

Understand Western USA

WESTERN USA TODAY..... 400

Drought, forest fires and illegal immigration worry state officials, but progressive new laws are bright spots for many.

HISTORY 402

From cliff dwellings and cowboys to the atomic bomb and Silicon Valley, the story of the West is still being written.

THE WAY OF LIFE 412

Race, religion, sports and a diversity of lifestyles define the cultural landscape. Dig into those topics here.

NATIVE AMERICANS 415

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

WESTERN CUISINE 419

Everything you need to know about regional food and drink, from green chile stew to Korean kalbi, wild mushrooms and Native American *horno* bread. It's not just steak and potatoes in the Wild West.

ARTS & ARCHITECTURE..... 425

The Western landscape has inspired authors, artists, filmmakers, musicians, photographers and architects for generations.

THE LAND & WILDLIFE 431

Mother Nature threw a tantrum – pounding seas, crashing tectonic plates, erupting volcanoes – then made nice with elk, bald eagles and wildflowers.

Western USA Today

The big news in the West? Drought, marijuana sales, and same-sex marriage. The ongoing drought dominated headlines in California, where the central valley farming region is entering crisis mode. As for pot, the citizens of Colorado and Washington voted to legalize the recreational use of marijuana in 2012 – and sales are booming. In a landmark decision, the US Supreme held in the summer of 2015 that same-sex marriage is a constitutional right.

Best in Print

The Grapes of Wrath (John Steinbeck; 1939) Dust Bowl migrants travel west to California.

Desert Solitaire (Edward Abbey; 1968) Essays about the Southwest and industrial tourism by no-holds-barred eco-curmudgeon.

Bean Trees (Barbara Kingsolver; 1988) Thoughtful look at motherhood and crosscultural adoption in Tucson.

Into the Wild (Jon Krakauer; 1996) Alexander Supertramp wanders across the West in search of meaning.

Wild (Cheryl Strayed; 2013) Author hikes the Pacific Crest Trail solo after the death of her mother.

Best Films

Stagecoach (1939)

Sunset Boulevard (1950)

Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid (1969)

Chinatown (1974)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)

The Shining (1980)

Thelma & Louise (1991)

Boyz n the Hood (1991)

Sideways (2004)

The Hangover (2009)

127 Hours (2010)

Same-Sex Marriage

In recent years the most high-profile political issue in California has been same-sex marriage. The state Supreme Court struck down a constitutional ban against same-sex marriage in 2008, but later that year the voter-backed Proposition 8 again limited marriage to a union between a man and a woman. In 2013 federal courts ruled that Prop 8 was unconstitutional. A subsequent appeal of this ruling to the US Supreme Court was denied on jurisdictional grounds, and same-sex marriages resumed in the state. The same-sex marriage question was settled in 2015 when the US Supreme court ruled 5-4 that the constitution guarantees a right to same-sex marriage, a right that must now be recognized by all 50 states.

Legalized Marijuana

In the fall of 2012 residents of Colorado and Washington voted to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. Colorado voters passed Amendment 64, which allowed for the limited possession and use of marijuana by anyone 21 years of age and older. Rules for the cultivation and sale of recreational pot in Colorado were adopted in September 2013. A similar initiative was passed in Washington, and by the end of 2014 the state had 160 marijuana shops with total sales estimated at \$1.7 million per day. How much in taxes was kept by the state of Washington and its local governments? More than \$70 million. In January 2015, Colorado collected \$2.3 million in excise taxes, which will be directed to schools. The federal government has indicated that it will not challenge these state laws, which are in conflict with federal laws.

Illegal Immigration

Illegal immigration remains a hot-button issue, and border-patrol agents have a very visible presence in southern Arizona, where their green-and-white SUVs