

# Golden Gate National Recreation Area Tour



**VISUAL TRAVEL TOURS**

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# Tour Summary

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area is one of the most visited National Parks in the United States, hosting over 13 million visitors per year. It is also one of the largest urban parks in the world with a size rivaling the urban areas of Marin, an affluent Bay Area county. More than 80% of its size is devoted to wild or open lands. This tour of the GGNRA units within Marin County includes Muir Woods, Olema Valley, Bolinas Lagoon, Fort Baker, and the incomparable Marin Headlands - with its breathtaking views of San Francisco and the world famous Golden Gate Bridge.

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# The Bridge to Marin's Recreation Areas





The Golden Gate Bridge between San Francisco and Marin County is an internationally recognized symbol of California. When it was completed in 1937 it was the longest suspension bridge in the

world, but that honor has since been lost. It now ranks number 9.



Pedestrian walkways on either side are perfect for a scenic stroll or bike ride. We'll start this tour by crossing the bridge to Marin County where open spaces become

immediately visible and accessible, for a multitude of recreation options.





The Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) was created in 1972 by Congress to maintain and preserve recreational opportunities. As we approach the Marin side the dramatic headlands come into view. Later in this tour we'll explore the many Marin County open spaces and revitalized military posts.



One of those posts is Fort Baker, located literally in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge. Reopened in 2008 as a high-end resort, the area now has several other uses, as we will see in the second chapter of this tour.



Most visitors to Marin County start at the viewing platform and rest area called Vista Point. People come from all over the world to enjoy the scenic beauty from this vantage point.



Many of the GGNRA units are world-renowned destinations. From Alcatraz Island to Muir Woods, decommissioned military posts to parks in San Francisco, millions of visitors enter the GGNRA each year to explore the area's history, culture, and natural environment.



For environmentalists, the GGNRA is a bold experiment in conservation. When Congress created the area it squeezed the nation's largest urban park between some of the most expensive real estate in the

country. The GGNRA is a refuge for wildlife and city dwellers alike. It is also a sports-lover's delight. Comprised of several different land management units spanning 3 counties, it is one of the most recognized and visited areas in Northern California.



The bridge can frame some excellent photos, such as looking down at Fort Baker as we ascend into the Marin Headlands.



Upon reaching the top we'll take a quick survey of our surroundings. We have gained a lot of elevation, and the bridge we just crossed looks like it is far below us.





As we move farther west into the Marin Headlands, the Golden Gate Bridge remains a fascinating sight, visible for miles in all directions. The headlands view is utterly spectacular on a clear day.



Our tour will take us north through Marin County where we'll see the rugged coastline of the Pacific Ocean.



We'll see an old-growth redwood grove tucked in a valley north of the Marin Headlands, called Muir Woods.



We'll go to more than one beach, and see a rarely-visited waterfall that many locals don't even know about!



We'll travel past the Bolinas Lagoon with its plentiful waterfowl and migratory birds.



And finally we'll make our way up the Olema Valley to visit some lesser-known portions of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Lace up your hiking boots: we have a lot of ground to cover!

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