It’s no secret that California is the ultimate destination for travel nurses. The wages are some of the highest in the nation, the nurse-to-patient ratios are a dream, and state laws provide extra protections for nurses, too. If you still need convincing to go to the Golden State, this travel guide introduces you to five awesome cities you could call home — at least for 13 weeks. But if you end up extending some of your contracts because you love it so much, don’t say we didn't warn you!

Happy Traveling!
Before we highlight specific cities, let's talk about exactly what the state has to offer travel nurses.

Picture it. You have an ideal schedule, working four 12s at a state-of-the-art hospital in Los Angeles. Before your shift, you hit the beach for a run. On your long weekends, you get to decide: should you head to Lake Tahoe for some skiing and R&R or cruise to San Francisco for shopping and a swank dinner?

From its solid pay to its mandatory patient-nurse ratios, there are plenty of reasons for travel nurses to be California dreaming.
The high salary

California has some of the highest travel nurse salaries in the nation. Though salaries may vary from city to city, and sometimes within the same city, most travel nurses can still find a pretty ideal pay rate.

The cities in the Bay Area – San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, and Santa Cruz – all average weekly pay rates of at least $2000. If you spend a year in one of these cities, you’ll be handsomely rewarded with a six-figure salary.

The opportunity for growth

California is the most populous states in the nation, with over 39 million residents. It also has one of the lowest nurse rates per capita in the nation. That adds up to a whole lot of travel nursing opportunities.

Further, 4 of the top 10 largest nonprofit hospital systems in the nation are in California:

- Kaiser Permanente (Oakland)
- Dignity Health (San Francisco)
- Sutter Health (Sacramento)
- Adventist Health (Roseville)

If you travel within one of these giant systems, you can advance your career.

- Make valuable connections at the most powerful healthcare institutions in the nation
- Advance your skills with the benefit of these hospitals’ advanced technology and staff
- Gain system-specific experience that will make you attractive for future in-house positions
The mandatory nurse-patient ratios

California is the only state in the nation with mandatory nurse-patient ratios. You’ll benefit from these ratios in a few ways:

- They guarantee a steady demand for travel nurses in California. For example, on average, TotalMed has about 850 job openings in California.
- They also mean you will have a nice, manageable workload in any hospital in the Golden State. Here’s a sample of the nurse-patient ratios for popular specialties:
  - Operating Room and ER Trauma – 1:1
  - ICU, NICU, L&D – 1:2
  - ER and Telemetry – 1:4
  - Med/Surg – 1:5
  - Psychiatric – 1:6
- They also spell lower patient mortality rates and higher staff satisfaction. In California, you will enjoy safer patients and happier coworkers.

The guaranteed breaks

Another boon of California’s unique hospital regulations is that your rest breaks and meal time must be honored, every day. Your nurse leader won’t ask you to do “just one more thing” before you take your rest break. And you won’t go home (quite as) starved at the end of your shift because your coworkers will shoo you off the floor to go have a nice lunch.
California is named after a **mythical paradise**, and it lives up to its moniker. The vast, beautiful state can suit any traveler. Are you a fashionista? Find your home in the shops on Rodeo Drive in LA. Outdoor adventurer? Take a trek through the Sierra Nevadas. Beach enthusiast? Dip your toes in the pristine Pacific at Carmel-by-the-Sea. Foodie? Delight your taste buds with any cuisine imaginable in San Francisco.

Want help picking the best city for you? Read on!
Frisco, San Fran, SFO — whatever you want to call it, San Francisco is a city rich with food, history, and culture -- and it’s waiting for your visit. Here are 5 reasons to sign a contract in San Francisco.
Find your fortune

The California Gold Rush prompted a lot of migration westward to try and strike it rich. And you’ll want to head west, too, once you see the salaries of these travel nursing assignments:

- San Francisco, CA, Med-Surg/Tele - $2,564 gross weekly
- San Francisco, CA, PCU/ICU/NICU - $2,690 gross weekly
- San Francisco, CA, L&D/Postpartum - $2,366 gross weekly
- South San Francisco, CA, Med-Surg/Tele - $2,548 gross weekly
- South San Francisco, CA, PCU/ICU/NICU - $2,691 gross weekly
- South San Francisco, CA, L&D/Postpartum - $2,370 gross weekly

Find some San Francisco treats

Rice-A-Roni is not the only San Francisco one! San Francisco has given birth to a number of culinary delights. Top off your salad with some Green Goddess Dressing. Pick up some sourdough bread from Boudin, who’s been baking it since 1849! And of course, when it’s hot, there is no better way to cool off than with an IT’s IT ice cream sandwich.

Find your way

The hills of San Francisco are notorious, and travel nurses who bring their cars are very brave indeed. But you can explore the East Bay on the BART, and San Francisco has those iconic cable cars and trolleys if you’d rather leave your car at home. Make sure you cross the Golden Gate bridge at least once, just for fun. Step back in time and take a ferry to Alcatraz Island. And you can’t forget Golden Gate Park — the best place to get a selfie with San Francisco’s most famous landmark.
Find your new favorite cuisine

Burritos are practically a religion here, and Mission Burritos are the only way to go. Every local will have their own favorite, so you might as well just try them all. If you’re craving something besides rolled-up perfection, San Francisco is truly a melting pot of culture and cuisine. For Persian food, head on over to Anar. Tunisian/Moroccon sound tasty? Then Café Zitouna is your spot. Burmese food anyone? You’ve got the whole world of food all in one city. Eat your heart out.

Find your fun

San Francisco combines the best of urban and outdoor fun. Catch a 49ers or a Giant’s game when they are playing at home. Curious and quirky types will enjoy an afternoon at the Cable Car Museum or the Musée Mécanique. Get lost in SFMOMA or attend a live show. What new hobby or interest will you find while you’re here?

Are you ready to find your next assignment in San Francisco? Check out our current openings.
Are you craving a big city but with sun and beaches for your next assignment? Look no further! Here are 5 reasons the City of Angels should be on your list.
LA pays.

Here is an example of what travel nurses can earn in Los Angeles:

- Los Angeles, CA, Med-Surg/Tele/PACU - $2,136 gross weekly
- Los Angeles, CA, PICU/OR/CVICU/CVOR - $2,646 gross weekly
- Los Angeles, CA, ER - $2,279.88 gross weekly
- Los Angeles, CA, Stepdown/ICU - $2,520 gross weekly
- West Los Angeles, CA, Med-Surg/Tele/PACU - $2,136 gross weekly
- West Los Angeles, CA, PCU/NICU - $2,520 gross weekly
- West Los Angeles, CA, PICU/OR/CVICU/CVOR - $2,646 gross weekly
- West Los Angeles, CA, ER - $2,279.88 gross weekly
- West Los Angeles, CA, Stepdown/ICU - $2,520 gross weekly

You’ll eat your heart out.

You’re going to get hungry from all your hard work - luckily, LA has tons of restaurants to please any palate. If you’re not from the West Coast originally, then you must make a trip to In-N-Out Burger at one of its 25 locations in the LA area and learn what all the (deserved) fuss is about. Sandwich fiends will meet their match with top-rated Gjusta and Philippe the Original. For fancy French food, find yourself a table at Petit Trois. And on Sundays, head on down to the Smorgasburg for all the eating and shopping a nurse can do in a single day.

You can do some stargazing.

Even with Hollywood right there, movie and TV star sightings are actually not very common. If you’re determined to see stars during your stay, you can try your luck at getting a seat in a studio audience of a show where your favorite celebs might be appearing. You can also search for your favorite stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame or even attend ceremonies where new stars are added to the sidewalk. See handprints of classic and current movie stars at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre. Visit the stars of the art world at the famous Getty Center. And for a different kind of stellar experience, head on over to one of the planetarium shows at Griffith Observatory.
You can get lost in all the parks.

Despite the urban sprawl, LA has a number of great parks for you to have some fun in the sun. Release your inner at Hogwarts at Universal Studios and ride the Ferris wheel at Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier. Or if you want to mini golf in a castle, LA’s got you covered. Get great views of your new city at the LA State Historic Park, and Runyon Canyon Park is a great escape from the urban jungle to go hiking and clear your mind after a long week of nursing.

You can be a beach bum on your days off.

One of the major perks of living in California is access to some fantastic beaches, and LA is a prime spot for beach combers. Swim, surf, or scuba dive at Leo Carrillo State Beach. Walk along the shores of El Matador Beach. Social butterfly travel nurses will love the crowds at Venice Beach. Manhattan Beach is known for beach volleyball, and you can fish there, too. Soak in the sun at Zuma Beach, and if you’re lucky, you might also see some whales.

Convinced? We have tons of especially high-paying assignments in Los Angeles — check them out.
As we explore California and all of its travel nursing allure, we bring you to San Diego, the state’s second-largest city. San Diego has so many of the trappings that travel nurses love: cultural diversity, sunshine, and those California salaries. Here are five reasons to sign a contract in San Diego.
Make the salary you want

Here’s a sample of recent positions in San Diego:

- PCU – $1,687 gross weekly
- OR – $1,669 gross weekly
- Home Health – $1,669 gross weekly

Make the arts and culture part of your life

When you get to San Diego, you must put Balboa Park at the top of your list of places to explore. Beautiful architecture houses multiple museums, gardens, and even a Shakespearean theatre. You may need thirteen weeks just to see all there is at Balboa Park!

For museum enthusiasts, San Diego does not disappoint. The San Diego Museum of Modern Art is for those who want a deep dive into the art world. Climb aboard an aircraft carrier and view military history at the USS Midway Museum.

Make your way around town

Just north of Balboa Park is a neighborhood called — what else? — North Park where you can shop, hit up the farmers market, and wander the art galleries. The Gaslamp Quarter is the hot spot for nightclubs and live entertainment. Old Town was the first settlement in California, and today you can watch living history programs to find out what life was like in the early Mexican-American period.

Make nature your escape

San Diego is a place that is meant to be lived outside. You’ll want to be out as often as you can. Check out Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve for scenic overlooks and trails. Pacific Beach is the place for kayaking, surfing, and paddleboarding. Enjoy the tide pools and watch the sunset at Sunset Cliffs Natural Park. At Silver Strand State Beach, you can camp, swim, and play beach volleyball. You’ll feel like you’re on vacation when you’re really on assignment.
Make Taco Tuesday a daily experience

Eating your way around San Diego will be time well spent when you’re not working hard on your unit. Mexico is right there, so you know the Mexican food is going to be spectacular. The very popular Las Cuatro Milpas is open for breakfast and lunch. La Puerta is your place for tacos, tunes, and tequila. Cafe Coyote serves up tortillas and tamales that are made fresh daily. You’ll have no excuse to be hungry in this city.

Are you ready to experience San Diego for yourself? Check out our open positions.
Sacramento is a place where travel nurses can revisit history, attend numerous festivals, and eat their weight in tomatoes. Here are 5 reasons to put California's capital on your travel nursing bucket list.
You’ll love the salary

You’ve probably heard by now that California is a top spot for travel nurses. Why? Because of how they treat their nurses. We’re talking state laws mandating staffing ratios and taking your breaks — for real! Oh, and of course, the great salaries. Here are some recent Sacramento wages:

- Med-Surg/Tele – $2,457 gross weekly
- PCU/ICU/NICU – $2,582 gross weekly
- L&D/Postpartum – $2,331 gross weekly

You’ll be immersed in history

California’s capital city is very proud of its history and heritage, particularly during the California Gold Rush. Old Sacramento is a 28-acre historic landmark with buildings from the mid-1800s where you can do your shopping, grab a bite to eat, and learn about life during the Pony Express. Be sure to check out Gold Rush Days where the streets are filled with costumed actors and live entertainment. For those who can’t get enough historical performances, the Sacramento Shakespeare Festival might be just what you need.

You’ll be surrounded by arts and culture

Speaking of Shakespeare, Sacramento has a lively theatre scene. Sacramento Theatre Company has something for everybody: musicals, new and classic plays, and shows for children. See world premieres of 7 plays each year at B Street Theatre. This city has festivals and cultural events throughout the year, including two that have been returning for decades: the Sacramento Pow Wow and the Sacramento Scandinavian Festival.

Art enthusiasts will love to get lost at the Crocker Art Museum. Check out the State Indian Museum to learn about the native people’s perspectives on Nature, Spirit, and Family. You also can learn more about California history at the California Museum. Their slogan is “I am California.” Now say it in former Governor Schwarzenegger’s voice. You’re welcome.
You’ll be full

We know nurses love to eat, and Sacramento has a lot to offer. Breakfast buffs will not want to miss out on The Waffle Experience. And it may seem obvious to find food in The Kitchen, in Sacramento, The Firehouse offers five-star dining.

If you love bananas and tomatoes, you’re in the right place. The Sacramento Banana Festival is a multicultural feast celebrating this versatile food. And tomatoes are such a big deal in this city, it’s sometimes called Sacratomato. It’s got its own juice and everything. If you need more variety in how you take your tomatoes, the Sacratomato Festival has you covered.

You’ll be a kid again

Who says you have to grow up? Grab a group of nursing friends and revisit your childhood. Combine your smarts on a scavenger hunt that is also a three-hour tour of the city. Visit some familiar characters in Fairytale Town. See exotic animals at the Sacramento Zoo. And cool off in the Raging Waters. It will be a nice escape before you have to re-enter adulthood on your next shift.

Are you ready to experience all Sacramento has to offer? Check our current openings.
Fresno provides the fun, connections, and amenities of a city without some of the hassles of a giant metropolis. Travel nursing in Fresno could be just the contract you’ve been waiting for. Here’s why.

**Find a phenomenal salary**

It’s no secret that California has the best travel nursing wages. In addition to that, there are mandates for staffing ratios and required breaks. Are you ready for great working conditions and a competitive salary? Here’s a sample of recent travel nurse pay packages in Fresno:

- Med-Surg/Tele – $2,471 gross weekly
- PCU/ICU/NICU – $2,555 gross weekly
- L&D/Postpartum – $2,303 gross weekly
Find your food fix

Fresno County is the nation’s top spot for agriculture, so you’ll be in heaven shopping for local produce at the Vineyard Farmer’s Market. When you’re hungry for a taste of Italy, Sam’s Italian Deli has you covered. Fresno is famous for its tri-tip, and Mike’s Grill is the best place to get it.

And when you just need a quick snack on your shift, reach for that familiar red Sun-Maid box and remember that the raisin industry was born here, too!

Find yourself in nature

As we’ve previously discussed, California is a nature lover’s paradise, and Fresno is no different. Explore the hand-dug Forestiere Underground Gardens. Bird watch and walk the trails of Woodward Park. Find your zen after a long work week at the Shinzen Friendship Garden. And don’t forget to take a boat tour or swim at Millerton Lake.

Find your cultural side

Though Fresno may not be the first city that comes to mind when you think of California culture, it has tons to offer. Release your stress and rock out at a concert at Fulton 55. Learn about culture, history, and art at Arte Américas, the Fresno Art Museum, and the African-American Historical & Cultural Museum. Catch a live show at the iconic Warnors Center for the Performing Arts. And meet some new friends at the twice-monthly Art Hop as you tour art galleries and enjoy new works.
Find a festival to attend

Oh yes, there are fests here year round, so there will be at least one happening during your 13 weeks. Indulge in gyros and baklava at California’s premier Greek Fest, or find some falafel and kebabs at the Armenian Festival. Enjoy tons of live acts at the Hmong Music Festival. See various types of live performances at the fringe-style Rogue Festival. Kearney Park is home to the Renaissance Fair and Pirate Festival, so be sure to invite your fellow nurses, savvy?

Are you ready to find your next assignment in Fresno? Check out our current openings.
California is calling!
Are you ready to answer?
Find my California job!