in Del Norte Coast Redwoods SP sits right on the route and opens 9am–8pm on weekends, so Saturday is the one day we can use it.· ON LEASH                                                                                                                                  |
| Lunch · Eureka or Ferndale | Stop at the halfway mark. Eureka's Old Town has patios, or we can detour five minutes to Ferndale.· ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Afternoon                  | We drive right past the north end of the Avenue, so we can do a second pass if we feel like it. Twenty minutes of turnouts, and we don't have to.· ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                 |
| Evening · arrive           | Back in Napa. Walk them along the river, then dinner on a patio. We know the town by now.· ON LEASH                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Making it easier           | If seven hours feels like too much we can stop in Ukiah or Healdsburg instead. Both are about an hour short of Napa, both have pet-friendly places, and it barely changes Sunday. Either way we should get out for a proper walk every two hours, at Eureka, Garberville, Willits and Santa Rosa.· ON LEASH |

## 06 Sunday Aug 16 — Napa to Los Angeles, and home

~6.5 hrs · ~430 mi · I-5 South  
Sleep · Home

|                     |                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Morning · unhurried | Breakfast, then one more river walk. If we skipped the tasting on Wednesday we can stop at a dog-friendly winery on the way out.· ON LEASH |
| Late morning        | South on I-5. Same stops as Tuesday. Leave by 10 and we're home for dinner.· IN THE CAR                                                    |
| Evening             | Home, with two very tired Goldens and a reason to come back for Craig's Creek and the James Irvine Trail.· DOGS OK                         |

## Dog-legal trails

|                                                                                  |                                                                    |                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Myrtle Creek Trail ★                                                             | 2.1 mi round trip · Easy · ~250 ft · ~1 hr<br>· Smith River NRA    | Leashed · welcome                                                         |
| Craig's Creek Trail ★                                                            | 6.4–7.4 mi round trip · Moderate–strenuous · ~1,420 ft · 3.5–4 hrs | Leashed · welcome                                                         |
| Elk River Trail · Headwaters Forest Reserve ★                                    | Up to 6 mi round trip · Easy–moderate · Gentle grade · BLM land    | First 3 miles · under control                                             |
| Arcata Community Forest                                                          | Miles of trails · Easy–moderate · Arcata                           | Leashed · all trails (city ordinance, not state park rules)               |
| Cal Barrel Road                                                                  | ~3–3.5 mi · Moderate · ~700 ft · Prairie Creek Redwoods SP         | Leashed · welcome                                                         |
| Walker Road                                                                      | ~3 mi round trip · Easy · Flat · Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP        | Leashed · welcome                                                         |
| Howland Hill Road                                                                | 10 mi one way · Unpaved · Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP               | Leashed · pullouts, legal the whole way                                   |
| Mill Creek Day Use Area                                                          | Network of old logging roads · Easy · Del Norte Coast Redwoods SP  | Leashed · Sat & Sun only, 9am–8pm                                         |
| Sequoia Park · Eureka                                                            | Short loops · Easy · Eureka                                        | Leashed · welcome (ground trails only)                                    |
| Hammond Trail                                                                    | 5.5 mi · Easy · Paved/multi-use · McKinleyville                    | Leashed · welcome                                                         |
| Trees of Mystery                                                                 | Trail loop + gondola · Easy · Klamath                              | Leashed · trails AND gondola                                              |
| Crescent City “Dog Town”                                                         | Fully fenced · Beachfront Park, Front St                           | Off-leash · fenced                                                        |
| Off-leash beaches — Moonstone, Clam, Luffenholtz, Mad River, Samoa Dunes         | Trinidad / McKinleyville / Arcata / Eureka                         | Off-leash under voice control (county beaches); read the signs at the lot |
| Leashed park beaches — Crescent, Gold Bluffs, Freshwater, Hidden, Trinidad State | Crescent City / Prairie Creek / Orick / Klamath / Trinidad         | Leashed · in the parks                                                    |

## Watch out for

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**Book the Fern Canyon permit first.** Our dates fall inside the May 15–Sep 15 reservation window, so we need a permit for Gold Bluffs Beach / Fern Canyon. There's also a \$12 day-use fee, and the kiosk takes cash or check only. The permit itself is free and first-come-first-served. Reserve it through Redwood Parks Conservancy and download the confirmation, because there's no cell signal out there.

**Book Fern Canyon through Redwood Parks Conservancy.** The reservation portal is free, and Thursday permits are easier to get than weekend ones. Bring \$12 in cash or a check for the kiosk.

**Reserve the Hiouchi and Crescent City nights first.** Mid-August books out on this coast, and several places run 2-night minimums in summer. The pet-friendly inns up here are small. Requa Inn has just four dog rooms and Benbow has a handful of terrace rooms, and in August those go before the motels do.

**California State Parks ban dogs from all trails.** That's everywhere in the state, with no exceptions on trails. We work around it by using national forest, BLM, county and city land, which means Myrtle Creek, Craig's Creek, Elk River at Headwaters and Arcata Community Forest. We also use the roads inside the parks where dogs are allowed, which are Howland Hill, Cal Barrel Road, Walker Road and Mill Creek's logging roads.

**Mill Creek Day Use roads are weekends only.** The dog-friendly old logging roads at Mill Creek Day Use open weekends only, 9am–8pm from Memorial Day through Labor Day, so Sat Aug 15 works. Verify the hours before we rely on it.

**Trailhead lots fill within hours.** Lots near Prairie Creek and Crescent City fill within hours in mid-August. That's why every morning in this plan starts early. The Boy Scout Tree lot is small dirt right on Howland Hill Road, which is why we scout it on the dawn drive.

**Davison Road restrictions.** It's 7.5 miles of narrow dirt each way to Gold Bluffs Beach. Passenger vehicles only, no trailers or RVs, 24-ft limit, and about 40 minutes each way. Check the tires before Howland Hill and Davison.

**Roosevelt elk are the one real hazard.** Elk weigh 800+ lbs and hang around Elk Prairie and Gold Bluffs Beach, and they react badly to dogs. Keep 100+ feet back, never move between animals, and keep the leashes short in both those places. Black bears and mountain lions are around too, but they're rarely an issue on these routes.

**This is tick country.** Myrtle Creek and Craig's Creek both have posted tick advisories, and Western blacklegged and brown dog ticks are both around. Make sure both dogs are current on prevention, carry a tick key, and check ears, paws and ruff after every trail.

**Poison oak on the dog trails.** Craig's Creek especially has poison oak growing into the trail. It doesn't bother the dogs, but the oil rides home on their coats. Wipe them down afterwards and wash our hands before touching our faces. Pack poison oak wash.

**Water.** The Pacific here has strong currents and sneaker waves. It's fine for wading and fetch on the sand, but nobody should swim out. The Smith is ideal in August, low and clear and warm. Blue-green algae is the one to worry about in late summer, and it blooms in slower freshwater. If the water looks scummy or bright green, keep them out.

**Verify pet policies directly before booking.** Every pet policy here is whatever the property itself states. DogTrekker verified the north-coast inn policies in July 2025, but these are small places with a handful of dog rooms, so call before booking. The questions to ask are on the checklist.

**What to book first.** The Airbnb, Benbow, and the Fern Canyon permit. Anything tagged Verify or Book early, we confirm at the source before we commit.

# Packing

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## Clothing for August

- ☐ A light rain shell, because the fog drips in the groves
- ☐ Fleece or hoodie for the mornings
- ☐ Quick-dry hiking trousers and shorts
- ☐ Swimsuit. The Smith and the Russian are both warm in August
- ☐ Sun hat and sunglasses

## Footwear, because feet get wet

- ☐ Trail shoes or light boots
- ☐ Water shoes for Fern Canyon and the rivers
- ☐ Camp sandals
- ☐ Extra socks

## Gear and tech, where the signal drops out

- ☐ Download the maps for offline use
- ☐ Grab a paper park map at a visitor center
- ☐ Power bank and car charger
- ☐ Daypack, headlamp and first-aid kit
- ☐ Camera and a spare battery
- ☐ Cash for the kiosks. Fern Canyon is \$12, and Big Sur costs more

## Car and camp, for the gravel roads

- ☐ Cooler and picnic kit
- ☐ Trash bags, since we pack it out
- ☐ A seat cover for wet, sandy dogs
- ☐ Check the tires before Howland Hill and Davison

## Dog kit, and see Dog Logistics

- ☐ Food, bowls and extra water
- ☐ Leashes and a long line, with the tags updated
- ☐ Crates and beds. Several properties require one
- ☐ Towels and waste bags, more of both than we think
- ☐ Tick prevention and a tick key
- ☐ Vaccination records for daycare

## A small health kit

- ☐ First aid for us and for the dogs
- ☐ Motion-sickness meds
- ☐ Bug spray and sunscreen
- ☐ Poison oak wash

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Prices, permits and pet policies change — confirm the week before. [zeusandblue.world](https://zeusandblue.world)