



Understand Northern California

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TODAY.....524

From rapidly evolving high-tech companies to the revolutionary 'Slow Food' movement, this is Northern California's cultural snapshot.

HISTORY526

Meet the characters who shaped Northern California's past, from Native Americans and crooked priests, to gun-slinging '49ers and guitar-strumming hippies.

THE PEOPLE: TREE HUGGERS TO TECHIES533

Computer programmers, political outcasts and tree sitters – Northern Californians are a different breed.

THE LAND & SUSTAINABILITY537

Read about the forces of wind, earth and water that make this place unique, as well as the efforts made to protect it.

WILD, WILDLIFE543

An introduction to Northern California's menagerie of grey whales, mountain lions and majestic condors.

ARTS & ARCHITECTURE.....547

Turn the volume up to 11 and get familiar with the people who create Northern California's vibrant artistic treasures.



population per sq mile

California



San Francisco



Los Angeles



1 ≈ 240 people

Northern 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

NorCal in a Nutshell

Before you let your mind wander to suntanned, traffic-jammed, bikini-clad visions of California, remember that NorCal bears little cultural resemblance to Orange County. Although nobody can agree on exactly where to draw the dividing line, there's something that happens along the drive through the Central Valley, a salt-of-the-earth place that filters out much of the cultural static. The interest in Hollywood is replaced by one in redwood. The relationship to technology is as essential as the relationship to nature. There's always some kind of protest going on.

Medical marijuana is old news – the state allowed its use back in 1996 – but the myriad social and economic effects of the marijuana industry is a hot topic, particularly along the North Coast, where it grows like, um, weeds. The federal government, which had previously turned a blind eye to the gray area of medical marijuana, began to crack down on large for-profit growers in Northern California in fall 2011.

Since the 1960s, Northern California has relished political demonstrations. In 2011, several thousand protesters associated with the 'Occupy Wall St' movement grabbed national headlines by closing the Port of Oakland, America's fifth largest port.

Roots of Environmentalism

Californians originally helped kick-start the world's conservation movement in the midst of the 19th-century industrial revolution, creating laws curbing industrial dumping, setting aside swaths of prime real estate as urban green space, and protecting pristine wilderness in national and state parks. It's no surprise that Northern Californians lead the nation by choosing sustainable food and low-impact lifestyles, preserving old-growth forests, declaring nuclear-free zones, pushing for environmentally

NorCal Films

The Birds (1963)
Dirty Harry (1971)
American Graffiti (1973)
Chinatown (1974)
Big Trouble In Little China (1986)
The Joy Luck Club (1993)
Sideways (2004)
The Pursuit of Happiness (2006)

Essential Records

Workingman's Dead – The Grateful Dead
Green River – Creedence Clearwater Revival
My Ghetto Report Card – E-40
Time Out – Dave Brubeck Quartet
Stand! – Sly and the Family Stone

Dookie – Green Day
Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain – Pavement
Mama Tried – Merle Haggard