

# Northern California Today

Water is on everyone's mind. At the time of writing, the state was in the third year of its worst-ever drought. Wells are going dry, fields fallow and lawns brown. Another Brown, Jerry, famous governor from the 1970s, is again governor, and, for the first time in years, the state has a balanced budget and surplus of cash. But that doesn't stop everyone from arguing over his legacy plan – a high-speed rail line, already under way from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

## Best NorCal Films

**Maltese Falcon** (Houston, 1941) Humphrey Bogart as a San Francisco private eye.

**Vertigo** (Hitchcock, 1958) Alfred Hitchcock's noir thriller, set in SF and San Juan Batista.

**Dirty Harry** (Siegel, 1971) Clint Eastwood as an SFPD inspector, investigating murder.

**The Joy Luck Club** (Wang, 1993) Intergenerational struggles between mother and daughter, in and around San Francisco.

**Blue Jasmine** (Allen, 2013) New York socialite disappears to Northern California.

## Best NorCal Albums

**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

## NorCal in a Nutshell

The story of California has always been a story of water, now more than ever. With the state in the middle of its worst-ever drought, local officials are sounding the alarm, setting limitations on usage, but stopping short of rationing, which nobody wants. Reservoirs are dangerously low, and many creeks and wells have gone dry. Dowsers and well-drillers are in high demand. Portions of the agricultural Central Valley have gone unplanted, farmers are slaughtering cattle because they've nothing to feed them, and food prices have begun to climb. Even the honey bees are swarming because flowers aren't blooming and there's no pollen for them. Nobody knows what's going to happen, but this being California, expect creative solutions.

But even in this (mostly) forward-thinking state, not all creative solutions to ongoing problems are met with open arms. To wit, the governor's legacy plan to build a high-speed rail link from San Francisco to LA in under half the time it takes to drive, with the goal of improving air quality and getting Californians out of their cars. Though the voter-approved project began preliminary construction in August 2014, opponents have fought vigorously to defeat it, with a series of seemingly endless lawsuits. It's slated for completion in 2029. Stay tuned.

## Roots of Environmentalism

Californians originally kick-started the world's conservation movement in the midst of the 19th-century's industrial revolution, with laws curbing industrial dumping, and protections for pristine wildernesses that helped establish the national parks system. In the 1970s, the modern-day environmental movement was born, when then-President Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency, following an oil spill off the Santa Barbara coast. Today Northern Californians

continue to lead the nation with new ideas about sustainable food and low-impact lifestyles – often with smug self-satisfaction. Locals know they have it good. Some towns even dub themselves nuclear-free zones. No surprise NorCal has the USA's highest demand for hybrid vehicles.

### Fast Companies, Slow Food

The technology boom has changed the cultural DNA of Northern California, with cutting-edge biotech research, online social media like Facebook and Twitter, and of course Google. Tech gazillionaires have driven up housing prices in San Francisco, transforming the city into a bedroom community for Silicon Valley. Longtime locals aren't pleased, and blame the giant tech shuttles – which everyone calls the 'Google Bus' – for the city's gentrification.

If talking tech is straying into dangerous social territory, change the subject to food. Northern Californians are obsessed by what they eat, fetishizing seasonal foods, like heirloom peaches and heritage cuts of pork, like a bodybuilder fetishizes protein supplements. But nowhere else in America can lay claim to such incredible bounty. Even in urban San Francisco, farmers markets offer still-warm-from-the-sun fruit, picked that very morning. 'Locavore' eating began here, and after you've gotten your own taste, chances are you too will be asking the provenance of your fried green tomatoes.

**NORCAL POPULATION:  
AROUND 14 MILLION**

**CALIFORNIA'S PROPORTION  
OF US GDP: 13%**

**ANNUAL TAXES EARNED  
FROM MEDICAL MARIJUANA  
SALES IN CALIFORNIA: \$105  
MILLION**

### if California were 100 people



40 would be Caucasian

38 would be Latino

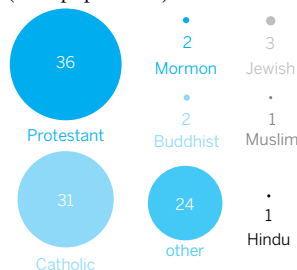
14 would be Asian American

7 would be African American

1 would be other

### belief systems

(% of population)



### population per sq mile

