

California Historical Timeline

Pre-History

25,000 BC to 0 AD

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- 25,000 BC – Explorers from Asia use boats to reach the California coast
- 12,500 BC - Santa Barbara Channel Islands were settled
- 10,000 BC - California population of dwarf mammoth hunted to extinction
- 9,000 BC – Unknown woman dies in the Rancho La Brea tar pits
 - Los Angeles Man dies in Los Angeles area
- 8,000 BC – Chumash Archaic Indians found settlement on southern California coast
- 5,000 BC – More Archaic Indian settlements established near coastal estuaries
- 2,000 BC - Large coastal villages established

0 AD – Christ is Born

- 200 AD – Indian groups from as far away as the Great Lakes migrate to California
- 476 - Chinese explorer Hwui Shan reaches the coast of California
 - Bow and arrow introduced to California
 - Roman Empire Falls
- 1431 – Chinese Admiral Zheng He reaches coast of California and trades with local Indians
- 1492 – Christopher Columbus sailing for Spain reaches the New World

Historical Period

Spanish Era 16th century

- 1502 – Christopher Columbus makes landfall in South America
- 1510 – The name California is first used in a Spanish romance novel
- 1522 – Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortes conquers the Aztec Empire and all of Mexico
- 1539 - Francisco de Ulloa explores the Gulf of California
- 1540 - Hernando de Alarcon enters the mouth of the Colorado River and is the first European to stand on California soil
 - Melchior Diaza lieutenant for Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, marches overland from Mexico into California
- 1542 - Portuguese sailor Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo lands at present-day San Diego and is the first European to explore California
 - Cabrillo explores the coast of California, as far north as present day Fort Ross
- 1579 - English privateer, Sir Francis Drake lands north of San Francisco Bay

17th century

- 1602 – Spanish explorer Sebastian Vizcaino, discovers Monterey Bay

18th century

- 1769 – Spain decides to settle California by establishing Franciscan missions among the Indians, and presidios (forts) to protect the missions
- Father Junipero Serra founds first mission, San Diego De Alcala, in San Diego
 - 21 missions are established from 1769 to 1823 along the 650-mile road, El Camino Real, from San Diego to Sonoma
 - Spanish explorer Gaspar de Portola establishes first fort at San Diego
 - Portola serves as California's governor from March 1769 to July 1770.
 - The entrance to San Francisco Bay is discovered by Portola's men
- 1775 - The Continental Congress names Benjamin Franklin the first Postmaster General of the United States Postal Service 1775-1993
- 1776 - Presidio of San Francisco and Mission Dolores are founded

19th century

- 1812 - Russian fur traders established Fort Ross, north of San Francisco
- 1821 – Mexico wins independence from Spain, opens up northern provinces of Texas, New Mexico and California to Americans
- 1822 – Boston Merchants begin trading with California
- 1826 – American Fur trapper Jedediah Smith explores California
- 1836 – Juana Briones moves to Yerba Buena, begins work to transform the area into a major settlement and port
- Mexico wins its independence from Spain, becoming California's new ruler.
- 1841 – German immigrant John Sutter establishes his estate near present day Sacramento
- 1846 - The Mexican-American War begins
 - California's Bear Flag Revolution begins in northern California
 - American Settlers seize Mexican Garrison at Sonoma
 - American forces led by Captain John Fremont capture Monterey
 - Donner party is stranded in the Sierra Nevada Mountains
- 1847 – American forces under Fremont and Colonel Stephen Kearny defeat Californios led by Jose Maria Flores
 - California is secured for the United States
 - Yerba Buena is renamed as San Francisco
 - John Fremont is appointed governor of California

American Era

- 1848 – California becomes a territory of the United States with the Treaty of Guadalupe, which ends the Mexican War
- James Marshall discovers gold at Sutter's sawmill in Coloma California
- 1849 – The Gold Rush begins as thousands of easterners travel west over the Oregon Trail to strike it rich in California
- 1850 - California is admitted into the Union as the 31st state on September 9th
 - Chinese immigration begins; thousands will come to California for work in the gold mines, railroads and on farms
- 1851 – Joaquin Murieta begins his life of crime as the Hispanic Robin Hood
- 1853 – German immigrant Levi Strauss founds Levi Strauss and Co. and begins making blue jeans
 - Joaquin Murieta is killed
- 1857 – California's first winery is established by Hungarian immigrant Agoston Haraszth
- 1860 – The Pony Express begins express mail delivery service to Sacramento
- 1863 – Construction on Transcontinental Railroad begins in Sacramento; stops because of civil War
- 1867 – Leland Stanford's Central Pacific Railroad Company restarts western leg of the Transcontinental Railroad
- 1869 – First westbound train on transcontinental railroad arrives in San Francisco
- 1873 – Levi Strauss gets patent for his Levi Jeans
- 1882 – Chinese Exclusion Act is passed by U.S. Congress
- 1885 – Japanese Immigration begins; thousands come to work on the farms
- 1888 – Lick Astronomical Observatory is built
- 1890 – Congress creates Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks
- 1892 – Naturalist John Muir founds the Sierra Club

20th Century

- 1906 – San Francisco earthquake devastates city
- 1911 – California women win the right to vote
- 1914 - Cecil B. DeMille, Adolph Zucker and Samuel Goldwyn release California's first feature-length film, *The Squaw Man*.
- 1915 - D.W. Griffith releases his ground breaking *Birth of a Nation*
- 1915 – San Francisco hosts the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition
- 1927 – Charles Lindberg's *Spirit of St. Louis* is built in San Diego
- 1930 - Dustbowl spurs immigration to California
- 1933 – Alcatraz Island is made a Federal prison; closes in 1963
- 1935 – Statewide irrigation projects begin, turning California's Central, Salinas and Imperial valleys into an agricultural paradise
- 1936 – The San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge opens
 - Hoover Dam is completed on Colorado River to control flooding and provide water for irrigation and power in southern California
- 1937 – Golden Gate Bridge opens
- 1940 – California opens first modern freeway

- 1945 – United Nations Charter signed in San Francisco
- 1950 – San Francisco 49s open their first football season; win 3 games
- 1960 – The Winter Olympics are held in Squaw Valley
- 1962 – California becomes the most populous state in the union
- 1969 – American Indians take over Alcatraz Island
- 1977 – Apple launches the personal computer, spurring the Silicon Valley revolution in computers
- 1984 – Summer Olympics open in Los Angeles
- 1989 – 7.1 magnitude quake strikes San Francisco bay area
- 1992 – California elects two women to U.S. Senate
- 1995 – Yahoo is incorporated
 - eBay is founded
- 1997 – Google is founded
- 1998 – California leads the nation in banning smoking in bars and restaurants
- 2004 – Private California company launches SpaceShipOne, the first private manned mission to space