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CALIFORNIA



— VISITOR GUIDE —

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Discover the Historic Heart of the Redwoods



FALL IN LOVE WITH FERNDALE

Tucked away on California's remote Redwood Coast, historic Ferndale is a hidden oasis of small-town charm, enchanting scenery, and spirited North Coast culture.

Visitors come here for the fantastically preserved [Victorian architecture](#) and central setting to the world's tallest trees. Yet what keeps them coming back is the feeling: a blend of vintage Americana and vibrant creative energy, of a tight-knit yet warmly welcoming community of farmers, cowboys, artisans and artists, all set against the beautiful backdrop of coastline and forest.

For a tiny rural town (pop. 1,372), the Victorian Village is home to an astonishing roster of amenities, from a lauded music hall and beloved performing arts theater to acclaimed restaurants, galleries and art studios. Hike through the southernmost stand of Sitka spruce in Russ Park and stroll the sands of secluded Centerville Beach, the northernmost point on the Lost Coast.

Wander neighborhoods of quaint cottages and magnificent "Butterfat Palaces" and clamber up the scenic hillside of Ferndale Cemetery, one of the most photographed cemeteries in the West. Explore the remarkable redwoods and surrounding communities, but come home to Ferndale's cozy [historic inns](#) and friendly Main Street [shops](#). Discover why Ferndale is the perfect home base for a fun family vacation, outdoor adventure or romantic weekend getaway.

Whether you're drawn to historic architecture, peaceful nature or lively downtowns, we invite you to discover Northern California's best-kept secret – and fall in love with Ferndale!



FERNDALE FACTS

ABOUT FERNDALE

Vintage Americana meets vibrant creative culture just miles from the world’s tallest trees—a winning combination that makes historic Ferndale the premier place to stay when visiting California’s Redwood Coast, named Lonely Planet’s #1 U.S. Destination in 2018. With historic inns, independent shops, galleries and restaurants, and access to epic outdoor adventures, Ferndale has something for everyone.

LOCATION

Ferndale is centrally located for a visit to California’s Redwoods and Lost Coast, just 20 miles north of Humboldt Redwoods State Park and 65 miles south of Redwood National and State Parks. It’s a 5-hour drive from the greater San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento, and 8 hours south of Portland, along scenic Highway 101. Or fly into the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport 45 minutes north (car rental available).

REDWOOD COAST

Welcoming more than 1.85 million visitors a year at its four redwoods parks, Humboldt’s Redwood Coast is a growing global travel destination. Also behind the “Redwood Curtain”—the tall-trees barrier separating the far reaches of Northern California from the rest of the state—lies the Lost Coast, a legendary stretch of remote, undeveloped coastline. With its fairytale setting and step-back-in-time Main Street, Ferndale epitomizes the magic of the Redwood Coast and its towering trees, fog-shrouded beaches and vibrant culture of history and art.

HISTORIC MAIN STREET

Ferndale is home to so many extraordinary examples of historic architecture that California designated the entire town as State Historic Landmark No. 883. Gingerbread embellished facades and gloriously ornate “Butterfat Palaces,” crafted from solid redwood by wealthy 19th Century dairy farmers, attract architecture buffs from far and wide, and Ferndale’s nostalgic Main Street has been featured in many films and TV productions, including major movies “The Majestic” and “Outbreak” and Ferndale native Guy Fieri’s Food Network series, “Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives.”



DAIRY INNOVATIONS

Ferndale’s earliest settlers quickly discovered the Eel River Valley’s lush, natural pasturage made it ideally suited for dairy farming and cattle ranching, industries still thriving here today. Dairy-farming Danes began arriving in the 1870s with practices from their homeland and by 1890, there were 11 separate creameries operating in the Ferndale area. Ferndale butter was considered the finest in the state, bringing premium prices in San Francisco and giving Ferndale its first nickname, “Cream City.”



While just one creamery remains today – Humboldt Creamery in Fernbridge – Ferndale's pioneer dairy plants were responsible for many revolutionary innovations in milk processing and dairy management, including production of the first sweet cream butter, the first milk tank truck, the first cooperative creameries, the first cow-testing program in California and the development of the nationally-known Gray-Jensen dry milk process, among other advances.



ARCHITECTURE

Famous for its fantastically preserved architecture, Ferndale is home to some of the most ornate, well-preserved Victorian buildings in the United States; in fact, the entire town resides on the Register of Historic Places. Thank the Victorian Village’s thriving dairy industry, which provided the wealth necessary to construct the dramatic facades, churches and elegant homes, known as “Butterfat Palaces.” With its magnificent Main Street

facades and pristine Victorian and Arts and Crafts era homes straight out of a Normal Rockwell painting, it's easy to see why Forbes has called Ferndale one of America's prettiest places.

MOVIES & TELEVISION

Ferndale features some of the best-preserved Victorian buildings in California, and its dreamlike setting of coastal mist, forested hillsides and pastoral farmland, Ferndale has been a favorite for movies, TV shows and commercials, including:

“I’m a Pepper” Dr. Pepper TV Commercial (1977)

A Death in Canaan (1978)

Salem’s Lot (1979)

Outbreak (1995)

The Majestic (2001)

Joe Dirt (2001)

Road Trip with Huell Howser – Ferndale, S1, E49 (2010)

“Guy’s Hometown Tour,” Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives, S19, E1 (2014)



ARTS & CULTURE

Ferndale has long been a haven for artists, makers and dreamers who found creative inspiration in the remote North Coast town. Main Street Ferndale was the site of the first kinetic sculpture race between legendary local artists Hobart Brown and Jack Mays, and remains the finish line of the now-world-famous [Kinetic Grand Championship](#), a 3-day, 47-mile human-powered extravaganza.

The Victorian Village owes its extraordinary preservation to the vision of area artists who rescued the town from stucco-laden modernization in the 1960s and '70s and continue to breathe life into its magnificent Painted Ladies, which today house galleries, workshops and theaters.

Discover the largest collection of master blacksmithing in the U.S. in The Blacksmith Shop; a maker's space driven by a passion for the nearly-lost art of building traditional Aleut skin-on-frame sea kayaks in Mind's Eye Manufactory; and the vibrant surfscapes and Dias de los Muertos inspired scenes of Ferndale painter Shawn Griggs.

Experience live music with some of the best ambiance and acoustics in the West at The Old Steeple, a magnificent historic church converted to a concert venue; enjoy a Thursday night of old-time cowboy music (and the restaurant's famous chicken cacciatore) with local legend Bill McBride at the Hotel Ivanhoe; or take in a show at Ferndale Repertory Theatre, Humboldt County's premier theatre destination producing comedies, dramas, and musicals since 1972.



ATTRACTIONS

Cross over **historic Fernbridge** into Ferndale. Completed in 1911, when it was dubbed “Queen of Bridges,” the iconic concrete arch bridge is the longest surviving span across the Eel River, even surviving the region’s devastating 1964 flood. At 1,320 feet, it remains the longest functional poured-concrete bridge in the world.

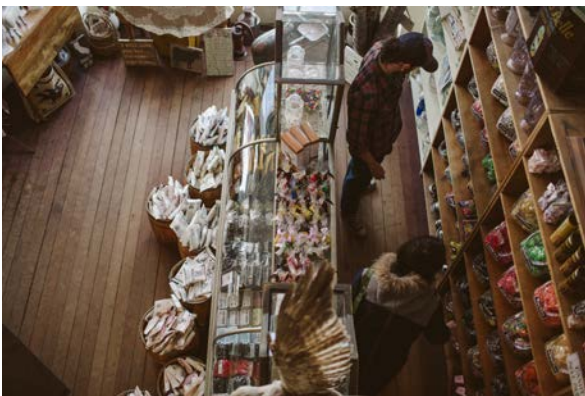


Clamber up the scenic rhododendron-studded hillside of **Ferndale Cemetery**, one of the most picturesque pioneer cemeteries in California and the eerie setting for Stephen King’s cult-favorite TV miniseries, Salem’s Lot.

You can tour plenty of historic homes in California, but few are still lived in by members of the same family that built them. **Fern Cottage Historic District** has been lovingly tended by the Russ family since pioneers Joseph and Zipporah constructed the picturesque farmhouse in 1866, and remains a treasure trove of Victorian era and early 20th Century furniture, clothing and appliances – almost all of which were actually purchased and used by the family.

Just a block from historic Main Street, the **Ferndale Museum** offers a trip back to Victorian-era Ferndale and Northern California that’s fun for all ages. Peer into historical exhibits of a Victorian home, blacksmith shop, and barber shop, and see displays of farming and logging equipment, working crank phones, a telephone switchboard, and an operating Bosch-Omori seismograph checked daily for earthquake recordings.

Enjoy the best shopping in the redwoods region on Ferndale's charming historic Main Street, where you can stroll lamppost-lined blocks of lovingly restored Victorian buildings featuring an eclectic mix of independently-owned stores, from boutiques and specialty shops to artisan galleries and an old-fashioned general store.



Named one of America’s most charming general stores by Country Living, the two-story **Golden Gait Mercantile** sells something for everyone, from candy, hats and antiques to local and imported specialty foods, skincare, jewelry and stationery. While there are plenty of modern treasures here, it’s

hard not to feel like you’ve stepped back in time thanks to the Mercantile’s old-fashioned candy counter, upstairs museum complete with Victorian mannequins, and collection of antique unopened stock from soaps to tonics.

The ancient art of blacksmithing is alive and well in Ferndale’s world-famous **Blacksmith Shop**, home to the largest collection of contemporary hand-forged iron in the United States at two Main Street locations. Featuring everything from whimsical sculptures to wine racks, from castle-worthy chandeliers to gourmet cutlery, and from artful fireplace tools to cabinet hardware and key chains, it’s a stunning showcase of what can be conjured up with hand, hammer, and imagination.



OUTDOORS

Step into an ancient forest as beautiful as any redwoods grove in **Russ Park**, a hundred-acre bird sanctuary and southernmost stand of mature Sitka spruce trees, fir and even the occasional redwood, just two blocks from Main Street. More than three miles of hiking trails wind through the park, meandering through ferns and lichen-draped branches to secluded Zipporah's Pond and stunning vistas of the Victorian Village.



It's not often that you get a beach all to yourself in California, but that's what you'll often find five miles from Ferndale at **Centerville Beach County Park**, a rugged stretch of coastline that continues north past picturesque farmland to the mouth of the Eel River and south past scenic sandstone bluffs. Centerville Beach is perfect for beachcombing, bird watching, wildlife viewing (look for seals, sea lions, pelicans and, in springtime, migrating Gray whales) and off-leash frolicking with well-behaved dogs.



Continue on Centerville Road past the beach parking lot and you'll find some of the best coastal hiking paths on the North Coast at **Fleener Creek and Guthrie Creek trailheads**, part of the Lost Coast Headlands National Monument. This 463-acre preserve of bluffs, mountains and beaches south of the Eel River is perfect for birdwatching, wildflower viewing, picnicking, and beachcombing.

Fleener Creek Trail offers a steep but quick half-mile descent to the beach below. (Avoid high tide if you want to venture past the bluffs to explore.) Guthrie Creek Trail is a scenic, secluded path that zigzags about a mile down to driftwood-strewn Guthrie Creek Beach. Along the way, enjoy views of headlands, bluffs and the False Cape. Fossils can often be found embedded in sandstone cliffs below, but watch out for falling debris; the BLM has labeled the last stretch of trail as unstable.



EVENTS

From old-fashioned parades to the lighting of America's tallest living Christmas tree, Ferndale is a hub of feel-good family-friendly events all year long.

Spring

Ferndale Volunteer Fire Dept. Firemen's Games
Foggy Bottom Milk Run (largest kids' run in Northern California)
Bicycle Tour of the Unknown Coast
Memorial Day Parade & Remembrance Ceremony
Kinetic Sculpture Race Finish Line

Summer

Pet Parade
Portuguese Holy Ghost Festa
Fourth of July Parade & Fire Truck Rides
Humboldt County Fair & Horseracing (longest continually running fair in No. CA)

Fall

Ferndale Concours on Main (only Concours d'Elegance to be held on historic boulevard)
Bargain Lovers' Weekend
Lost Coast Beer & Bocce Festival
Historic Churches of Ferndale Tour

Winter

Hospitality Night
Victorian Holidays
Lighting of America's Tallest Living Christmas Tree (a tradition since 1934)
Christmas Lighted Tractor Parade

<https://www.visitferndale.com/events>



RESTAURANTS

With unparalleled ambiance and diverse menus, Main Street Ferndale is the Redwood Coast's favorite foodie destination. From creative Mexican inspired dishes to hearty farm-to-table comfort food, from third-wave coffee shops to bakeries featured on Food Network, and from pizza loaded with local cheese to juicy burgers with grass-fed Humboldt beef, Ferndale restaurants have something to delight the taste buds of every diner.

LODGING

Ferndale's historic hotels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation homes offer a variety of lodging options in one of the most scenic, peaceful settings on the Redwood Coast. Stay in luxury at an elegant boutique hotel, where you can experience an authentic Victorian high tea, relax in an English garden, or linger over a romantic fireside dinner. Or enjoy the character and charm of one of our many unique vacation rentals and Airbnbs, from historic homes to refurbished farmhouses.

Learn more at

<https://www.visitferndale.com/lodging/>



FERNDALE ITINERARY IDEAS

Ferndale is the perfect home base for exploring the Redwoods, Lost Coast and surrounding Humboldt communities while enjoying the atmosphere of small-town Americana, vibrant arts and entertainment culture, and welcoming sense of community. Here's our perfect itinerary for a long weekend in the Victorian Village.

DAY 1

Enjoy the scenic drive to Ferndale. If you're coming from the south, consider jumping off Highway 101 on the Avenue of the Giants, the old highway through the heart of Humboldt Redwoods State Park. If traveling from the north, stop for Roosevelt elk viewing and a prehistoric hike through lush Fern Canyon in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park or pull over for sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean at Patrick's Point.

Arrive in Ferndale and settle into your accommodations.

Set out on a walking tour of historic Ferndale, famous for Victorian architecture ranging from quaint cottages to the magnificent "Butterfat Palaces" built by the wealthy families who made their fortunes in the 1880s dairy industry. Plan to spend plenty of time exploring charming neighborhoods with row after row of candy-colored Queen Anne, Eastlake-Stick, Italianate, Gothic Revival, Neoclassical, Bungalow and Mission style homes surrounded by lovingly tended gardens.



DAY 2

Start your day in the Victorian Village with a morning hike. Begin in scenic Ferndale Cemetery, where you'll meander past crumbling headstones and ornate mausoleums flanked by bright-blooming rhododendrons as you ascend a steep slope above town. At the summit, step under the shade of towering lichen-draped spruce as you take in a panoramic view of village, pastures, and the Eel River reaching the Pacific Ocean.



Circle back to the road through the cemetery and follow it to the other side, where you'll find the trailhead for Russ Park, a nature preserve and bird sanctuary with 105 acres of Sitka spruce, Douglas firs and the occasional redwood. Trail options include a short but steep hike overlooking the Eel River Valley as well as more leisurely loops, including one around a pond named for Ferndale pioneer Zipporah Russ.

Return to Main Street Ferndale for lunch and shopping at independent boutiques and galleries, followed by a tour of the treasure-trove of local history in the Ferndale Museum, where displays include a Victorian home, blacksmith shop, and barber shop, working crank phones, telephone switchboard, and an operating Bosch-Omori seismograph.

Head toward Humboldt Bay to check out the Victorian seaport of Eureka, the largest coastal city between San Francisco and Portland and another outpost of incredible Victorian architecture. Must-sees include the revitalized waterfront of Old Town Eureka and the often-photographed Carson Mansion, one of the most fanciful examples of Victorian architecture in the world. Swing into Humboldt Bay Provisions, a new tasting room in the heart of Old Town Eureka, for the oyster bar and local drinks. If you have time, venture up to Arcata for shopping on the college town's plaza and a tour of the Holly Yashi jewelry factory.

Return to Ferndale and stock up on picnic supplies for a trip to the beach. Drive out aptly named Ocean Avenue to rugged and remote Centerville Beach, past grazing cows, rustic barns and old farmhouses. Take a stroll on the sand past windswept bluffs and wild waves, keeping eyes peeled for seals, sea lions, pelicans, and, in springtime, migrating Gray whales. Build a driftwood bonfire and enjoy a memorable sunset.

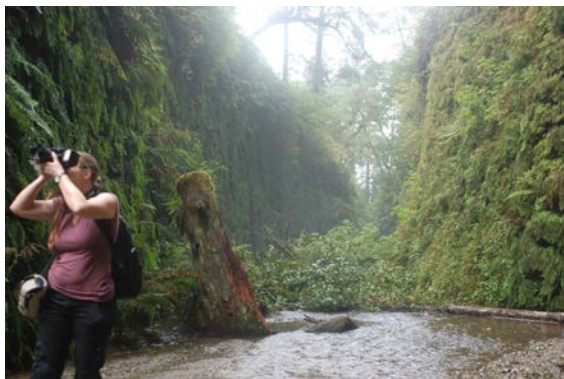
DAY 3

Awake early, grab a quick breakfast of housemade granola and coffee at Mind's Eye Coffee Lounge and hit the road to the Redwoods. From Ferndale there are three directions in which you can find these ancient gems:

To the south: Just 30 minutes south of Ferndale you'll find one of the world's most scenic drives. For 31 miles, you'll want to drop the top on your rental convertible as historic Highway Avenue of the Giants winds alongside Highway 101 through Humboldt Redwoods State Park, home to the world's largest remaining contiguous old-growth forest of coast redwoods. Founder's Grove is a popular, relatively flat loop that includes the magnificent 362-foot fallen Dyerville Giant, while Rockefeller Forest is slightly more secluded and home to the 8th, 6th, 4th, and 2nd tallest trees in the world. Other must-sees include the Shrine Drive-Thru Tree and the California Federation of Women's Clubs Grove featuring a four-fireplace Hearthstone designed by renowned architect Julia Morgan.



On the way back to Ferndale, stop at the quaint company town of Scotia to visit the historic Scotia Inn, learn about logging and lumber mill life, steam donkeys and locomotives in the Scotia Museum, or tour the Fisheries Center, the largest freshwater aquarium on the North Coast, on the south side of town.



To the north: About an hour north of Ferndale you'll find the enchanted landscape of lush forest, deserted beaches and prairies of grazing Roosevelt elk that is Redwood National and State Parks, a cooperative sanctuary for old-growth Coast Redwoods.

Lady Bird Johnson Grove, which traverses a ridge top redwood forest, is the most popular and easily accessible hike. But perhaps the most famous attraction is Fern Canyon, a lush hidden paradise where hikers can follow Home Creek through a narrow gorge with 30-foot fern-lined walls, a prehistoric natural wonder that Steven Spielberg chose as a location for Jurassic Park 2: The Lost World. From Highway 101 at Orick, turn on unpaved Davison Road and continue past Elk Meadow (the aptly-named favorite grazing spot of the largest North American elk species) for 10 miles to the trailhead.

To the east: A 20-mile drive out Highway 36 takes you to Van Duzen-Pamplin Grove County Park, where you'll find beautiful redwood groves and some of the region's most popular swimming holes, along with dog-friendly sites for picnicking, camping, hiking, fishing. Continue for five more miles to Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, a small but rewarding park boasting a sublime redwood forest full of big trees and few people.

DAY 4

Fuel up with a hearty breakfast from Poppa Joe's before exploring some of the most remote and astonishingly beautiful coastline in California, no backpack required. Ferndale is the northern gateway to the Lost Coast, accessible via a scenic drive out the winding Mattole Road. This 28-mile legendary route, known to locals as "The Wildcat," traverses through alpine forests, by tiny secluded towns and down an epic drop to the ocean at Cape Mendocino, where sweeping cliffside views give Big Sur and the Hawaiian Islands a run for their money.



Head back to Ferndale upon reaching the shore near the cape, or complete the loop through Petrolia, Honeydew and the Mattole River Valley into Humboldt Redwoods State Park and 101 North.

Bonus adventure: Instead of heading east when you reach Petrolia, go southwest towards the coast along Lighthouse Road for five miles, park and hike another 3.5 to visit the Punta Gorda Lighthouse via the Lost Coast Trail.

OTHER ITINERARY IDEAS

Brewery Tour: Lost Coast Brewery, South Korea-based The Booth Brewing Co., and Humboldt Cider Company in Eureka; Eel River Brewing Company in Fortuna; Redwood Curtain Brewing Company and Wrangletown Cider in Arcata; Mad River Brewing Company in Blue Lake; and Six Rivers Brewery in McKinleyville.

Foodie Tour: Humboldt Sweets, Sweetness & Light and Mind's Eye Coffee Lounge in Ferndale; Loleta Cheese Factory and Queso Kings Grilled Cheese Bar in Loleta; and Dick Taylor Craft Chocolate, Humboldt Bay Provisions, Brick & Fire, and Living the Dream Ice Cream in Eureka.

Guy Fieri Tour: Visit the Food-Network featured favorites of Ferndale native son Guy Fieri at The Ivanhoe, Humboldt Sweets, and Ferndale Meat Co. in Ferndale; Clendenen's Cider Works in Fortuna; and Café Nooner, Bless My Soul Café, Brick & Fire, and Paul's Live from New York Pizza in Eureka.

Kid-Friendly Itinerary: Top kid-friendly attractions in Ferndale include Centerville Beach, Russ Park, Ferndale Museum, Historic Main Street, the Golden Gait Mercantile's candy counter and Victorian mini-museum, Sweetness & Light, and Firemen's Park and playground and bocce ball courts. Head to Eureka for Sequoia Park Zoo, Madaket Humboldt Bay Cruise, Redwood Discovery Museum and Samoa Cookhouse.

Dog-Friendly Itinerary: Stay in Ferndale's pet-friendly Shaw House Inn before heading out to explore Fido favorites Main Street Barkery & Bath, Russ Park, Centerville Beach and the Lost Coast Headlands. Other dog-friendly attractions include Humboldt Botanical Garden and King Salmon Beach, both located between Ferndale and Eureka.