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TRAVEL, CULTURE, & CALIFORNIA  
LIFESTYLE

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# SPRING TRAVEL IDEAS IN NORTHERN/CENTRAL CALIFORNIA



As I drove past hills covered in wildflowers last weekend, I thought about how California changes with the seasons and realized how many places there still are for me to discover. To be honest, I generally don't travel much in the spring. As a teacher, the months of March-May are busy ones, but even weekend day trips can provide opportunities to see what makes this beautiful state special at this time of year. It's a good time to spend days outdoors before the intense heat of summer kicks in here in the valley. Here are some ideas for what to do in Northern and Central California in spring, but I'd love to hear your suggestions, too!

## Baby seals in April and May:



All along the coast of Northern and Central California, seals come to give birth in early spring, and the pups stay close to their mothers for the weeks following. Baby seals can be viewed near [Monterey](http://thisismyhappiness.com/2015/02/27/30-things-to-do-in-monterey-bay-area/) all along the coastal walk between Monterey and Pacific Grove and in the little coves of Point Lobos. Be careful—it's very important to be quiet around the pups because noise can easily scare the moms, resulting in pups being orphaned.

## Wildflowers!



One of spring's main attractions is wildflowers(<http://gocalifornia.about.com/od/topcalifornia/a/california-wildflowers.htm>), and there are many places to see a beautiful display of flowers every spring in California. Areas with higher elevation, like Lassen National Park and the Sierra Nevada, will have wildflowers in late spring and through summer. Here are just a few places you can see California's wildflowers:

Many places near Monterey and Carmel(<http://www.seemonterey.com/blog/post/top-5-places-to-see-wildflowers-in-monterey-county/>), such as the coastal trail in Pacific Grove, Point Lobos State Reserve, and Garrapata State Park.

Lake Tahoe(<http://thisismyhappiness.com/2015/07/13/30-things-to-do-in-lake-tahoe/>) hiking trails throughout spring and summer

Point Reyes National Seashore(<http://thisismyhappiness.com/2014/02/23/nature-at-point-reyes/>): find out more here(<http://naturalhistorywanderings.com/2011/04/09/pt-reyes-a-top-wildlife-and-wildflower-destination/>)

North Table Mountain Ecological Reserve(<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-Visit/North-Table-Mountain-ER>) in Oroville, about one hour north of Sacramento

## Botanical gardens



There are some amazing botanical gardens in this part of California, and all of them make a great place to spend a sunny spring day and see spring flowers in bloom. Here are four of the best: [Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden](http://www.gardenbythesea.org/)(<http://www.gardenbythesea.org/>), [UC Berkeley Botanical Garden](http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu/)(<http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu/>), [UC Davis Arboretum](http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/)(<http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/>), and the [San Francisco Botanical Garden](http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/)(<http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/>)

## A unique event in Downtown Napa



**DoNapa Behind the Scenes:** One of my favorite Northern California towns, the city of Napa, is providing the opportunity to participate in local experiences this spring. These behind-the-scenes activities, led by the city's greatest chefs, chocolatiers, artists, sommeliers and more, showcase the secrets behind some of Napa's most popular hotspots. [DoNapa Behind the Scenes](http://donapa.com/event/behindthescenes)(<http://donapa.com/event/behindthescenes>) take place Wednesdays and Thursdays through April.

## A Wine Lover's Weekend in Napa Valley



**Stags Leap District's Vineyard to Vintner Weekend:** This wonderful [weekend experience](http://www.stagsleapdistrict.com/v2v_overview.php) for wine lovers will include 19 Stags Leap District wineries along the Silverado Trail and a vintner's brunch. Winery open houses include special access, such as barrel tastings and specially prepared food pairings. April 29-May 1 (you can choose to attend the Friday dinner, Saturday open houses, and/or Sunday brunch).

## Point Reyes Birding Festival

Because I love birds, I wish I could go to [this festival](http://www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org/), which runs April 29-May 2. It will highlight the many species of birds that call this area home or migrate here throughout the year.

## Mother's Day Garden Tour in Capay Valley

Tour Fully Belly Farm, taste wine, listen to music, and tour gardens as part of this special event on Sunday, May 8. More details [here](http://fullbellyfarm.com)

[/capay-valley-mothers-day-garden-tour/](#)).

# Zinfest



Held annually every May, [Zinfest](http://thisismyhappiness.com/2014/05/29/lodi-zinfest/) (<http://thisismyhappiness.com/2014/05/29/lodi-zinfest/>) is the Lodi wine region's largest wine festival, attracting visitors from across the U.S. and even Canada. This festival is not just about Zinfandel, the region's most famous grape. You can try many other wines (two years ago, there were about 250 wines!), including Verdejo, Kerner, and Barbera, all made in Lodi by the

area's best wineries. Find out more [here](http://www.zinfest.com/)(<http://www.zinfest.com/>).

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