



## News Release

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For Immediate Release

### **CALIFORNIA OFFERS ECOTOURISM PROGRAMS YEAR-ROUND**

(SACRAMENTO, Calif.)—It’s always Earth Day in California. The Golden State has long been a leader in its efforts to help minimize the environmental footprint of its visitors and local residents by offering a host of ecotourism programs year-round.

“Ecotourism isn’t just a buzzword in California, it’s a way of life,” said Executive Director Caroline Beteta of the California Travel and Tourism Commission. “Travelers from around the world visit California in part because of its inherent natural beauty. By educating them about ways to minimize their impact on the state’s pristine environment, we help sustain California’s rugged terrain, scenic landscapes and picturesque coasts for generations to come.”

Although many will celebrate Earth Day April 22, visitors to California can go green every day of the year.

Santa Barbara, part of the **Central Coast Region**, takes green initiatives to a whole new level. The region's visitors bureau and Simple Shoes (a Santa Barbara-based brand) teamed up to launch [www.GreenSantaBarbara.com](http://www.GreenSantaBarbara.com), a Web site that allows visitors to learn about global environmental issues while experiencing the greener side of Santa Barbara. The site features self-guided tours and information about all things green, including architecture, art, transportation, sustainable agriculture, biodynamically grown wines, recycling, nature preserves and ecotourism activities, green hotels and itineraries. Travelers arriving to Santa Barbara car-free save up to 50 percent at 22 hotels and 20 activities and restaurants. For complete details, participants can go to [www.SantaBarbaraCarFree.com](http://www.SantaBarbaraCarFree.com).

In the **Los Angeles County Region**, the Pacific Wheel at Pacific Park in Santa Monica is generating more than one kind of energy. Visitors help to alleviate air and water pollution from traditional fossil fuels by riding the world's first-ever solar-powered Ferris wheel. Unveiled in 1998, the Pacific Wheel soars 130 feet above the Pacific Ocean while generating more than 71,000 kilowatt hours of renewable photovoltaic power from the sun's rays. For another hands-on eco-friendly experience, travelers can help save endangered birds from extinction by restoring their nesting habitat at the Aquarium of the Pacific's Endangered Species Habitat Restoration Day March 29 at Seal Beach Wildlife Refuge.

At COPIA: The American Center for Food, Wine and the Arts in Napa, part of the **San Francisco Bay Area Region**, travelers have an indirect impact on the environment at the center's restaurant and in their food programs, simply because the center composts their waste and puts it back into their 3.5 acres of organic gardens. Visitors can learn firsthand about ecotourism while aboard a special cruise that explores the Monterey Bay

National Marine Sanctuary, one of Santa Cruz's most exquisite points of interest and an underwater world rich in biological resources. Starting this month, Pacific Life Tours will offer the ecotourism trips aboard a 70-foot yacht, where passengers will learn about Monterey Bay's kelp forest ecosystem, adaptations for animals living in the ocean and human effects on the sea. The Orchard Garden Hotel in the heart of San Francisco offers a green lodging alternative without forgoing a luxurious setting. The property was built adhering to the nationally accepted standards for green building developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. What that means is in-room recycling systems, chemical-free cleaning products, compact fluorescent light bulbs, a 100 percent tobacco-free environment and guestroom key card energy control systems.

Visitors to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, located in the **Desert Region**, who take public transit don't have to worry about negatively affecting the environment. Two recently purchased buses now use biodiesel fuel, which is a domestic, renewable fuel derived from natural oils, such as soybean oil. The Tramway's other diesel buses have been converted to biodiesel fuel, including back-up engines, tractors and generators. The Tramway also uses Shred-It, a mobile paper shredding and recycling company that has helped them save more than 40 trees by recycling their office paper and newspapers.

In addition to minimizing the impact of conventional tourism on the environment, ecotourism also involves enhancing the cultural integrity of local people. In the **San Diego County Region**, visitors can take part in a unique travel experience that provides education, cross-cultural exchange and community development. VolunTours, a social enterprise of the nonprofit organization Los Niños based in Chula Vista, give travelers the opportunity to directly support development in Tijuana, Tecate, Mexicali and other Mexican locations by volunteering their time on day, overnight and weekend trips to lay

cement for classroom foundations and plazas and help pack liters of honey after the busy summer bee season. Visitors can be a part of a scientific team May 2-3 at the San Diego Natural History Museum's BioBlitz Balboa Park, when the public will interact with working scientists, volunteers and educators to help explore Balboa Park's biodiversity as a community. The heart of BioBlitz is a "rapid biodiversity assessment" that answers two questions: How many species can be found in Balboa Park in 24 hours? And, what are those species?

Visitors are encouraged to bring a fork and an appetite for one huge plate of greens at the Organic Planet Festival in Eureka August 24, located in the **North Coast Region**. Part music party and part information exchange, the annual summer event, which takes place in a grassy park in Old Town Eureka along the Humboldt Bay waterfront, has featured steel drum bands, workshops to convert cars into biodiesel vehicles, booths of all kinds and noteworthy green speakers. Each year, thousands of festivalgoers sample what is billed as the largest organic salad in the world. Located near the coastal town of Mendocino, Shambhala Ranch makes an ideal destination for travelers looking to relax without harming the earth. Shambhala Ranch, known internationally as a popular Esalen-style retreat, is completely off the grid and solar powered. Meals are often prepared using produce from the innkeeper's organic orchards, vegetable and herb gardens.

Vacationing green is made easy at Lake Tahoe's Granlibakken Resort, located in the **High Sierra Region**, where guests can take shuttles and "carpool" to nearby Tahoe City and picturesque Emerald Bay, one of the most photographed places in the world. The resort also offers free nighttime service to and from local restaurants and casinos. As a designated Fire Safe Community, Granlibakken Resort has created a natural firebreak

between its buildings and the surrounding forests, which has increased its defensible space and created a better habitat for many species of animals, making for more frequent visitor sightings of black bears, beavers, hawks, raccoons and chipmunk. For eco-friendly, non-motorized, sustainable recreation with a natural history focus, many Tahoe travelers turn to the professional guides at the Tahoe Adventure Company based in Tahoe City. Some of the company's popular outings include full moon and astronomy lake kayaking, hikes that teach about geology and ecology, along with winter snowshoe treks.

Appealing to both residents and visitors, the Roseville Utility Exploration Center, located in the **Gold Country Region**, is scheduled to open January 27 and will offer high-tech, hands-on exhibits on a variety of topics ranging from electricity and water conservation to reducing solid waste and storm water pollution. Center attendees can expect to crawl through a mountain of trash and come out cleaner. They can also stroll through the Green House to learn how they can save money and the earth at the same time. The exhibits are designed for both adults and children and will be open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays. Family exploration labs will introduce environmental concepts to children. Technology workshops will offer homeowners, business owners and the professional trades classes in photovoltaic energy, xeriscaping, building with recycled products and other practical topics from industry leaders.

The Green Institute for Village Empowerment (GIVE) in Corona, part of the **Inland Empire Region**, provides visitors and residents with hands-on tips for going green via its educational symposiums and special events that highlight sustainable lifestyles, technologies and developmental practices. Most recently, the nonprofit organization has hosted events, open to the public, titled "Transition from Blight to Might: Social Impact of an Evolving Society," "Solutions for Our Future Water Needs,"

“Winning Our Energy Independence” and “Investing in California’s Green Valley Economy.”

For many travelers, lodging green is an integral part of their visit to the Golden State, and nobody makes it easier to know who’s green and who isn’t than the Green Hotels Association ([www.greenhotels.com](http://www.greenhotels.com)). Green hotels are eco-friendly properties that institute programs that save water and energy and reduce solid waste. Lodging at these establishments is an easy way for travelers to participate in the state’s ecotourism efforts. In Calistoga, the Mount View Hotel and Spa has been a longtime member of the Green Hotels Association. In the **Orange County Region**, Carousel Inn and Suites in Anaheim is a member. In Burney, part of the **Shasta Cascade Region**, the Green Gables Motel, Cold Creek Inn in Mt. Shasta, Lake Oroville Marina in Paradise, Ada’s Place in Quincy, Drakesbad Guest Ranch in Chester and the Himont Motel in Falls River Mills are members, along with Forever Resorts Lake Don Pedro Marina in LaGrange, part of the **Central Valley Region**.

The CTTC is a nonprofit organization with a mission to develop and maintain marketing programs – in partnership with the state's travel industry – that keep California top-of-mind as a premier travel destination. According to the CTTC, travel and tourism expenditures total \$93.8 billion annually in California, support jobs for 929,000 Californians and generate \$5.6 billion in state and local tax revenues. For more information about the CTTC and for a free California vacation packet, go to [www.visitcalifornia.com](http://www.visitcalifornia.com).

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