

The Mountains of California

The mountains in California are in plain sight from every part of the state. Wherever you go, these majestic mountains glorify each and every landscape as they entice you to climb their peaks and experience all of the hidden wonders of nature. The mountains in California played a significant role in the state's history. In addition to isolating California's various Native American cultures, they served as barriers during the early days of European and American exploration and settlement.

There are two major ranges of mountains in California: The Sierra Nevada and the Coast Ranges. The Coast Ranges of California average less than 4,000 feet in height. They follow an 800-mile course which begins in the northwest corner of Del Norte County and continues south to the Mexican border. This mountainous area has a strong influence on California's climate. The storms that originate over the Pacific Ocean bring significant amounts of rainfall to the western slopes. In the mean time, the eastern slopes remain relatively dry. Some of California's major industries benefit from the climatic conditions created by the coastal mountains. The evergreen trees that the north coast timber industry relies on thrive are nourished by the increased rainfall. The coastal fog cools hot inland valleys that are located east of the coastal mountains. This benefits the cultivation of wine grapes and fruit and nut trees.

The impressive Sierra Nevada is about 500 miles long, 70 miles wide, and between 7000 and 15,000 feet high. Occupying one fifth of the state, the Sierra Nevada is the largest mountain range in California. In late October or early November, the first snowfall whitens the peaks of the Sierra Nevada. Snow then continues to fall heavily throughout the winter. In between storms, the bright California sunshine prevails. The visual image of the snowy-white mountains glistening in the sunshine is positively magnificent!

The famous [Mammoth Mountain](#) is bounded on the west by Sierra Nevada crest. While the town of Mammoth Lakes is situated at 7,800 feet, Mammoth Mountain rises dramatically to elevations that exceed 12,000 feet. This makes Mammoth Mountain a popular destination for skiers, hikers and mountain bikers.

Mt Shasta



The [Mount Shasta Volcano](#) is situated at the northern extremity of the Sierra Nevada. In his book *The Mountains of California*, the naturalist John Muir has written extensively on this impressive mountain. Indeed, he had good reason to do so. Rising from its bed of lava, the Mount Shasta Volcano is a unique and spectacular sight. The highest point of the Mount Shasta Volcano stands at approximately 14,440 feet above

mean tide.

[Mount Whitney](#) is also located in the Sierra Nevada. At 14, 491 feet, it is the highest point in the lower continental United States. This mountain was the inspiration for the construction of the USS Mount Whitney which serves as the Flagship for Commander Second Fleet/Commander Striking Fleet Atlantic. The USS Mount Whitney is the most sophisticated Computer, and Intelligence (C4I) ship that has ever been commissioned. The USS Mount Whitney is capable of receiving and transmitting significant amounts of secure data from any point on earth through various communications paths, thereby allowing the Joint Intelligence Center and Joint Operations Center to provide the timeliest intelligence available in the Navy.