



# California's Fascinating Facts

## Statewide

- California is bigger than 85 of the smallest nations in the world.
- California is America's top wine producer, making 90 percent of all U.S. wine.
- California produces more than 350 crops. Almonds, artichokes, figs, olives, persimmons, pomegranates, prunes, raisins and walnuts are commercially produced only in California.
- California has more shopping centers (over 6,000) than any state in the U.S.
- California is home to the last remaining Japantowns in the U.S. Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and Japantown in San Francisco and San Jose are the last of 43 different Japantowns in California.
- With eight National Parks covering 4.1 million acres, California claims more than any other state in the nation.
- California has 1,264 miles of coastline.
- The martini was invented in 1860 in either San Francisco or Martinez – the debate continues.
- Oakland's Frank Epperson invented the Popsicle in 1905.
- "California Cuisine" was introduced by Alice Waters at her Berkeley restaurant, Chez Panisse.
- At 108 years of age, the Livermore Centennial Light Bulb is the world's longest-burning light bulb, and has only been turned off three times.
- Livermore's Wente Vineyards is the oldest, continually family-operated winery in the U.S.
- California microbrewing was born at Berkeley's Triple Rock Brewery & Alehouse, America's oldest original brewpub.
- The Regional Parks Botanic Garden at Berkeley's Tilden Park contains the world's most complete collection of California native plants, including rare and endangered species.

## Bay Area

- Big Basin Redwoods State Park is California's first state park.
- The California Academy of Sciences, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano, is the greenest museum in the world. The U.S. Green Building Council awarded it their highest possible rating: LEED Platinum. It features a living roof planted with native California plants and walls insulated with recycled blue jeans.
- The fortune cookie was first invented in San Francisco by Makoto Hagiwara in the late 1800s/early 1900s.
- The legendary Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco houses a secret (and real) speakeasy between the lobby level and second floor of the hotel that can only be accessed with a special key that stops the elevator car between floors.
- San Jose has the largest concentration of technology expertise in the world, with 6,600 technology companies.
- Mount Diablo State Park in Walnut Creek offers the best view of the world in the U.S. The summit, standing 3,849 feet tall, offers a sweeping panorama of more of the earth's surface than can be seen from any

other peak in the world, except Mt. Kilimanjaro.

- San Jose was California's first state capital.
- San Francisco cable cars are the only mobile National Monuments.

## Central Coast

- Opened in 1897, the Del Monte Golf Course in Pebble Beach is the oldest golf course in continuous operation west of the Mississippi River.
- The widely-acclaimed Monterey Jazz Festival, held each September, is the longest continuously running jazz festival in the world.
- The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary covers 5,312 square miles, one and a half times the size of the largest national park in the continental U.S. At its center is an underwater canyon that is twice as deep as the Grand Canyon.
- Almost 250 thousand tons of sardines were processed on Cannery Row in 1945, the year John Steinbeck's novel *Cannery Row* was published.
- Monterey County grows more mushrooms than any other county in California.
- Castroville is the artichoke capital of the world, producing 95 percent of the nation's artichokes. In 1948, a young woman by the name of Norma Jean was crowned Castroville's first "Artichoke Queen." She later gained fame as actress Marilyn Monroe.
- Monterey was home to the first printing press and the first newspaper (the *Californian*) in California.
- Oceano Dunes State Vehicle Recreation Area is the only California State Park where vehicles may be driven on the beach.
- In 1990, Jamba Juice (originally called the Juice Club) opened its very first store in San Luis Obispo.
- One of the largest monarch butterfly winter gathering spots of the West Coast is Pismo State Beach's North Beach Campground.
- Famous outlaw Jesse James stayed at the Sulfur Hot Springs in Paso Robles while recovering from a gunshot wound.
- Solvang has the most windmills (five) within 2 square miles outside of Copenhagen, Denmark.
- The Santa Barbara Channel is the world's top source for sea urchin (90% of the catch is exported to Asia).
- San Luis Obispo's Bubble Gum Alley is filled with more than 1.7 million pieces of bubble gum.
- At Vision Quest Ranch in Monterey, guests can have breakfast delivered by an elephant.

## Central Valley

- Visalia Mall was the first enclosed shopping mall in California when it opened in 1964.
- California Vegetables Specialties in Rio Vista is the only U.S. producer of endive, nicknamed "white gold," and the largest producer of endive outside of Belgium.

- Manteca is the pumpkin capital of the world, growing and exporting more pumpkins than any other producer.
- The City of Davis became the first city in the United States to receive the Platinum Bicycle Friendly Community designation from the League of American Bicyclists. Davis was the first city in the United States to design and implement bicycle-specific traffic signals.
- Mariani Nut Co. in Winters is the world's largest independent nut processor and ships almonds and walnuts across the country and around the world.
- Lake Berryessa, located just outside of Winters, has a sunken city underneath it called Monticello.
- Fresno's Forestiere Underground Gardens were carved by hand using only farming tools over a 40-year period. Modeled after the Roman Catacombs, Forestiere carved over 10 acres of rooms, passages and gardens in this historical architectural marvel.
- Coalinga is home to the nation's only Iron Zoo – a series of derricks painted as whimsical critters.
- Reedley is known as the "World's Fruit Basket."
- Mendota is known as the "Cantaloupe Capital."
- Fresno County is the #1 agricultural county in the world.
- Bakersfield has more Basque restaurants than any other city in the country.
- The California Delta is the largest estuary on the west coast of North and South America.

- Live Oak is home to the Bicentennial Living Witness Tree, a valley oak identified as being over 200 years old, standing at the time of the signing of the U.S. Constitution.
- Yuba City has the largest Punjabi population in California, second only to India.
- Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park is California's only town founded, financed and governed by African Americans.

## Deserts

- The lowest golf course in the world is Furnace Creek in Death Valley, at 214 feet below sea level.
- Badwater, in Death Valley National Park, is the lowest point in the continental U.S., at 282 feet below sea level.
- Death Valley National Park is the largest national park in the continental U.S., at 3.3 million acres.
- The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is the world's largest rotating tramway and the only rotating tramway in the Western Hemisphere.
- Golf carts are street-legal in Palm Desert – even on highways! The city's annual Golf Cart Parade is a colorful tradition dating back to the 1960s and features floats up to 14 feet high.
- The Living Desert in Palm Desert is the only American zoo and garden dedicated solely to interpreting and conserving the deserts of the world.
- Palm Desert enjoys more than 350 days of sunshine each year.

- Rancho Mirage is known as the Playground of the Presidents.
- President Gerald Ford retired in Rancho Mirage and lived here until his death. Betty Ford still lives in Rancho Mirage.
- More Bentleys are sold in Rancho Mirage at Desert European Motors than in any other U.S. city.
- Baker is home to the world's largest thermometer, standing at 134 feet. It symbolizes the record high temperature in Death Valley in 1913 – 134 degrees.
- During the early 1900s, Death Valley was home to boomtowns with fascinating histories like Greenwater, the town that had no water; Schwab, the town owned by women; and Panamint City, a town so lawless that silver was cast in 400 pound cubes for transporting so that outlaws couldn't steal it.
- The Fabulous Palm Springs Follies, which features performers who range in age from 55 to 85, is home to the 2009 Guinness Book of World Records' "Oldest Still Performing Showgirl," 85-year-old cast member Dorothy Kloss.
- The Salton Trough is the largest continental rift on the North American continent. Salton Sea State Recreation Area is also home to one of the world's largest inland seas.
- The Coachella Valley is known as the date capital of the world. California grows 99.5% of all dates grown in the United States.
- South Yuba River State Park in Penn Valley offers the first wheelchair-accessible wilderness trail in the U.S., the Independence Trail.
- Mariposa is the only California county with a mineral and a flower named after it – Mariposite and the Mariposa lily. It's also the only California county with an insect named after it.
- Coulterville's Hotel Jeffery is the oldest hotel in California continuously owned by a single family.
- The State Indian Museum in Sacramento has the world's smallest baskets on display – each just one centimeter in size.
- Sutter's Fort State Historic Park was the first permanent European settlement in the Central Valley.
- Railtown 1897 State Historic Park's Historic Jamestown Shops and Roundhouse complex is one of only three original, intact steam-era facilities of its kind remaining in North America.
- The Pony Express, the first railroad west of the Rockies and the world's first Transcontinental Railroad all terminated in what is today Old Sacramento State Historic Park.
- The California State Railroad Museum is North America's most-visited railroad museum. Among its many displays is North America's most comprehensive Toy Train exhibit, and a million-pound steam locomotive.
- 19 million pounds of copper mined in Copperopolis in the 1860s made Calaveras County second in national production of this ore.

## Gold Country

- The infamous bandit Black Bart was tried and convicted in San Andreas, Calaveras County.
- Calaveras County is home to the only commercial custom cashmere dehaier in the U.S.
- Grass Valley is home to the world's tallest dog, a Great Dane named Gibson.
- In 1854, Hangtown (Placerville) had become the third largest town in California, surpassed only by Sacramento and San Francisco.
- Sacramento is known as the "Camellia Capital" for its more than one million camellia bushes.
- The Bok Kai Temple in Marysville, originally constructed by Chinese immigrants in 1854 during the Gold Rush days, is the only known temple in the United States honoring Bok Eye, the Chinese water god. The Bok Kai Festival, which includes a parade with Lung Huang, the 150-foot golden dragon, has been held every year since 1880.
- 50,000 skiers and snowboarders can ride uphill per hour on Mammoth Mountain's ski lifts.
- The highest golf course in California is the Sierra Star Golf Course in Mammoth Lakes, at an elevation of 8,000 feet. The second-highest is Snowcreek Resort.
- 90 percent of California gulls are born at Mono Lake.
- Glacier Point is home to America's highest observation platform, at 7,214 feet (a drop of 3,214 feet).
- The Badger Pass Ski Area is the oldest ski area in North America, in continuous use since 1934.
- Squaw Valley USA was the site for the first televised Olympics (the 1960 Winter Games). Walt Disney served as master of ceremonies. The Olympic Village Inn in Squaw Valley was built to house more than 750 athletes, allowing all athletes to be housed under one roof for the first and only time in modern Olympic history. Computers were used to tabulate results for the first time.

## High Sierra

- Mount Whitney is the tallest peak in the continental U.S.
- In Mono County's Eastern Sierra, you can ride a bike 100 miles on paved roads before you encounter a stoplight.
- Methuselah, an ancient bristlecone pine, is the oldest living thing on Earth. It can be found in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest in Inyo County near Big Pine.
- Mono Lake is home to four to six trillion brine shrimp, which are found nowhere else on earth.
- During World War II The Ahwahnee played host to the United States Navy. In 1943 the Navy converted The Ahwahnee into a rest and relaxation hospital for Naval personnel undergoing treatment. More than 90,000 service men and women relaxed in Yosemite National Park, while 6,752 patients were treated at The Ahwahnee.
- Yosemite National Park has the only 100 percent electric hybrid shuttle fleet in the nation. The free shuttle system runs 365 days a year and transports over 5 million guests annually.

- Truckee is the coldest spot in the nation, excluding Alaska. Truckee has been amongst the top five coldest places in the nation 11 times in the last 16 years.
- Columbia State Historic Park is the home of the longest running Poison Oak Show. Each September for 26 years, Poison Oak leaves and branches are incorporated into jewelry, as standalone works of art, and even a poison oak salad.
- The estimated 39.75 trillion gallons of water contained in Lake Tahoe is 99.9 percent pure, with visibility to 75 feet below the surface. That's enough water to cover the entire state of California to a depth of 14.5 inches. The water that evaporates daily is 1.4 million tons, enough to supply the needs of 3.5 million people on a daily basis.

## Inland Empire

- Big Bear Lake is host to a carp roundup, where contestants compete to bring in the most carp by bow and arrow.
- San Bernardino's San Manuel Amphitheater, located in Glen Helen Regional Park, is the nation's largest amphitheater.
- Pharaoh's Lost Kingdom in Redlands is home to the world's tallest water slide.
- San Bernardino National Forest is the largest urban forest in the U.S.
- The Pechanga Reservation in Temecula is home to the largest natural-growing, indigenous coast live oak tree in the United States. It is estimated to be anywhere from 850 to 1,500 years old, making it one of the oldest oak trees in the world.
- Temecula is home to Southern California's only female-owned and managed winery, Keyways Vineyard & Winery, owned by Terri Pebley.
- The highest concentration of boutique farms in the nation stretches between Riverside County and San Diego County, giving the Temecula Valley access to vast amounts of fresh and often organic food.
- San Bernardino County has the largest land mass of any county in the United States.
- Big Bear Valley has nearly 30 endemic wildflowers not seen anywhere else in the world.
- Temecula was an important stop on the Immigrant Trail coming out of the desert. If you made it to Temecula, you would probably survive!
- Big Bear is home to the largest gold rush in Southern California history. In fact, Big Bear started as a gold mining town back in the 1800s.
- Glen Ivy Hot Springs Spa in Corona is home to Club Mud, California's only therapeutic red clay mud bath. Red clay mud from the Temescal Valley is mixed with the natural thermal water that has been drawing guests to Glen Ivy since 1860.
- Big Bear has one of only six solar observatories in the world.
- Temecula is the only city in California to still retain its original Indian name.
- The Moonridge Animal Park is one of only two alpine zoos in the nation, and the only one in California.

## Los Angeles County

- Los Angeles is one of only two U.S. cities without a majority population. People from 140 countries, speaking approximately 86 different languages, currently call Los Angeles home.
- Catalina Island is home to famed flying fish from May to September, which it celebrates with the Flying Fish Festival at the end of May.
- Beverly Wilshire, A Four Seasons Hotel, was built on the site of the Beverly Auto Speedway, which provided residents with an opportunity for picnics and Model T Ford races on Sunday afternoons. At the time, the population of Beverly Hills was less than 1,000.
- Santa Monica is home to the oldest pleasure pier on the West coast, which opened in 1909 and houses the world's first solar-powered Ferris wheel.
- The use of the “doggie bag” began with Lawry’s in Beverly Hills in 1938.
- Santa Catalina Island was purchased sight unseen in 1919 by William Wrigley, Jr., chewing gum magnate.
- The Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach is the first aquarium in the nation to open a carbon-neutral building.
- With more than 1,500 theatrical productions annually, L.A. has more theatrical shows than any other city in the world.
- Los Angeles is the birthplace of the hula-hoop, Barbie doll, DC-3, Mickey Mouse, Fender Stratocaster, chaise lounge and space shuttle.
- Watts Towers of Simon Rodia State Historical Park is California’s smallest state park, at only .11 acres.
- The Queen Mary in Long Beach holds the record for the most number of people on a ship at one time – 16,683.
- Little Ethiopia is the first officially designated African area in the United States. L.A. has 50,000 Ethiopians.
- Downtown L.A. is the largest government center outside of Washington, D.C.
- LAX is the most filmed airport in the world for movies.
- Los Angeles's original name was "El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles de Porciuncula," which can be abbreviated to 3.63% of its size (L.A.).

## North Coast

- Mendocino Wine Company is the first carbon neutral winery in the U.S. and one of only three in the world.
- Willits Frontier Days is the oldest continuous rodeo in California.
- Living Light located in Fort Bragg is the premier raw organic chef school in the world.
- The Cotati Accordion Festival is the biggest accordion festival in California, with over 5,000 people and 30 bands attending the two-day event held annually every August.
- Buena Vista Carneros is California’s first winery, founded in 1857 by Hungarian immigrant Agoston Haraszthy.

- The Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens is the only public garden in the continental U.S. with direct Pacific Ocean frontage.
- Mendocino is one of the only places in the world where the candy cap mushroom grows.
- Boonville, in the Anderson Valley, has its own folk language called Boontling, a holdover from frontier days.
- Sonoma Plaza is 8 acres in size – the largest town plaza in California today – and was laid out by General Mariano Vallejo in 1835.
- The largest natural freshwater lake within California, Clear Lake, is the oldest lake in North America and possibly the world, estimated to be 2.5 million years old.
- Lake County is the only place in the world to find Lake County diamonds, unusual semi-precious stones.
- The smallest licensed bar in California is a tiny space below deck in the Madaket, which happens to be the oldest continuously running passenger ferry in the United States.
- The legend of Bigfoot began in Humboldt County in 1958, when a local paper coined the term Bigfoot to refer to a report of the elusive hominid.
- Two-thirds of all oysters consumed in California originate in Humboldt Bay.
- The Humboldt County Fair is the oldest running county fair in California. It started in 1896.
- The 1.6-million-square-foot Anaheim Convention Center is the largest on the West Coast.
- The South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa has the highest concentration of brand retail in the U.S., with \$1.5 billion in sales annually.
- Mission San Juan Capistrano, founded in 1776, was the first winery in California.
- More than 500 million guests have passed through the gates of Disneyland since opening day on July 17, 1955.
- The Napa Rose restaurant at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa has 41 certified sommeliers, a rarity in the restaurant world. General Manager and Master Sommelier Michael Jordan is one of 96 Master Sommeliers in North America and 167 worldwide.
- Disneyland Resort recycles 4.1 million pounds of cardboard; 1.3 million pounds of green waste; 370,000 pounds of office paper; 361,260 pounds of glass bottles; 274,280 pounds of plastic bottles; and 17,240 pounds of aluminum cans each year.
- At 147 feet, Disneyland's Matterhorn Mountain is exactly 1/100th the height of the 14,700-foot-high real Matterhorn on the Italian/Swiss border.
- Crystal Cathedral in Orange is the largest glass structure in the world, with more than 10,000 rectangular panes of glass.
- Little Saigon in Westminster has the largest Vietnamese community outside of Vietnam.
- The Richard Nixon Presidential Library & Museum in Yorba Linda is also the location of the farmhouse where

## Orange County

America's 37th President was born and raised.

- All boysenberries – a cross between a loganberry, red raspberry and blackberry – can trace their roots back to Knott's Berry Farm.
- Huntington Beach has the most state park land in all of California.
- One of the first of its kind, Huntington Central Park Disc Golf Course is an 18-hole course in a scenic, tree-lined setting with hills and a lake providing obstacles and traps. Huntington Central Park's disc golf course is the only disc golf course in Orange County.

## San Diego County

- Imperial Beach is the most southwesterly city in the U.S.
- Mission San Luis Rey de Francia is the largest of the California Missions. Until the mid-1800s, the Mission's church was the largest structure in California.
- Stretching 1,942 feet, the historic Oceanside Pier is the longest wooden pier on the Pacific Ocean.
- The historic 101 Café in Oceanside is the oldest continuously-operating restaurant on historic Highway 101.
- The Rancho Buena Vista Lagoon is the only fresh-water lagoon in California.
- Since 1980, more than 500 penguin chicks have hatched at SeaWorld San Diego, making it one of the most successful penguin breeding programs in the world. Today there are more than 300 penguins, representing five species, inside the park's Penguin Encounter.
- SeaWorld San Diego is the only place in the western hemisphere that houses emperor penguins, the largest of the penguin species (they can grow to almost 3.5 feet tall and weigh up to 90 pounds).
- San Diego became the first county after California achieved statehood in 1850.
- The Whaley House in Old Town, constructed on a former gallows site, is often referred to as the most haunted house in America, inhabited by at least seven spirits.
- In 1868, San Diego became the first city west of the Mississippi to designate land for an urban public park, Balboa Park, which is the second oldest city park in America. Second only to the Smithsonian in size, it is the largest urban cultural park in North America.
- The first successful breeding of a pair of California condors in captivity took place in April 1988 at the San Diego Wild Animal Park; the Park is only one of two places where the public can see the majestic California condor.
- The 4,600-acre Mission Bay, with its 27 miles of beaches and abundance of grassy recreation areas, is the largest aquatic park in the world.
- Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is the largest state park in the continental United States, containing 600,000 acres.
- Welk's Resort in Escondido is home to the world's largest champagne glass.
- Over 30,000,000 Legos were used to construct the attractions and decorations at Legoland in Carlsbad.

## Shasta Cascade

- Lava Beds National Monument was a training ground for astronauts heading to the moon.
- Tulelake is the horseradish capital of the world, producing 1/3 of America's harvest.
- The town of Dorris is the home of the world's tallest flagpole.
- Mt. Shasta is California's tallest volcano at 14,160 ft., and the second tallest in the United States.
- The Sundial Bridge in Redding is the World's longest glass-surfaced cable-stayed suspension pedestrian bridge. It's also the largest sundial in the world.
- Shasta Lake, with 30,000 surface acres and 370 miles of shoreline, is California's largest lake.
- Burney Falls is one of the few waterfalls in the world with a constant water volume, with 100,000 million gallons of water tumbling over the falls each day.
- Ahjumawi State Park is California's only park accessible only by boat.
- Tehama County was the home of the first and only president of the California Republic, William B. Ide.
- The largest gold nugget ever found in North America was discovered in 1859 in Paradise, weighing 54 pounds.
- The Hat Creek Radio Observatory is the world's largest research facility dedicated to studying radio emissions from space.
- Shasta Dam contains enough concrete to build a 3-foot sidewalk around the world at the equator.
- The Lassen Smelowskia flower only grows within Lassen Volcanic National Park.
- Mt. Shasta predates the last ice age.
- The Red Bluff Round-Up is the largest three-day rodeo in the U.S.