

› Understand Western USA

WESTERN USA TODAY.....400

Budget woes, immigration and forest fires worry state officials, but new technologies and eco-initiatives are bright spots.

HISTORY402

From cliff dwellings to cowboys, from the atomic bomb to Apple, the story of the West is still being written.

THE PEOPLE 412

Shhh... Race, religion and cultural stereotypes – all that stuff you're not supposed to talk about? Find it here.

NATIVE AMERICANS 415

A visit to a pueblo or reservation adds cultural and historical context to a Western journey.

WESTERN CUISINE 419

Green chile stew, Korean *kalbi*, wild mushrooms and *horno* bread – it's not just steak and potatoes.

ARTS & ARCHITECTURE.....425

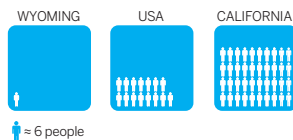
Everything you need to know about Western books, film, music, dance and eye-catching buildings.

THE LAND & WILDLIFE 431

Mother Nature had a tantrum – pounding oceans, crashing plates, wind and rain – then made nice with moose, bald eagles and wildflowers.



population per sq/mile



Western USA Today

It's All About Money...

Fiscal woes are affecting states across the West, and legislatures are slashing their budgets. In Arizona, California and Utah, state parks have been especially hard hit. In Arizona, many state parks are now operating on a five-day schedule, while the number of law-enforcement rangers has been significantly cut in Utah. In California, 70 of the state's 278 parks are scheduled for closure, although Governor Jerry Brown has signed a bill to allow them to explore partnerships with nonprofit organizations to remain open. Nevada's unemployment rate hit 12% in the spring of 2011, which was higher than the national average. And real estate? Luxury condominiums in Vegas sit empty and mountain resort properties in Colorado are experiencing declines.

Natural Wonders

Highest Point: Mt Whitney, CA
14,497ft

Lowest Point: Death Valley, CA -282ft

The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long.

...Politics...

Illegal immigration remains a hot-button issue even though the number of arrests for illegal border crossings dropped from 1.6 million in 2000 to 448,000 in 2010. The number of border patrol agents jumped from 10,000 in 2004 to more than 20,700 in 2010, with agents having a very visible presence in southern Arizona, where their green-and-white SUVs are a common sight on rural roads. Arizona has also passed a stringent anti-immigration law, requiring police officers to ask for ID from anyone they suspect of being in the country illegally.

In California the most divisive issue has been same-sex marriage and the constitutional amendment to ban it, which is tied up in legal battles. Colorado remains the West's most visible swing state. The state went Republican in all but three of the last 12 presidential elections, but during the 2010 mid-term elections Democrats won a senate seat and the governorship, the latter by a razor-thin margin.

Dos and Don'ts

» Do leave a 15% to 20% tip for your server at a restaurant (unless service is appalling).
 » Don't assume you can smoke, even if outside. Most Americans have little tolerance for smokers and have even banned smoking from many parks and beaches.

» Don't be overly physical when you greet someone. Some Americans will hug; urbanites may exchange cheek kisses, but most folks – especially men – will just shake hands.

How to Blend In

» If the ground shakes a little, don't freak out. Locals are used to low-level earthquakes.
 » Glide up to that gas pump in Oregon and...sit tight. No self-pumping allowed.