



California

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Why Go?

With bohemian spirit and high-tech savvy, not to mention a die-hard passion for the good life – whether that means cracking open a bottle of old-vine Zinfandel, climbing a 14,000ft peak or surfing the Pacific – California soars beyond any expectations sold on Hollywood's silver screens.

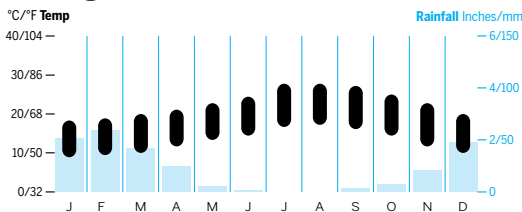
More than anything, California is iconic. It was here that the hurly-burly gold rush kicked off in the mid-19th century, where poet-naturalist John Muir rhapsodized about the Sierra Nevada's 'range of light,' and where Jack Kerouac and the Beat Generation defined what it really means to hit the road.

California's multicultural melting pot has been cookin' since this bountiful promised land was staked out by Spain and Mexico. Today, waves of immigrants from around the world still look to find their own American dream on these palm-studded Pacific shores.

Come see the future in the making here in the Golden State.

When to Go

Los Angeles



Jun–Aug Mostly sunny weather, occasional coastal fog; summer vacation crowds.

Apr–May & Sep–Oct Cooler nights, many cloudless days; travel bargains galore.

Nov–Mar Peak tourism at mountain ski resorts and in SoCal's warm deserts.

History

By the time European explorers arrived in the 16th century, more than 100,000 indigenous people called this land we now call California home. Spanish conquistadors combed through what they named Alta (Upper) California in search of a fabled 'city of gold,' but they left the territory virtually alone after failing to find it. Not until the Mission Period (1769–1833) did Spain make a serious attempt to settle the land, establishing 21 Catholic missions – many founded by Franciscan priest Junipero Serra – and presidios (military forts) to deter the British and Russians.

After winning independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico briefly ruled California, but got trounced by the fledgling United States in the Mexican-American War (1846–48). The discovery of gold just weeks before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed saw the territory's nonindigenous population quintuple to 93,000 by 1850, when California became the 31st US state. Thousands of imported Chinese laborers helped complete the transcontinental railroad in 1869, which opened up markets and further spurred migration to the Golden State.

The 1906 San Francisco earthquake was barely a hiccup as California continued to grow exponentially in size, diversity and importance. Mexican immigrants streamed in during the 1910–20 Mexican Revolution, and again during WWII, to fill labor shortages. Military-driven industries developed during

wartime, while anti-Asian sentiments led to the unjust internment of many Japanese Americans, including at Manzanar in the Eastern Sierra.

California has long been a social pioneer thanks to its size, confluence of wealth, diversity of immigration and technological innovation. Since the early 20th century, Hollywood has mesmerized the world with its cinematic dreams. Meanwhile, San Francisco reacted against the banal complacency of post-WWII suburbia with Beat poetry in the 1950s, hippie free love in the '60s and gay pride in the '70s.

California is not a finished work. Today's issues revolve around growth. In a state that has an economy bigger than Canada's and is the headquarters for cutting-edge industries, from space probes to biotechnology to Silicon Valley, the question of how to manage a burgeoning human population – with accompanying traffic gridlock, scarce affordable housing and the sky-high cost of living – is challenging.

Meanwhile, prisons are overflowing, state parks are underfunded and the conundrum of illegal immigration from Mexico, which fills a critical cheap labor shortage (especially in agriculture), vexes the state. Most worrying is California's extreme, years-long drought that shows no signs of abating, affecting farmers and urban dwellers alike with water shortages. In response, Governor Jerry Brown officially declared a state of emergency and instituted strict water-conservation measures statewide.

CALIFORNIA IN...

One Week

California in a nutshell: start in beachy **Los Angeles**, detouring to **Disneyland**. Head up the breezy Central Coast, stopping in **Santa Barbara** and **Big Sur**, before getting a dose of big-city culture in **San Francisco**. Head inland to nature's temple, **Yosemite National Park**, then zip back to LA.

Two Weeks

Follow the one-week itinerary above, but at a saner pace. Add jaunts to NorCal's **Wine Country**; **Lake Tahoe**, perched high in the Sierra Nevada; the bodacious beaches of **Orange County** and laid-back **San Diego**; or **Joshua Tree National Park**, near the chic desert resort of **Palm Springs**.

One Month

Do everything described above, and more. From San Francisco, head up the foggy North Coast, starting in Marin County at **Point Reyes National Seashore**. Stroll Victorian-era **Mendocino** and **Eureka**, find yourself on the **Lost Coast** and ramble through fern-filled **Redwood National & State Parks**. Inland, snap a postcard-perfect photo of **Mt Shasta**, drive through **Lassen Volcanic National Park** and ramble in California's historic **Gold Country**. Trace the backbone of the **Eastern Sierra** before winding down into otherworldly **Death Valley National Park**.