



Weekend Photo Getaways

by Andy Long

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Golden Gate Bridge and Fog
Canon 1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm at 70mm, f/29, ISO 100, 1/60 second, -2/3 EV

take advantage of the occasion and fly to San Francisco early in order to have several days along the coast and around Santa Rosa to relax, enjoy, and indulge in a bit of photography. Photographers should always use any chance to explore a new area, even if it's only one day. One day could lead to more days later. While we all have certain places we really want to investigate and some that, at one point, weren't on our radar, all new locations offer photographic possibilities.

California is one of those places that wasn't high on *my wish list* of places to visit (with the exception of Yosemite in winter), but every trip I take has advantages for me as a photographer. First, it was an opportunity to photograph an unfamiliar area and, hopefully, come away with some new images for my portfolio. And second, I wanted to see if this particular area held promise as a destination for a future workshop.

You have a few days to kill when you've traveled to a work meeting in another state. What can you do? Grab your camera gear and do a little exploring to see what you can find. With even a little bit of pre-planning research, you can find several spots you'll want to visit and, of course, opportunities for good shots that simply pop up.

When my wife had a one-day meeting in Santa Rosa, CA, we decided to

If you find yourself with several days to spend in the Santa Rosa area, I can suggest numerous locations worth a stop. Heading north out of San Francisco toward the Golden Gate Bridge, you'll reach a park that offers numerous vantage points for good shots of the bridge. (The morning I was there the sky was blue with fog rising from the water--nice mood.) A little farther along, you'll approach Muir Woods National Monument, a very nice redwood forest. Depending on how much time you want to spend, the monument offers quite a few trails of varying distance and difficulty.

The next point of interest along the coast is Point Reyes National Seashore. This is the one location I would like to explore later, but we chose to move on. I'm told you can shoot a nice lighthouse and a group of Tule elk.



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Ice Plant

**Canon 1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm
at 180mm, f/32, ISO 100, 0.6
second, -2/3 EV**

Farther up the coast, you'll arrive at Bodega Bay. This small community is worth a stop for its several photo spots, if you're there at the right time of year for bird activity or whale watching. A bird walk was built just south of town fairly recently. It boasts boardwalks and trails through the marshes. (I saw a lone egret, but different times of the year I'm sure would feature other bird activity.) The most popular spot is Bodega Head, where lots of people go to see the passing whales that occasionally approach very close to the rocky cliff.

Between Bodega Bay and Jenner, you'll encounter several pullouts with access trails that run down to the beach where there are nice sea stacks that can be used as strong foreground subjects for sunset shooting. The trails may be adorned with patches of ice plant that present a pretty

bloom in spring. In the fall the normally green leaves start turning red, offering a chance for you to create interesting color and pattern shots. As you progress farther north, you'll find many more pullouts with nice overviews of the coastline, but you would be well advised not to stop at every one, because you'll never make it to your preferred destination.

My next stop was at Gerstle Cove in Salt Point State Park where I was told I'd discover interesting colors and patterns in the sandstone above the water as well as good crashing wave action. Both were true. In fact, this is a location where you'll want to give yourself a bit of time. Take a variety of lenses with you to capture the wave action as well as the sandstone patterns.



Crashing Waves
Canon 1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm at 200mm, f/5, ISO 320, 1/1600 second, -1/3 EV

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Just south of Gerstle Cove is Fort Ross, an old

Russian outpost with quite a few interesting buildings. Depending on the time you have to remain in the area, you might opt to head north to Point Arena for more photo ops.

Between Jenner and Santa Rosa in the town of Guerneville you'll find Armstrong Redwoods State Preserve, another forest worth a visit. The big draws here are the tallest and also the oldest redwoods in the area. For me, treks into the woods are more about looking for intimate landscapes of small bits and pieces rather than trying to capture the whole scene, even if it's a large redwood.



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Through the Trees
Canon 1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm at 70mm, f/22, ISO 1250, 2.5 seconds, -2/3 EV



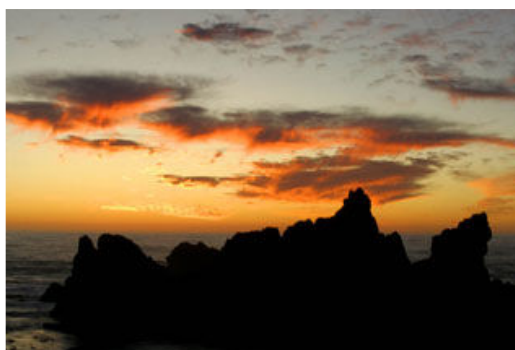
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Downed Redwood Details
Canon 1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm at 140mm, f/29, ISO 800, 4 seconds, -2/3 EV

The Vintner's Inn, where we stayed, a little north of Santa Rosa, has its own vineyard and is designed like an old Italian villa with several lovely fountains and vines growing up the wall around the windows and balconies. Even if you're not staying at the inn, it's worth a visit for its unique photo opportunities.



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Left: Fountain at Vintners Inn
Canon 1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm at
78mm, f/2.8, ISO 50, 10 seconds, -1/3
EV

Above: Coastal Sunset
Canon 1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm at
70mm, f/32, ISO 50, 1 second

Naturally, I've described only a nutshell view of the coastal area north of San Francisco. Another photographer with the same time limitations and locations might highlight entirely different photo locales. Each photographer uses his own techniques to investigate a region. One might try to reach as many spots as possible, while another might concentrate on just a few areas to explore. Neither method is right or wrong. The only directive is to make certain to take advantage of your travels. Many spots are worth taking a camera on a business trip when a part of the day is free, especially if you've never been to the location before.

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