CALIFORNIA

THE GOLDEN STATE *Became a state September 9, 1850 (31st)*

California has more people than any other state. It holds the highest mountain and the lowest desert in the lower 48 states, along with giant trees, rich farmland and a long Pacific coast.



Why the Golden State?

On January 24, 1848, James Marshall was building a sawmill for John Sutter on the American River. He spotted flecks of gold in the water. Word got out, and about 300,000 people rushed to California from around the world. So many came that California became a state just two years later. Its golden poppies fit the nickname too.



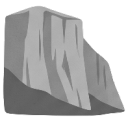
Trees That Need Fire

Giant sequoias grow wild only on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains. The biggest by volume, the General Sherman Tree, is about 275 feet tall and about 2,200 years old. Thick bark protects sequoias from flames. They even need fire. Its heat dries their cones so the seeds fall, and it clears the ground so seedlings get sunlight.



Why Is the Bridge Orange?

The Golden Gate is the narrow opening where San Francisco Bay meets the Pacific Ocean. When steel for a bridge across it arrived in the 1930s, it wore a coat of reddish primer, a paint that protects metal. The architect Irving Morrow liked how it looked against the hills and sky. He chose a color called International Orange.



The Waterfall That Glows

Horsetail Fall drops down the east side of El Capitan, a giant granite cliff in Yosemite Valley. It flows only in winter and early spring. For a couple of weeks in February, the setting sun can hit it at just the right angle. Then the water glows orange like fire for a few minutes.



Hottest and Lowest

Badwater Basin in Death Valley is 282 feet below sea level, the lowest spot in North America. Tall mountains block rain clouds from the ocean, and the sun bakes the air trapped between the valley walls. On July 10, 1913, the temperature reached 134 degrees. Yet Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48 states, is less than 100 miles away.



Billions of Bees

California's Central Valley grows about 80 percent of the world's almonds. Most almond trees cannot make nuts unless bees carry pollen from flower to flower. The trees bloom in February, and there are not nearly enough local bees. So beekeepers from across the country truck in more than a million hives full of honeybees.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 39.4 million (the most)
Size	About 163,700 square miles (3rd largest)
Highest point	Mount Whitney, 14,505 feet
Counties	58
Neighbors	Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, and Mexico to the south

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. What is California's motto?
3. How tall is Mount Shasta?

Answers: 1. Sacramento 2. I have found it (Eureka) 3. 14,179 feet

DID YOU KNOW?

- The garibaldi, California's state marine fish, is bright orange. Young ones are covered in shiny blue spots that fade as they grow.
- Silicon Valley is named for silicon, the material used to make computer chips.
- Lake Tahoe is 1,645 feet deep. Only one lake in the United States is deeper.
- As many as 10,000 people lived in Bodie in 1879, when its gold mines were booming.