

# Bohemian Highway is a short, sweet jaunt

## California roadway ranks among its most satisfying drives

**G**iant leaps can be made by taking small steps. That is especially true on California's Bohemian Highway. It could take several days to experience the grandness of this 10-mile roadway.

Considered one of the state's most scenic drives, it winds through massive redwoods, quiet pastures and rocky ravines. The two-lane road passes through western Sonoma County, where you'll encounter three charming hamlets that have aged nicely through time.

Artists and nature lovers flock to Freestone, Occidental and Monte Rio. Organic farms and wineries highlight the areas. Specialty nurseries lock hands with innovative shops and delectable eateries. Hiking, biking and paddling open a gateway to outdoor activities.

Monte Rio straddles both sides of the Russian River. Redwoods and the spectacular Sonoma Coast create a setting synonymous with the California lifestyle. It's a vacation wonderland; a grand getaway. Public beaches snuggle with the Russian River. A golf course, quality fishing and a variety of dining options create the perfect setting. Rent a cabin or quaint cottage on the river. Choose a luxurious bed-and-breakfast or a historic hotel.

Hiding between the redwoods,



**VERY VARIETAL** – Hop on the Bohemian Highway and explore Sonoma wine country and an impressive group of surrounding natural attractions.

*Image: rolf\_52. Adobe Stock.*

Freestone and Monte Rio is Occidental – an adorable hamlet blessed with beauty and charm. Once the final stop on the Pacific Railroad, Occidental has a small population of new residents and old-timers, and it plays host to a mix of exceptional restaurants and

unique shops.

Cyclists and car clubs cherish Occidental because of its challenging routes between the coast and the redwoods. Coleman Valley Road is a popular drive. It climbs to great heights while leaving town, descends on a picturesque

valley before climbing and running along a ridgeline with spectacular views of the coast.

Freestone is Sonoma County's first historic district. Shielded from the extremes of marine fog and inland heat, it's quite a spot; a tiny gem located on the southern end of Bohemian Highway. It's situated in an exquisitely scenic valley and boasts a benign climate, pastoral vistas and rolling hills.

Freestone is home to classic western-style buildings and once served as the center for logging and milling the redwood forest that previously covered much of the area. Today, it's a popular stop for travelers on their way to the Sonoma Coast by way of the Bodega Bridge.

Fewer than 40 people reside in Freestone. Its magical aura meshes with distinctive attractions. It's home to Wild Flour Organic Bakery & Gardens. Ingredients for its delicious muffins and scones are grown in its back yard. Visit the Osmosis Day Spa. Experience its exclusive cedar-enzyme bath – a Japanese-style treatment. And the Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyards' tasting room is an education in the Sonoma Coast growing area.

Bohemian Highway is a euphoric roadway, a rhapsody of royal proportions.

# Great Wall of China will put tourists in awe

## Renowned structure is barriers telling ancient tales

**T**he Great Wall of China is one of mankind's most incredible architectures and achievements in ancient engineering. Is it any wonder why millions of travelers flock to see this historic barrier?

Built 2,300 years ago and more than 13,000 miles in length – five times the size of the U.S. – it's an awe-inspiring sight best seen in person. It can't be seen from space, but it is an out-of-this-world presence.

Steps lead up to watchtowers and back down to the wall as it meanders through brilliant landscapes, hillsides and mountains from the Gobi Desert in northwestern China to the sea coast of eastern China.

It's a structure unlike any other. It's endured wars and dynasties. The sight is overwhelming. Its magnitude makes it seem like an illusion, but it's anything but a mirage. Fog rises from the lush forests and dissolves into the sky, giving it the appearance of being bathed in incense.

It's a pathway into history that is best visited one step at a time. It's an ancient trail that has one heck of a story to tell. The aura of the wall conjures images of archaic periods. Made from brick, stone, tamped earth and wood, it's a direct link with legendary dynasties of China's past.

People mistakenly assume the Great Wall of China is a continuous entity. But it exists in chunks, scattered



**WALL STREET** – A section of the Great Wall of China climbs a hillside while meandering through lush forests. *Image: aphotostory. Adobe Stock.*

with natural defenses like precipitous mountains.

Mutianyu Great Wall is regarded as the "Essence of Great Wall in Ming Dynasty." Tourists can see its original appearance and enjoy its ancient culture. The architecture and sightseeing are magnificent. Densely populated watchtowers highlight its appearance. Acres of forest hugging vast mountains

can be seen from every direction, igniting colorful scenery all four seasons.

Hikers will relish Jinshanling Great Wall. It's one of the best-preserved sections of Ming Great Wall, which is featured in steep mountains, and ornate and dense towers. There are five strategic passes, 67 defense towers and two beacon towers. They've survived furious battles to tell their unique tales.

Badaling Great Wall features more width and higher walls. It's divided into sections by a fortress shaped like a trapezoid. There are 43 towers but only a dozen are open for tourists.

Simatai is the only ancient architectural site in China that retains the original appearance of the Ming Dynasty. It's been designated the "Primitive Great Wall" by UNESCO. Yuanyang Lake hugs against the west side of the wall. The hillside reflects off its calm waters. General Tower is considered to be the most exquisite of this section of the wall. Appreciate the nightscape via cable car to enjoy the stunning views while carrying a lantern.

Ox-Horn Edge, Nine-Eye Tower and General Cliffs steal the spotlight on Jiankou Great Wall. Ox-Horn Edge stretches from the mountainside to the peak of the mountain before it suddenly falls. The shape of sharp ridges resembles the horn of an Ox. Nine-Eye Tower sits atop Flame Mountain. Its name originates from its nine arrow windows on each side. And General Cliffs takes on the appearance of two generals, standing at an important position upon the Great Wall.

The Great Wall of China is teeming with unique pieces that uncover mysteries and create one of the world's most stunning puzzles. It's an overwhelming obstacle that leaves visitors feeling as if they've conquered the world.