



# Understand California

## **CALIFORNIA TODAY..... 710**

Growing pains are par for the course in California, a creative social experiment and multicultural mosaic.

## **HISTORY ..... 712**

From Native Americans and Spanish missions to 20th-century water scandals, earthquakes and race riots, here's how California evolved.

## **CALIFORNIA CUISINE ..... 722**

Eat like an Iron Chef judge and discover fresh seafood shacks, farmers markets, food trucks and more.

## **WINE, BEER & BEYOND..... 728**

Tipple sun-kissed vintages, starting in Northern California's wine countries, and sample the Golden State's ground-breaking microbrews.

## **THE WAY OF LIFE ..... 733**

Bust the myths and stereotypes, uncover the realities and find out what makes Californians tick.

## **ON LOCATION: FILM & TV ..... 737**

California just wouldn't be the same without 'The Industry' and Hollywood's A-list.

## **MUSIC & THE ARTS ..... 740**

Be entranced by California's soulful side and a New World of architecture, art and sound.

## **BY THE BOOK ..... 746**

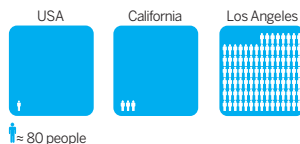
Hollywood screenwriters, noir crime novelists, Beat poets, social realists and sci-fi visionaries have all found inspiration here.

## **THE LAND & WILDLIFE ..... 748**

Meet the state's iconic wildlife and find out what makes California really shake, rattle 'n' roll.



## population per sq mile



# California Today

## Natural Wonders

- » Highest point: Mt Whitney (14,497ft)
- » Lowest point: Death Valley (-282ft)
- » Area of national and state parks: 6.5 million acres
- » Miles of coastline: 1100

## California Dreamin' vs Reality

Even if you've seen it in movies or on TV, California still comes as a shock to the system. Venice Beach skateboarders, Santa Cruz hippies, Rodeo Drive-pillaging trophy wives and Silicon Valley millionaires aren't on different channels; they all live here, where tolerance for other people's beliefs, be they conservative, liberal or just plain wacky, is the social glue.

Recently, the most divisive political hot-potato topic has been same-sex marriage, and the proposed constitutional amendment to ban it, which remains tied up in legal battles. Medical marijuana is old news for Californians, who approved a state proposition allowing its use back in 1996 – although the proliferation of marijuana clubs and rumors of Mexican cartel intervention have raised eyebrows lately.

## Roots of Environmentalism

There's no denying that California's culture of conspicuous consumption is exported via Hollywood flicks and reality TV (hello, *The Hills* and *Real Housewives of Orange County*). But since the 1960s, Californians have trailblazed another way by choosing more sustainable foods and low-impact lifestyles, preserving old-growth forests with tree-sitting activism, declaring nuclear-free zones, pushing for environmentally progressive legislation and establishing the USA's biggest market for hybrid vehicles.

That shouldn't come as a surprise. It was Californians who originally helped kick-start the world's conservation movement in the midst of the industrial revolution, with laws curbing industrial dumping, swaths of prime real estate set aside as urban greenspace, and pristine wilderness protected by national and state parks. Today, even conservative California politicians prioritize environmental issues. That said, the state's current budget crisis has resulted in deep cuts in environmental protections.

## Top Films

- » *Maltese Falcon* (1941)
- » *Vertigo* (1958)
- » *The Graduate* (1967)
- » *Chinatown* (1974)
- » *Bladerunner* (1982)
- » *Pulp Fiction* (1994)
- » *Sideways* (2004)

## Top Downloads

- » 'California Dreaming' – Mamas and the Papas
- » 'Surfer Girl' – Beach Boys
- » 'Californication' – Red Hot Chili Peppers
- » 'California Love' – 2Pac
- » 'California Gurls' – Katy Perry

## Dos and Don'ts

- » Do slather on the sunblock, even on cloudy days.
- » Do leave tips where appropriate.
- » Don't smoke indoors.
- » Don't get tanked while wine-tasting.