

CALIFORNIA

Posted by: [Jan Ross](#)

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Giant redwood tree soars into the sky.

In the middle of the little town of Lahaina on the island of Maui, there is an ancient banyan tree that is massively huge. It has spreading, winding branches that fill the little park where it's located. It's quite impressive and was the largest tree we had ever seen.

But it could have been gobbled up whole by the huge redwood we were gazing at in the middle of Muir Woods. Soaring high above our heads, it filtered the sun until the ground around it was covered with dappled images of sun and shade that moved and shifted as the mighty tree swayed slightly in the breeze.

Established on January 9, 1908 as a national monument, [Muir Woods](#) is located only about 11 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge but this wilderness of huge trees, whispering streams and lush greenery seems light years away from the big city. We drove across the Golden Gate Bridge in our comfortable, air-conditioned bus and made a quick stop on the other side to take some pictures of this magnificent, man-made structure,

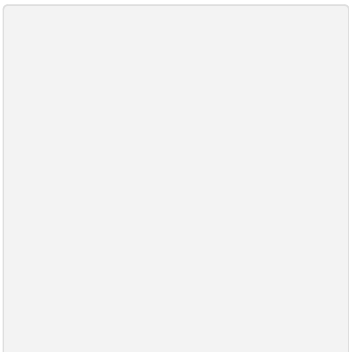
then headed into a completely different world of equally magnificent but natural sights.

Disembarking the bus, we found ourselves speaking quietly which seemed appropriate in the cathedral-like setting of these mighty giants of the tree world. Some of the trees in Muir Woods are over 600 years old and soar 260 feet in the air. Incredibly, the tallest redwood on record was as high as a 37 story building.

Cool, shady and moist, the forest beckoned to us and we headed out on one of the many branching paths through the

forest. A variety of trails wend their way through the park and you can wander as long as you like. Muir Woods actually contains 6 miles of trails. There is a 1/2 hour loop, a 1 hour loop, and a 1 1/2 hour loop as well as longer hikes on trails that extend into surrounding parks. As we strolled along the path, we saw others enjoying the area, but the park was by no means crowded. The only sounds were of insects whirring, the gentle sigh of the wind through the huge trees, and the burble of the streams that run through the forest.

The San Francisco coastal fog that causes problems for



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the residents is a blessing to the coastal Redwoods. These redwoods flourish only in the coastal fog areas where the fog supplies critical moisture to the trees, keeps the forest lush and green and encourages new growth.

This forest of coastal redwoods has never been logged so the living and dead trees that have fallen help provide a rich community of plants and animals. The forest floor is covered with a variety of ferns, flowers, lichens and moss.

The undergrowth is so lush in places, it's hard to see the forest floor. The ferns take over the area, carpeting it in a green sea of waving fronds and bright color amid the lovely streams that make their way through the stillness of the forest.



Path through Muir Woods.



Ferns cover the forest floor.

We would have loved to stay longer, but it was time for our tour to head on to the beautiful island of Sausalito, so we headed back to the parking lot, lingering to take in the smells and sights of lovely Muir Woods. One last glimpse of the towering Redwood giants and the beautiful, quiet forest and it was time to go.

If you go to Muir Woods, the woods are cool, shady and moist so bring a light jacket with you. A bottle of water is a good idea if you are

taking a long hike. The gift shop does not sell bottled water, so bring your own and dispose of your bottle properly. The park opens every day at 8:00 AM and closes based on Daylight Savings Time. You can check the hours [here](#). The entrance fee is \$15 for adults 16 and over, unless you are with a tour group. You can drive the the park yourself, [take a trolley](#), or book a tour, as we did. [Tower Tours](#) offers a great [tour](#) of Muir Woods and Sausalito that is 3 1/2 hours long

The Muir Woods Visitor Center has information about the park and also sells books and other items. The Muir Woods Trading Company operates the cafe and gift shop and is committed to sustainable, eco-friendly business practices. The cafe features local, organic foods and the gift shop specializes in locally and sustainably made redwood gifts for the home as well as Native American made jewelry, and other souvenirs.



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Tags: , Muir Woods, Redwood forest



For twenty years, I worked as a librarian in an elementary school but finally decided to get serious about travel writing and devote all my time to it. Now, I travel the world and write all about it. I can't imagine a more fabulous or fulfilling job. I write a regular travel column for two regional, Central Kentucky magazines and contribute regularly to other magazines and online travel sites, such as The SavvyGal, A Luxury Travel Blog and

The Vacation Gals. I'm an avid reader and stay active with Yoga, Pilates and Zumba classes. My favorite place in the whole world is a beach - any beach. I have been married for 34 years and my husband is my favorite travel companion. I also rely on him for his excellent photography skills. We have two grown children and the best grandson in the world. Slowly but surely, we are visiting all the places we have dreamed about. Hopefully, the next one will be the one you want to read about!

<http://www.wanderlustwonder.com/>

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My first article for Travelhoppers – <http://t.co/y15s8Ix>

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Muir Woods – a Wilderness Right Outside San Francisco – <http://tinyurl.com/3q5gzbu> via @Shareaholic

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