

The New York Times - 36 HOURS by Frieda Moon May 31, 2018

36 Hours in Sacramento

With its thriving cultural scene, striking architecture and lush vegetation, this often overlooked California city — the photogenic backdrop of the movie “Lady Bird” — has much to offer the weekend visitor.



As a travel destination, California’s capital gets no respect. Despite sitting at the confluence of two impressive rivers, with sprawling shade trees that make much of the city feel like a leafy urban park, Sacramento has a misplaced reputation as a lowly, unattractive place. But the state’s oldest incorporated city — founded in 1849, the year before California joined the union — remains a lush oasis of bougainvillea and palms, prolific fruit trees and mighty oaks.

It also has a thriving cultural scene and architectural character all its own. Along with neighborhoods of midcentury modern homes, Craftsman Bungalows and ornate Victorians, there’s the birthplace of Tower Records (the Art Deco [Tower Theatre](#) and its kitschy, colorful [Tower Cafe](#) are both still operating) and the [Crocker Art Museum](#)’s bright white, modernist expansion, the 125,000-square-foot Teel Family Pavilion, which tripled the museum’s size in 2010. Unlike California’s glittering, glamorous coastal cities, Sacramento’s location in the Central Valley gives it an earnest, small-town affect and a welcome lack of pretension.

Friday

1) 3 p.m. LAY OF THE LAND

With few hills and wide, tree-shaded streets, Sacramento is an unusually bikeable city. The [JUMP dockless e-bike share program](#) (\$1 for the first 15 minutes, 7 cents a minute after that) began just last month, but may become the best bet for getting around “the Grid” (as Sacramento’s core is known), Davis and West Sacramento.

The Crocker is the city’s must-see institution, but make your first stop the smaller [California Museum](#) (\$9), which is based at the State Archives and is home to the California Hall of Fame, which, besides celebrating famous Californians, offers an overview of the state’s history from the Spanish missions era to Japanese internment during World War II, indigenous peoples to Hollywood’s Red Scare. Afterward, take a walk through the 40-acre, Victorian-style [Capitol Park](#), where there is a trout pond, a cactus garden and a collection of native plants representing every county in this heterogenous state.

2) 4:30 p.m. CALIFORNIA CRAFTED

Cruise down to the [R Street Corridor](#), a former railroad yard and industrial area, now home to intriguing shops and designers. For hyper-curated outdoor clothing and gear with a city-streets-meets-Redwood forests sensibility — think fleece sweatshirts in vibrant colors — head to the [All Good](#) flagship store, which also organizes hiking, surfing and bouldering trips in California and beyond.

Down the street, the [Warehouse Artist Lofts Public Market](#) has a small but enticing food court with excellent poke — the Hawaiian-style raw fish salad that’s sweeping California — at [Fish Face Poke Bar](#) and an exciting collection of shops: midcentury wares and records at [Kicksville Vinyl & Vintage](#), where you can find everything from 45s to atomic age lamps; and fabulously retro vintage clothing at [Old Gold](#). For admirers of bespoke clothing, [Benjamins](#) crafts shoes — like a \$375 boot made of leather from the Chicago tannery Horween, which takes 16 to 20 weeks to deliver — on site.



The Old School Burger and stout beer at Broderick Roadhouse. Credit Drew Kelly for The New York Times

3) 5:30 p.m. BEER-THIRTY

Sacramento is flush with beer. Try [New Helvetia](#), named for the city's original moniker. The brewery has a neighborhood feel, complete with backyard picnic tables, a devoted running club and a resident mascot dog named Moose (there's a session I.P.A. named in his honor). [Bike Dog](#) in industrial West Sacramento is popular with bicyclists, dogs and serious beer geeks.

For a funky outdoor beer garden with communal tables imported from Germany and a shipping container kitchen, [Der Biergarten](#), has 32 taps of mostly German beer and a menu that includes classics like currywurst (\$8.06) and schnitzel (\$12.67). There's even [Sac Brew Bike](#), a mobile pub that tours beer bars and resembles a pedal-powered trolley that can seat up to 15 people. Tours start at \$27 a seat.

4) 6:30 p.m. HAMBURGER HAPPINESS

Contrary to restaurant lore and signage, [Broderick Roadhouse](#) was not established in 1893. It actually started as a food truck in 2012 and, on the strength of its hamburger game, quickly grew into a small and beloved local chain. The original West Sacramento location retains the charm of a Western relic. If you come earlier for the 3 to 6 p.m. happy hour, the towering Old School burger and tap beer special (\$10) is a steal.

5) 8 p.m. SHOWTIME

Catch a show at [The Sofia Tsakopoulos Center for the Arts](#) (tickets, \$9 to \$46), the new performing arts complex by the 30-year-old [B Street Theatre](#). The two-theater venue includes both the 250-seat main stage and the 365-seat Sutter Theatre for Children, which will host "family series" shows at 1 p.m. on Saturday and Sundays. For serious post-theater cocktails, red velvet curtains, pressed tin ceilings, a horseshoe-shaped wooden bar and live music — blues, jazz, big band and country — on weekend nights (starting at 9 p.m.), [Shady Lady Saloon](#) may be Sacramento's sexiest cocktail bar.



Capitol Park in downtown Sacramento. Credit Drew Kelly for The New York Times

Saturday

6) 10 a.m. For the Road

Grab coffee at [Temple Coffee Roasters](#), a highfalutin caffeine palace that opened its grandest location — which includes a floor hand-laid with 500,000 pennies — in 2016 in an 1880s building in the trendy Midtown neighborhood. Coffee snobs will find Kyoto slow-drip and a custom tap system for Nitrogen-infused coffees and teas. Then get a picnic lunch for the road at [Roxie's Deli & BBQ](#), an East Sacramento corner store with a retro feel and sandwiches that will feed two adults for less than \$10. A local favorite is the messy Meatball Mafia sandwich (\$9.65) with smashed meatballs, provolone and Parmesan cheeses, topped with tomatoes, onions and jalapeños.



Temple Coffee Roasters opened its grandest location in 2016 in an 1880s building in the trendy Midtown neighborhood. CreditDrew Kelly for The New York Times

7) 12 p.m. GET OUTTA TOWN

The paved, 32-mile [Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail](#) starts in Old Sacramento's Discovery Park and travels along the American River, a tubing hot spot during the scorching summer months. Stop at the [Nimbus Hatchery](#), which raises steelhead trout and Chinook salmon, and has a nature trail. If you're up for an ambitious ride (or a short drive), continue all the way to the town of Folsom — of Johnny Cash prison song fame — which is loaded with Gold Country character.

8) 5 p.m. TACOS AL FRESCO

For a quick, quintessentially California snack, head to [Chando's](#), a small local chain of taco stands where you can grab three flavorful street-food-style tacos — like “The Ensenada,” with fried fish and cabbage, birria (spicy stewed goat) and vegetarian options like spinach or potato — and a fountain drink for just \$7.49. Take your meal to the recently renovated pond at nearby McKinley Park, where 1,200 rose bushes in bloom from March through May. The garden was

featured in Greta Gerwig's 2017 film "Lady Bird" — a love letter to her hometown — which has inspired [walking and running tours](#) of the film's locations.



The Shady Lady Saloon, with its red velvet curtains, pressed tin ceilings, horseshoe-shaped wooden bar and live music, is great for post-theater cocktails. Credit Drew Kelly for The New York Times

9) 7 p.m. STADIUM CITY

Many cities have beloved sports teams, but few treat sports events — even minor league baseball games — as much like a night life activity as Sacramento, where eating a [Merlino's freeze](#) while watching a River Cats game at West Sacramento's [Raley Field](#) is a favorite way to spend an evening. In 2016, the country got its first solar-powered sports stadium when the [Golden 1 Center](#) opened in Sacramento, transforming the city's downtown with an indoor-outdoor design that includes five towering, fully-retractable glass doors. The \$500 million-plus arena hosts the Kings N.B.A. team, as well as big-name musical acts like Paul McCartney, Ariana Grande and John Mayer.

10) 10 p.m. PLAYING WITH FIRE

In the Southside Park neighborhood, [Binchoyaki](#) is a sassy little izakaya, where perky 1960s-era oldies play and the open kitchen makes the compact dining room feel like a party. Specializing in Japanese-style charcoal grilled skewers, the restaurant serves salty, umami-packed bites of pork jowl, chicken gizzard, beef tongue, bacon-wrapped enoki mushrooms and more (starting at \$1.50). A testament to the restaurant's mom-and-pop, handmade impulse, the bar is lined with planter trays sprouting mung beans and pickling jars of beet-colored daikon and shochu liquor infused with umi (plum). From 10 p.m. to midnight, there's a \$1 oyster happy hour on weekend nights.



The Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at the University of California, Davis, features a light-filled Grand Canopy design. Credit Drew Kelly for The New York Times

Sunday

11) 8 a.m. THE THREE Bs

[Bacon & Butter](#), in the Tahoe Park neighborhood, is worth both the trek and the inevitable brunch lines. The seasonal menu changes frequently, but might include, as it has in the recent past, a FGT benny (fried green tomato and ham hock with baby arugula, poached eggs, corn and béarnaise sauce, \$15) and chili verde hash with tomatillo-stewed pork butt, black beans, pasilla chile, eggs, baby squash and corn (\$17). After breakfast, head to [Asha Urban Baths](#), an Old World-style, coed, swimming suit-required bathhouse with a soaking pool, sauna, steam room, sauna and cold plunge. Drop-in admission is \$25.

12) 12:30 p.m. ALL ABOARD FOR ART

Head to Amtrak's Sacramento Valley Station, a 1926 Renaissance Revival train station that just received a major face-lift, and hop the [Capitol Corridor](#) train 15 minutes west to the college town of Davis. From the 1913 Mission Revival Davis Station, it's a 20-minute walk to the new [Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art](#), which opened in 2016 at the University of California, Davis. The museum's porous, light-filled [Grand Canopy design](#) is itself a work of art. A recent exposition included John Cage's first participatory composition, "33 1/3," which debuted at U.C. Davis in 1969.