

California

California...depending on which direction you are heading, can be the start or end of your Amtrak journey across the Southwest. For thousands of years, California has been either an origination point or a destination point for millions of people. People have sailed to and from its Pacific shores, and traveled the Native American and Spanish trails that start here and lead across the continent. Stage lines, railroads, highways all connect the state to the rest of the US as well as Mexico. Today even space flights have started and ended in California.

Steeped in thousands of years of history, California has been home to over 70 different groups of Native American peoples. The first Europeans visited in the mid 1500's, and the Spanish established a string of missions along the California coast to bring settlers to this region. In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain and claimed all of California. By the 1840's settlers from the United States and Canada had established homes in large regions of the state, and ultimately causing clashes with the ruling Mexican government. Finally, California became an independent republic in 1846 and in 1850 became the 31st U.S. state.

California is a remarkable state with climates ranging from Mediterranean to sub-arctic, which has helped to attract nearly 38 million people, who now call California home. There are three distinct regions of California; Northern California covers the area from the Oregon border to San Francisco, Central California includes the Santa Barbara area and much of the Sierra Nevada mountains, and Southern California features the areas of Los Angeles, San Diego and the desert regions to the Arizona and Mexican borders.

In Northern California you can visit the strikingly different cities of San Francisco or Sacramento. If parks are your interest, enjoy the majestic Redwoods

or Lassen. Settled in the hills of the Napa and Sonoma Valleys you find hundreds of wineries.

Central California offers iconic National Park landmarks such as Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon. Here you will find Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in the lower 48 states. Just 76 miles from Mount Whitney, visitors can experience the lowest elevation and some of the hottest temperatures in the United States in Death Valley National Park. After visiting some of the natural icons of the country, you can explore the beautiful cities of Santa Barbara, Monterey and San Luis Obispo.

Southern California is home to famous cities such as Palm Springs, Los Angeles, Hollywood, Santa Monica and San Diego. For those who enjoy outdoor recreation, there is plenty to do and see along the vast coastline, and inland at Joshua Tree National Park and Big Bear Lake.

Amazing California - no wonder it has been a travel destination for millions of natives and visitors.

Source(s):

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California>

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