

Humboldt Road Trip

FYI - lots of great food and interesting places I haven't had a chance to check out. Google Maps seems to be the best resource to find what you're interested in.

On the way there:

Wineries in Hopland and Ukiah

Geyserville seems to have a good cluster that I'm just starting to explore.

In Hopland, I like Grazziano. Decent cheap wine and Jon is a nice tasting host.

North of Hopland is Saracina, which has a great outdoor patio & decent wine line up.

North of Ukiah is Perducci, an older winery also with a great patio and decent wines/prices.

McNab, Jaxxon-Keys, Nelson, and Rivino are all about the same caliber. If you like one, you'll like the others. Jaxxon-Keys also distills whiskey.

Costco Gas in Ukiah is the cheapest in the region.

On Hwy 101 past Legget is where Redwood Country starts.

[The Peg House](#) is a decent place for burgers with plenty of outdoor seating. Stopped here on our way home from visiting the redwoods. A bit pricey due to the remote location. Their burger is legit, properly charred on the outside plus tender and juicy in the middle. The lettuce, tomato, and onion were fresh and top quality. The ciabatta roll was fresh and was the proper size for the burger patty. I want to come back again when it's not pouring rain so we can enjoy the outside patio seating. There's other good food in the area, but I'm usually not passing through during mealtime so Google Maps is your best resource.

Just north of the Peg House is the [Frank and Bess Smithe Grove](#). The river is swimmable here during the summer months. I enjoy stopping here on the return trip since it's on that side of the road..

Places to stop if you like quirky weird stuff, or you have kids:

[The World Famous Tree House](#) is a novelty and mainly worth stopping for if you want to stretch your legs.

[Confusion Hill](#) is an old roadside attraction. Essentially the same as the Mystery Spot in Santa Cruz, but much more run down. Hwy 101 used to go right by the place but a newer road has been built that bypasses it. Again, worth stopping to stretch your legs but not a destination stop. The tour is \$5 and contains optical illusions for your enjoyment. There's a train here too but I've never been on it.

[The One Log House](#) is also a novelty, but it's right next to a coffee shop so there's that. Someone hollowed out the inside and made a place for a bed, some shelves, and a table. It's a few dollars to see it. This parking area also contains the Grandfather tree, which is an impressive redwood.

Once in Humboldt County:

Check out the farmer's market schedule. <https://www.northcoastgrowersassociation.org/>
The Arcata farmer's market on Saturdays is the best one and year-round.

Swimming holes: www.wetspot.org

California Coastal Trail: [Humboldt - California Coastal Trail](#)

Bureau of Tourism sites:

[Visit Humboldt](#)

[Visit Redwoods](#)

[The Avenue of the Giants](#) starts here and I encourage you to drive the entire length. This drive passes along a majority of Old Growth Redwoods left in California. Along the roadside are many groves that are easy to park at and walk for a few minutes (or more). I want to recommend the Chimney Tree Grill, but every time I've passed it it's been closed. Supposed to be good food. You could easily spend a ½ day here driving around and getting out of your car for 20 min or so at each stop. Easy to spend a day here if you want to find a swimming hole or just enjoy the trees for longer. Avenue of the Giants also passes through some small towns if you need to get supplies. HRSP has some decent campgrounds so this is a good spot as a first night. The groves I think are worth stopping at include:

HQ Visitor's Center and the grove across the street.

[Franklin K. Lane grove](#)

[Bolling Grove](#) (a popular internet pic of a fallen redwood is here)

[Governor William D. Stephens Loop Trail](#)

[Garden Club of America Grove](#)

[Redwood Giganten](#)

Marin Garden Club Grove

[Founders Grove Nature Trail Loop Trailhead](#)

[Rockefeller Grove](#)

Bull Creek Flats area: [Big Trees Day-use Area](#)

[Drury-Chaney Trail](#)

Mattole Rd. will take you to Rockefeller Grove and Bull Creek Flats. This is my favorite part of the park and is a must-do, even if you only drive up Mattole Rd. for a few miles.

Along parts of the Avenue of the Giants is beach access to the south fork of the Eel River. You can kayak/float this stretch of the river as water levels allow.

For lodging in the area, the Miranda Garden Resort seems to be the best bet, but I haven't stayed here. There's a couple of restaurants across the street that are good.

I have stayed at the Redwood Riverwalk (in Fortuna, further north) and liked it. Basic accommodations, walking distance from the river, walking distance to the Eel River Brewing Company!

Inland on Hwy 36

This is a nice drive to Grizzly Creek Redwoods, but can have lots of big trucks on it. I wouldn't come up this way unless you're a Star Wars fan, or going to Van Duzen Co park.

Speederbike scenes from RotJ were filmed at [Grizzly Creek Redwoods](#), specifically [Cheatham Grove](#). The parking lot looks like a small driveway on the northern side of the road. At this location, they filmed the backdrop footage used for the close up shots of the actors when riding the speeder bikes. These close-ups were all done on a soundstage with a green screen. Today, there are still parts of the grove that you can match to those movie scenes ([specifically the one where you see Luke duck under a branch](#)). This was lumber company property at the time of filming and was later donated to the State Park. Side shots of speeder bike scenes were shot along the Avenue of the Giants. All scenes with actors standing on the ground were filmed farther north near Jedidiah Smith Redwoods, on a property that was logged after filming.

The town of [Ferndale](#) has a lot of Victorian architecture. It's about three blocks long but the buildings are in good shape. Apparently there's a good coffee shop here too.

Downtown Eureka is interesting, but not worth going out of your way for, unless you're into Victorian architecture. There's two Dutch Bros coffee shacks in town, one in the middle and one on the north end, both along 101. Old Town Eureka is not bad and is usually where you'll find some decent restaurants. * Use Gmaps to find a restaurant that works for you around Old Town Eureka, I've listed some highlights a bit further down.

Costco Gas in Eureka is one of the cheapest places for gas. Bear River Casino south of Eureka, and Blue Lake Casino further north are the other two cheap gas places.

Other fun things in Eureka include:

Go on a boat ride: <https://humboldtbymaritimemuseum.com/madaketmainpage.html>

Do the Skywalk at Sequoia Park. <https://www.redwoodskywalk.com/>

Visit the Botanical Garden <https://www.hbgf.org/>.

Headwaters trail is an 11-mile round trip

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/california/headwaters-forest-reserve>

◆ Headwaters Forest Reserve: Elk River Trailhead & Old Town of Falk Walking Tour

Papa & Barkley's weed lounge

Fort Humboldt

Fishing Charters

Downtown Arcata has a nice town square in a grungy-quaint sort of way. Decent restaurants, and old storefronts. Los Bagels is here and they sell bagels with lots of toppings on them. Not sure why they're in such a remote town.

Hot Tubs at Cafe Mokka

Arcata Marsh - wildlife viewing, probably the best bird watching location in Humboldt County

Arcata Theater is historic, shows movies and serves alcohol.

Minor Theater is historic and shows artsy movies.

The Plaza Grill is in a historical building and feels historic, food is decent.

Cal-Poly Humboldt - parking is free on weekends. Nothing too special about this campus except for the amount of stairs. Nice view at the top from Founder's Hall. Adjacent to the community forest.

Arcata Community forest is a 2nd growth forest behind (east of) Cal-Poly Humboldt. Dog friendly, mtn bike friendly, and walk friendly. Probably more for locals vs visitors. It's a beautiful forest with an extensive trail network. This park also hosts a disc golf course through the redwoods.

Hammond trail - a regional bike path starting in McKinleyville and heading south to Arcata.

Some nice spots, some just ok. <https://humboldt.gov/2761/Hammond-Trail>. Good for locals but not something I'd go out of my way for.

Inland on 299

299 is a mountain highway that takes you to the Central Valley. Along the way, Hwy 299 snakes along the Trinity River. Good camping (including BLM/dispersed camping), fishing, hunting, backpacking, and rafting & floating can be found out here.

Continuing on 101:

About 20 min north of Arcata is the town of Trinidad. It's a very quaint and picturesque coastal fishing town that's worth a visit for at least a few hours. Here, you'll find:

- Katy's smokehouse
- Trinidad Bay Cafe (good breakfasts)
- HSU Marine Lab
- Kayak rentals. self, or guided trips. <https://kayaktrinidad.com/>
- Murphy's Market (good for picnic lunch stuff). We got the fresh crab sandwiches on sliced sourdough and enjoyed them on the trail a few hours later. The deli has a decent selection of prepared foods and also has live local oysters.

Other good spots in Trinidad include: Moonstone Crossing winery (worth checking out), a local art gallery, beach access, and a short coastal trail. The nearby Larrupin' Cafe offers upscale dining and is considered the best restaurant in Humboldt County. Sue-Meg State park is only a few minutes drive north, while Prairie Creek Redwoods is roughly 30 min away and well worth a day trip. It would be easy to spend 2-3 days here just exploring the local area.

Lost of small AB&B's here. I've known people who've stayed at the [View Crest Lodge](#) and were happy with the accommodations.

North of Trinidad is Sue-Meg State Park. Great place to hike and walk along the coast. Agate beach is to the north of the park and good for rock hunting. Wedding Rock is an amazing view and the campsites feel secluded. Sue-Meg State Park is nearby, which has some great coastal trails.

[Prairie Creek Redwoods State/National Park](#). Head towards the visitor center. The best redwoods are along the nature walk near the visitor center. The Newton B. Drury Scenic parkway is a must-do. Gold Beach is pretty, but don't expect to put out your beach towels and lay out in the sun (breezy, overcast, foggy).

Irvine Trail (good for trail runs), long and reaches the coast

Trails along prairie creek

Lady Bird Johnson Grove

Tall Trees trail (get a free permit here:

<https://www.nps.gov/redw/planyourvisit/talltreespermits.htm>

Redwood Creek trail

Fern Canyon. One of the most well-known parts of the park, this area has been used in a few movies. You can get there via a 10+ mile round trip hike from park HQ, or drive down to the beach where the parking lot is. Reservations & \$10 parking fee required in summer (both state and national park passes cover the fee). Low clearance vehicles not advised due to unmaintained road to parking lot.

Newton B. Drury Scenic parkway. This is an awesome drive, essentially a smaller version of the Avenue of the Giants. There are turnouts along the way to access the forest trails.

Klamath Area and Del Norte County

Go on a Yurok canoe tour: <https://visityurokcountry.com/canoes/>

Jet boats: <https://www.jetboattours.com/>

Smoked Salmon

Trees of Mystery

Del Norte Redwoods is skippable. It's got some nice parts, but doesn't surpass the other old growth locations.

Further north is Crescent City and [Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP](#). The main attractions here are Howling Hills Rd, along with the Boy Scout Tree trail, Grove of Titans Trail, and Stout Grove. If you're here for redwoods and old growth forest, this is about as prehistoric as it gets (Humboldt Redwoods feels the most manicured, Prairie creek is a bit in-between). Pack a lunch and spend about $\frac{3}{4}$ of your day here.

Most Star Wars RotJ scenes were filmed on a property adjacent to this park, so you're about as close to walking on Endor as you'll be able to get (I believe it was filmed somewhere in the Mill Creek Expansion, but this is all logged area now).

Additional Driving:

Hwys 299 and 96 each parallel a river, making for excellent scenic driving along one big half-day loop.

A special shout out to [Hummel Tire](#):

Was up here on a 3-day visit to tour the redwoods. Got a bad flat on the Avenue of the Giants and found this place via a Google search. They were friendly, treated me like a long-term customer, and quickly resolved my issue to get me on the road again. If you bought your tires at Costco, there's one in Eureka about 20 min north. Otherwise, Hummel is the place you want to go for your tire needs.

Food suggestions:

Los Bagels - well known local shop that sells bagels with stuff on them

Familia Coffee - newer coffee shop in Arcata

Dutch Bros - regional chain in the western US

Toni's - 24 hour restaurant and bakery. Burgers and stuff. Rumored to be the inspiration for the

Chum Bucket in Spongebob

Humboldt Bay Bistro

Humboldt Provisions - oyster bar

Shamus T. Bones - BBQ joint. Food is ok, oysters are some of the best in area

Gill's by the Bay - in the southern part of greater Eureka, this fish & chips spot sits right on the water. Crab sammies! Patio seating is available as well as nostalgic-style indoor seating.

Local Grocery stores:

- Eureka/Arcata Coops
- Eureka Natural Foods
- Murphy's Markets
- Wild Berries - this place gets bad press due to management behavior

Breweries:

- Eel River Brewing Co.

All their beers are well crafted. I tried every single one as they offer a flight of all 12 beers on tap. My favorites were the New School Hazy and Raven's Eye Imperial Stout. The Clarity Hard Water was something I've never tried before and worth the trip out there just to check it out. Had to get a couple of 6-packs of that so my friends at home can try it too.

Not only is the beer worth coming out for, their smoked meats are good and also worth a special trip. My daughter says it was one of the best French Dip sandwiches she's ever had. My pastrami reuben was also great. Just a hint of smoke flavor, no fatty chunks...just thin-sliced, tender pastrami meat.

All the Humboldt Breweries are good, most have food:

- Lost Coast
- Redwood Curtain
- Mad River
- Six Rivers
- Humboldt Cider Co.

Wineries:

- Briceland (Redway) Haven't been due to weird hours.
- Old Growth (Eureka) decent wines, a bit on the lighter side of flavor
- Serpentino (Arcata) outdoor patio, good wines
- Fieldbrook (Fieldbrook) good wines, weekends only.
- Trinity Vineyards (Weaverville) - bleh
- Moonstone Crossing (Trinidad) - my favorite. Tell tasting host Haley that I said hi!

Beaches

- The Beaches between Eureka and Clam Beach are very flat.
- The north Jetty near Eureka is a bit of a drive but it's fun to watch the waves roll past the north jetty. Off-road vehicle access is also allowed here, so this is not a serene place.
- Manila Dunes. Quiet, peaceful, also frequent car break-ins.
- Mad River Beach. Drive down some country roads to a small parking lot that leads to Mad River Beach. This is likely the nicest of the flat beaches. Great for sunsets and bonfires.
- Clam Beach. Not really clams here anymore. Has mostly turned into a dog-friendly beach.
- Moonstone and Lufenholtz beaches have dramatic rock action.
- Baker Beach and College Cove are the de facto nude beaches.
- Trinidad Beach is probably the easiest to access and one of the nicest too.
- Agate beach is a bit of a hike to get to but has agates and sea glass to search for.

- Sue-meg state park has trails along a rocky shoreline, as well as some good tidepool action (research required to do this).

Lodging Suggestions:

In Fortuna, Eureka, and Arcata, car break-ins are just as prevalent as the rest of California. If in these three towns, you need to follow the “nothing in your car” rules when parking overnight.

- Holiday Inn Express near Mckinleyville airport. Good safety choice. Decent rooms, heated indoor pool, free breakfast
- Arcata Hotel is Victorian-y and has Tomo sushi down below.
- Anything near Trinidad with a good review
- VBRO's and HipCamps are available.
- Don't book a hotel along Guiontoli Lane (car break ins)
- Don't book a hotel along DT Eureka (car break ins)

Camping:

- HRSP
- Sue-meg
- Prairie Creek
- Gold Beach
- Van Duzen County park
- Hip Camp
- AirB&B