Headline: Hidden treasures await in California

Deckhead: Tasty places await those willing to explore unknown

California wears a number of hats and you won’t have a difficult time finding one that fits. It’s synonymous with glamour, stars, delectable wine regions, beaches and scenic highways.

The Golden State, however, runs deeper. Treasures are waiting to be discovered. Secret islands, mythical boiling mud pits and culture help define this magical state. Don’t limit your ambitions; spark your curiosities. There are places waiting to be untapped if you’re willing to venture away from the popular destinations.

Once such place is Palm Springs. It’s set among ancient rocks and the elaborate palms of the Coachella Valley. Geography hatched an architectural style known as Desert Modernism.

Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is one of only three rotation tramcars in the world and the only one in North America. The cars rotate 360 degrees, allowing visitors to have an uninterrupted view of the scenic Coachella Valley and the Salton Sea – a vast inland waterway and one of the lowest points on Earth.

Step through four life zones once step out at the Mountain Station at 8,516 feet. The short trip is equivalent to taking a road trip through the Sonora Desert. Flora and fauna change before your eyes and the temperature can change by nearly 40 degrees from top to bottom.

Encounter 16 acres of boiling springs, mud pots, hissing steam vents and roaring fumaroles in Bumpass Hell – located in Northern California’s Lassen Volcanic National Park. A three-mile trail leads to the site and the scent of rotten eggs warns that you’re getting close. Stop by the Big Boiler. Sweltering steam spews from its vent, once measuring as hot as 322 degrees – making it worldwide one of the hottest fumaroles.

Denmark springs, along the state’s central coast, is the tiny town of Solvang. The authentic Danish town boasts windmills, bakeries and a smorgasbord restaurant. Featured in the film “Sideways”, it’s slice of Scandinavia that has the power to surprise travelers while they cruise Highway 101.

The Channel Islands are labeled the Galapagos Islands of North America. They create one of the U.S.’s more unique national parks. The islands at located off the central coastline and showcase animal flora and fauna – from colorful wildflowers that bloom in the spring to the sea lion rookeries and the elusive Island Fox that is found nowhere else on Earth. The islands are accessible from Oxnard, Ventura and Santa Barbara by Island Packer concessionaire boats.

Badwater Basin sits in Death Valley National Park – one of the hottest, driest and lowest places in North America. It drops 282-feet below sea level. Paradoxically, Mount Whitney – the highest point in the contiguous U.S. – is only 76 miles away. The vast salt flats are mostly dry but can transform into a ready-made lake following a major rainstorm.

The left coast will steer you in the right direction – even if you’re heading off the beaten path.

Cutline: DEEP INTENTIONS – A sunset landscape enhances the beauty of the Coachella Valley in Palm Desert, California. Image: Sundry Photography. Adobe Stock.