

## 11 California: What to see and where to go

**Presenter:** Hi everybody and welcome to our travel magazine *Amazing Planet*. Today we'll be talking with Professor Schürer about America's most populated state, which is of course California.

Now, Professor Schürer, let's talk about how long you've been living in California and what is so special about the Golden State. Why is it called the "Golden State" anyway?

**Schürer:** California has been called the "Golden State" for a long time. In 1968, it was actually made the official nickname. I think the name goes back to when a lot a lot of gold was found in California. That was in 1848, and the time was known as the Gold Rush. This gold was the reason why so many people from Europe travelled west and made California what it is today. Another explanation is that there is a certain golden-colored spring flower in California that makes the fields look as if they were made of gold.

**Presenter:** So how did you end up in California?

**Schürer:** I was born in New York City, but when I was six years old, my family moved to Germany. You see, my father is German, and he wanted to go back to Berlin because he had been offered a very good job. So I spent the next 15 years in Germany, but then I went back to the US to study at Berkeley, one of California's top universities. I immediately fell in love with California, and so I travelled up and down the state and tried to see as much as possible.

**Presenter:** And what did you like the most?

**Schürer:** That's difficult to tell. As you know there are so many different things to see: big cities, wonderful beaches, natural wonders like the biggest trees on earth, fantastic national parks with forests and mountains; you can go skiing or take a walk in the desert ... It's amazing.

**Presenter:** So what can you tell our listeners? Where would you start to get to know California?

**Schürer:** I guess that depends on what kind of person you are. If you are a city person, Los Angeles is probably the first place to visit. Some people think L.A. is the capital of California, but it isn't. Los Angeles is by far the biggest city in California, but the capital is Sacramento, a city a lot smaller than Los Angeles.

Anyway, L.A. is of course very spectacular, with the Hollywood Studios and the Walk of Fame, so if you are into films, then L.A. is the first place to visit. However, I like San Francisco best. It's such a beautiful city, with hills on the one side, and the ocean on the other side. There is one little problem though: if you want to see San Francisco on foot, you need to be quite fit.

**Presenter:** Why is that?

**Schürer:** Because it's a very hilly city. It goes up and down, and the streets are really quite steep. So walking through San Francisco is a bit like going hiking in the mountains. But of course you can get on one of the cable cars. They are like small trains and take you everywhere. In fact, the cable cars are a very typical San Francisco thing and a tourist attraction, too.

Talking of tourist attractions: There is one that is famous all over the world. It's the Golden Gate Bridge, which is really a spectacular sight. You can enjoy it either from far away or you can walk or ride your bike over it and look down on the ocean. The bridge is 67 meters high – above the water, that is – and 1.6 kilometers long. It was built between 1933 and 1937. To be precise, it took exactly four years, three months and fourteen days to build. And the construction of the bridge was a difficult and dangerous thing at that time. In fact, eleven workers died because they fell into the ocean.

But let me also mention one fun fact. Did you know that, in the beginning, the architects wanted to paint the bridge black and yellow?

**Presenter:** Black and yellow? I didn't know that. Why was that?

**Schürer:** That was because of the ships coming into San Francisco Bay – so they could see the bridge better and not crash into it. But then, the builders decided to paint it orange, which was a good idea because it looks a lot nicer, and it's also easy to see.

**Presenter:** Thank you, Mr Schürer, for telling us about San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. Obviously, San Francisco is your favorite city in California.

We are now going to take a break, and then continue talking about the national parks of California. We'll be back in five minutes, so stay with us.