

CALIFORNIA'S MISSION TRAIL

AUTO TOUR



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CARMEL MISSION



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CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA



SONOMA VALLEY

Over 250 years ago, the Spanish monarchy set out to colonize their claim on the temperate shores and fertile lands now known the world over as California.

At that time there were an estimated 350,000 to one million Native American residents whose cultures and spirituality were linked to the land and honored its sacredness.



SOLEDAD



ROARING CAMP RAILROADS

This was the setting for California's Mission period from 1769 to 1833. A total of 21 missions were built along the more than 600-mile El Camino Real ("The Royal Road") from San Diego to Sonoma. Each of the missions was planned to be a one-day walk from one another.

A road trip vacation along California's Mission Trail provides visitors with a glimpse into California's early history while celebrating today's diverse cultures, delicious cuisine, and thriving art scene.

Let your California's Mission Trail Auto Tour road trip experience be a journey of discovery!



SANTA CRUZ MISSION



MISSION SAN JUAN BAUTISTA



SONOMA



CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA



CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA



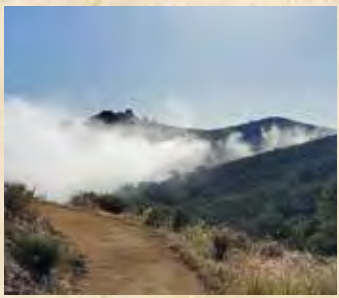
SONOMA BARRACKS



WILDER RANCH STATE PARK

CALIFORNIA'S MISSION TRAILS

AUTO TOUR



SOLEDAD

US 101. The **Mission Nuestra Senora de la Soledad** is nestled in the heart of the wine country known as the Santa Lucia Highlands. The mission's chapel, padres' quarters, and one wing of the quadrangle have been carefully restored, and the chapel has the original tile floor. The restored wing includes a museum and gift shop. The haunting ruins of the original adobe walls provide a feel for what once was the most isolated of California's early missions. Today there are also three other historic missions within a 45-minute driving distance (San Juan Bautista, Carmel, and Santa Cruz). **Los Padres National Forest** is to the southwest of the mission. Soledad is the gateway to the west entrance of **Pinnacles National Park** to the east. Soledad was recently named as one of the 50 safest cities in California, and has been recognized as one of the 15 best small towns to visit in 2023 by Smithsonian Magazine. The **Soledad Historical Society**, located at 137 Soledad Street, features exhibits of the history and people of the area and is the location for the **Soledad Farmers Market** every Thursday from April to October. Soledad is also located in one of the prime grape-growing regions in California. There are over twenty wineries within a 30-mile radius, many offering tasting rooms and a wide selection of wines for sale. For more information, go to: CityOfSoledad.com.



terest, **Plaza Market Shops** and **Utopia Mall** to name two. A 1799 adobe that is today a National Landmark is the home of **Old Adobe Antiques**. San Juan Bautista also features several art galleries and antique stores including **Fool's Gold** with original prints. Theater performances come alive at the **El Teatro Campesino** in San Juan Bautista and the **San Benito Stage Company** in nearby Hollister. The City of Hollister, along and near California Highway 25, provides a scenic gateway to **Pinnacles National Park** where visitors can see colorful rock formations and giant California condors soaring overhead. For those looking for outdoor recreation and adventure, **Fremont Peak State Park** offers camping and hiking trails with breathtaking views of Monterey Bay. The **Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area** is perfect for ATVs, motorcycles, and camping. Visitors can also hike on a portion of the **Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail** outside of San Juan Bautista. For more information, go to sanjuanbautistaca.com or discoversanbenitocounty.com.



and on the U.S. Open rotation. For more information, go to: CarmelCalifornia.com.

SANTA CRUZ

CA 1, 9 AND 17. On California's Mission Trail. The site of the original historic Mission Santa Cruz is today **Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park**. The park features a restored adobe building from the 1791 mission when it provided housing for indigenous families who worked at the mission. The park grounds include a patio, gardens, exhibits and excellent views of downtown Santa Cruz. The rebuilt **Mission Santa Cruz chapel** is located nearby on Mission Plaza and is a popular place for baptisms and small weddings. A small garden features the mission's original hand-carved baptismal font. The **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** is an admission-free, classic seaside amusement park featuring a wooden roller coaster, a beautiful vintage carousel, and over 40 rides, plus games, food and shopping. The adjacent **Santa Cruz Wharf** is the longest timber-pile wharf in the U.S. extending over a half-mile into the Monterey Bay. Strolling visitors on the wharf can dine on the freshest seafood and fine local wines. Visitors can get an up-close, behind the scenes look at marine life at the **Seymour Marine Discovery Center** on the westside of town. Santa Cruz also features an eclectic variety of shopping, dining and art galleries. **West Cliff Drive** is a scenic, three-and-a-half mile walking and biking path along the Pacific coastline and is home to the **Santa Cruz Surfing Museum**, hidden beaches, and **Natural Bridges State Park and Beach**. Visitors can also see towering redwoods up close while traveling on a 19th century steam train at **Roaring Camp Railroads**. Go to: SantaCruz.org.



SAN BENITO COUNTY

US 101/CA 156. Picturesque **San Juan Bautista State Historic Park** in San Juan Bautista was the site for the Alfred Hitchcock movie **Vertigo** starring Jimmy Stewart and Kim Novack. The park features well-landscaped grounds and several buildings built in the 1800s including a blacksmith shop, a historic jail, and an early American settler's cabin. Many building interiors feature vignettes and exhibits. Volunteers act out the mission's past on the first Saturday of each month. A block away, San Juan Bautista offers unique shopping experiences in the **National Registry Historic Shopping District**. All local-run shops offer unique items to satisfy every in-

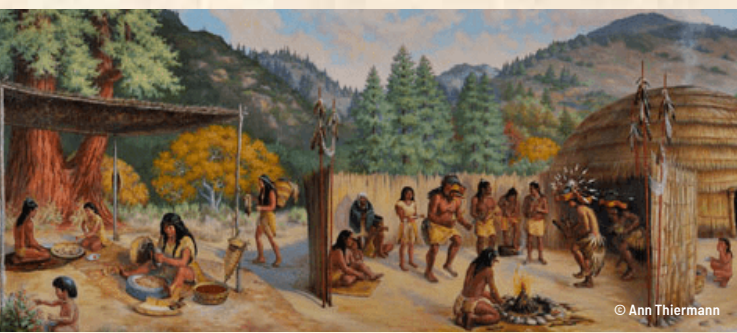
CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA

CA 1. Mission **San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo** is one of the most authentically-restored of California's historic missions. Tours are available for groups of 10 or more, but self-guided tours can take visitors back to the 18th century. The Carmel mission is a popular location for public events including **Taste of Carmel** in October. Carmel is one of the best art cities in the U.S. Nearly **100 art galleries** are located within one square mile in downtown Carmel. Visitors can get to know the artists personally at **21 local artist-owned galleries**. Carmel is a shopper's haven with hundreds of unique shops clustered in the area surrounding **Ocean Avenue**. Part of the fun is discovering an amazing array of offerings in the many side streets and charming courtyards. **Walkable wine tasting** is available at nearly 20 wine tasting rooms in the village. Carmel wine producers offer something for every taste. Carmel's performing arts hub is at the **Sunset Cultural Center**, considered by many as the finest live music venue on the Monterey Peninsula. The theatre is home to the Monterey Symphony, the Carmel Bach Festival, and hosts contemporary artists as well. The scenic **Outdoor Forest Theater** has delighted young and old theatergoers since 1910. **Carmel Beach**, located at the foot of Ocean Avenue, is on the bucket list of beach-lovers everywhere. Visitors can stroll the carpeted soft-white sand beach, catch a few rays and revel at the spectacular sunset. The beach is also canine-friendly. To the south of the beach is a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home, and to the north is the fabled **Pebble Beach Golf Links**, home to the Annual AT&T Pro-Am Golf Tournament

SONOMA VALLEY

Take **US 101 north from San Rafael to CA 37, east to CA 121 at Sears Point, and north to CA 12**. The historic **Mission San Francisco Solano** is within **Sonoma State Historic Park** on the picturesque **Sonoma Plaza**. The park is comprised of multiple buildings in and around the charming Plaza, including the restored **General Mariano Vallejo Home/Swiss Chalet** built in 1851-52, about a ten-minute walk from the Plaza. The historic home is a museum today furnished with many personal effects and artifacts of the Mexican general and early California historical figure. The park also includes the restored **Sonoma Barracks** of the Mexican army built around 1840. **Sonoma Plaza** is the perfect place to start or end a day of touring and features old adobe storefronts, sunlit courtyards, historic landmarks and a pleasing mix of restaurants, boutiques, galleries, tasting rooms and hotels. Just off the plaza is the **Sonoma Valley Museum of Art** that presents critically acclaimed exhibitions of contemporary art. The **Depot Park Museum** is the restored historic depot for the old Northwestern Pacific railroad. Sonoma Valley is known as **the birthplace of California's wine industry** and today is home to over **100 wineries**. Wine tasting tours are offered by group, by trolley, by bike or by Segway. For those who love wine and art, or wine and the outdoors, there are tours available including on bike, walking or even by trolley. The **Transcendence Theatre Company** offers dazzling Broadway productions with wine, food and fun under the stars. Nearby **Jack London State Historic Park** is a great place to walk, hike, mountain bike, horseback ride, and tour the historic buildings of the famed adventure writer. The **visitor center** is in a historic Carnegie Library building on the east edge of the Plaza and is open seven days a week. Go to: SonomaValley.com.





Where the thread of culture was interrupted, California's Native Americans are today reviving traditions through research and practice. California Native American cultures are indelible.



Amah Mutsun Tribal Band

CALIFORNIA'S MISSION TRAIL

1. SAN DIEGO DE ALCALA - Located in San Diego northeast of the I-5 and I-15 interchange on San Diego Mission Road. Mission San Diego was founded by Father Serra in 1769 and became the first of twenty-one Spanish missions in Alta California. The mission was moved from its original location after a 1774 drought forced the padres to move it closer to the San Diego River and native villages. The area's Tipai-tpai people resisted Spanish colonialization and in 1775 attacked the mission. The mission was rebuilt to the specifications of an army fort. Unique features visitors can see today include a 46-foot bell wall and Father Serra's replicated living quarters. The mission church includes California's first cemetery. Today, services are held daily in the mission's chapel. An interfaith art



museum includes the mission's original records in Father Serra's handwriting, early liturgical robes, books and other relics. Go to: missionsandiego.org.

2. MISSION SAN LUIS REY DE FRANCIA - Located east of Oceanside and north of California Highway 76 on Mission Avenue. Founded by Father Lasulin in 1769 to become the 18th Spanish mission in Alta California. Mission San Luis Rey was known as the "King of the Missions" because of its size, indigenous population, and crop production. By 1830, the mission included the largest building in California.

The mission has been restored to its original design and is has the only surviving cross-shaped mission church today. The church features a cupola and dome made of pine allowing light to easily enter. The mission's gardens include a fruit orchard with California's first pepper tree. Go to: sanluisrey.org.

3. MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO - Located just west of I-5 on Old Mission Road. Founded by Father Lasulin in 1775 to become the seventh Spanish mission in Alta California. The stone church once held seven domes and a bell tower that could be seen ten miles away. The mission was damaged by an 1812 earthquake and the ruins today are preserved by archaeologists and engineers.

The mission is best known for the annual migration of cliff swallows in March. The mission's Serra Chapel completed in 1782 was where Father Serra held mass and is today the oldest building still standing in California. A side chapel is dedicated to St. Peregrine the patron saint of cancer sufferers. Today, ivy covers the mission's walls that hold four historic mission bells, and the garden is accented with orange Birds of Paradise. Go to: missionsjc.com.

4. MISSION SAN GABRIEL ARCANGEL - Located east of downtown Los Angeles and north of I-10 on Mission Drive in San Gabriel. Founded in 1771 by Father Serra to become the fourth Spanish mission in Alta California. The mission was moved in 1775 to improve planting and eventually grew to include several hundred acres producing one-fourth the wealth of California missions in grain and livestock.

The mission's unique Moorish design is framed with slender capped buttresses. The mission's cemetery is the oldest in Los Angeles and includes a crucifix memorial to the 6,000 Native Californians buried there. Today the mission complex includes an active Roman Catholic Church, the

restored winery, kitchen gardens, and mission's museum housing historic books and Native paintings. Go to: parish.santa-briemissionchurch.org.

5. MISSION SAN FERNANDO REY DE ESPANA - Located in Mission Hills, between I-5 and I-405 on San Fernando Mission Boulevard. Founded in 1797 by Father Lasulin to become the 17th Spanish mission in Alta California. The convent, originally built as a visitor guesthouse, is the largest free-standing adobe in California today with a colonnade of nineteen arches bordering its length.

Today, the restored church, convent, and workshops are open to the public. The convent displays historic relics and furniture. The walls of the mission church feature the original California Native American artwork. A hand-carved statue of King Ferdinand III, the mission's patron saint, stands above the altar. For more information, call 1 (818) 361-0186.

6. MISSION SAN BUENAVENTURA - Located in Ventura, north of US 101 and fronting Main Street. Founded in 1782 on Easter Sunday by Father Serra to become the ninth Spanish mission in Alta California. The area's Chumash people were directed by Padre Cambon to construct a seven-mile aqueduct to bring water from the Ventura River to the mission.

The original mission was damaged by a series of earthquakes and a tidal wave in 1812. The mission was restored in 1957 to include the original triangular design and gardens. The church features a 400-year-old crucifix from the Philippines. Museum exhibits include two wooden bells used during Holy Week. Go to: sanbuenaventuramission.org.

7. MISSION SANTA BARBARA - Located in Santa Barbara, north of US 101 on Laguna Street. Founded in 1786 to become the tenth Spanish mission in Alta California. Mission Santa Barbara was known as the "Queen of the Missions" due to its central location and accessibility to the sea. It became the headquarters for all California missions.

The church design is based on an ancient Latin chapel with twin bell towers and a Doric facade that overlooks the city. The church's location provides an outstanding view of the ocean. The mission has a large store of historic material, displays, and original items. Go to: santabarbaramission.org.

8. MISSION SANTA INES - Located in Solvang, off Mission Drive/CA 246, at Mariposa Drive. Founded in 1804 to become the 19th Spanish Mission in Alta California. This mission was designed to serve as the church of mountain passes. It was the site of an 1824 revolt by the Chumash people over their mistreatment by the military guards from the nearby presidio fort.

The mission has survived several earthquakes and today houses a collection of vestments, church records, and an altar wall with the original decorations. Go to: missionsantaines.org.

9. LA PURISIMA CONCEPCION - Located at La Purisima Mission State Historic Park, Lompoc.

Founded in 1787 by Father Lasulin to become the 11th mission. The mission was originally established at a site known to the Chumash people as Algsacapi, and to the Spanish as the plain of Rio Santa Rosa.

The original mission complex was destroyed by an earthquake in 1812 and was rebuilt a few miles northwest where it is located today. The 1824 Chumash revolt that began at Mission Santa Ines spread to Mission La Purisima where the mission was captured for nearly thirty days. Many of the mission's buildings and the original water system were restored by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and dedicated on December 7, 1941, the same day America entered World War II. Go to: www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=598.

10. MISSION SAN LUIS OBISPO DE TOLOSA - Located in San Miguel, off CA 101 at Broad and Palm Streets. Founded in 1772 by Father Serra to become the fifth Spanish mission in Alta California. This was the first mission to install locally-produced tile roofs to limit the damage from flaming arrows shot over the mission's walls by the area's indigenous

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Street. Founded in 1797 by Father Lasulin to become the sixteenth mission. The original church was destroyed by a fire and replaced by adobe blocks in walls that are six feet thick. Bright and vibrant frescos were painted by the area's indigenous people and have never been repainted. These pictures and murals are considered to be the most authentic and well-preserved examples of Native art in the California Mission System.

Between 1845 and 1870 the mission's land was distributed among local indigenous people. A 2003 earthquake closed the church to the public until extensive renovations were completed in 2009 when the church and historic cemetery were open to the public. The mission's museum features a 16th-century Spanish woodcarving of the mission's patron saint, Michael the Archangel. Go to: missionsanmiguel.org.

12. MISSION SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA - Located in Jolon on Mission Creek Road northwest of the Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation. Founded in 1771 by Father Serra to become the third Spanish mission in Alta California. The mission's original location was moved in 1773 to its current location where the mission padres directed the area's indigenous people to build an extensive aqueduct system from the San Antonio River.

Today's Mission San Antonio has faithfully been restored to replicate its original and pastoral condition. The church museum includes exhibits with the traditional musical instruments and colored musical charts used by the padres to teach the area's indigenous people music and religion. Go to: missionsanantonio.net.

13. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA SOLEDAD - Located south of Soledad off US 101. Founded in 1791 to become the 13th mission. Father Lasulin named this mission for our Lady of Solitude. It was located near the Salinas River, where the soil was rich, and the water was plentiful. By 1805, the mission was to produce over 100,000 bushels of wheat and owned nearly 17,000 head of livestock.

While the location seemed like a remote outpost, the mission became well-known for its hospitality. Prosperous in its early years, the mission declined after the Mexican War of Independence. Father Vicente

The mission initially captured and brought in native people from Mutsun-speaking villages in the areas surrounding the mission. When those populations had been exhausted, other indigenous people from further tribes were brought in including people from 84 distinct tribes.

Life was difficult for the indigenous people forcibly brought to the mission. Harsh punishment, unsanitary living conditions, and exposure to European diseases meant life was often short for indigenous residents.

Mission records from 1823, documented from the start of the mission to only 25 years later that there were 858 marriages performed, 3,396 baptisms, and 19,421 deaths.

14. San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo - Located in San Juan Bautista State Historical Park on Second and Mariposa Streets in the city of San Juan Bautista. Founded in 1797 by Father Lasulin to become the 15th Spanish mission in Alta California.

Named for John the Baptist, the mission was unknowingly built on the San Andreas fault line and many of the original structures were ravaged by earthquakes. Mission San Juan Bautista's church was built in 1813 and the pulpit built in 1813 has a sounding board mounted overhead. The main altar's reredos were painted in 1818.

The mission chapel today is the parish church built in 1841 after the original deteriorated. The 1841 parish church was restored beginning in 1813 and completed in 1844. The restored mission complex includes the church, the padres' quarters which now house a museum, and a large courtyard. On the west side of the mission is a commemorative wall with the names of the Native Americans, including members of the Pomos, Coast Miwoks and Wappo tribes, who lived and died here.

The plaza area was the site of the Bear Flag revolt that briefly established the independent Republic of California in 1846. Go to: sonomaparks.org/location/mission-san-francisco-solano.

Francisco Sarria stayed on in poverty to serve the Chalón and Esselen Indigenous people of the area until his death in 1835. The mission property was granted to Francisco Soberanes as a rancho. It wasn't until the 1950s reconstruction was started by the local communities and the Native Daughters of the Golden West. A statue of Our Lady of Solitude is the centerpiece of the altar. Go to: soledadmission.com.

15. MISSION SAN CARLOS BORROMEO DE CARMELO - Located about three miles south of Monterey, on CA 1. Founded in 1770, Mission Carmel became the second historic California mission. This was one of nine missions founded by Father Serra while he served as "Father President" of the northern California missions and is where his remains are buried in the Basilica. The front courtyard offers a good view of the mission's two dissimilar bell towers. The interior of the church has been extensively restored.

The Mission contains a great deal of significant art and original artifacts. An elaborate Serra Memorial Cenotaph (monument) showing the life-size figures of Father Serra and three missionaries was sculpted by Carmel artist Jo Mora in 1924. The historic mission also features a gift shop. This is an active Roman Catholic Church designated as a Minor Basilica in 1961. Since this is an active parish, please be advised that access to the Basilica might be limited in the spring and summer for weddings, services and special events. Go to: carmelmission.org.

16. MISSION SAN JUAN BAUTISTA - Located in San Juan Bautista State Historical Park on Second and Mariposa Streets in the city of San Juan Bautista. Founded in 1797 by Father Lasulin to become the 15th Spanish mission in Alta California.

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17. Santa Clara De Asis - Located in San Rafael, west of US 101 on Fifth Avenue. Founded in 1817 to become the twentieth, or second to the last of twenty-one Spanish missions in California. Named for Rafael, the angel of bodily healing, this mission was originally planned to be a sub-mission to care for the sick Native people from Mission San Francisco.

Within five years the mission's growing operation became a successful work or orchards, livestock and farmlands. But this mission was the first to be secularized and abandoned. Today a chapel on the site duplicates the original 1817 mission. Go to: saintraphael.com/landing-page.

18. MISSION SAN FRANCISCO SOLANO - Located on the Sonoma Plaza and now a part of Sonoma State Historic Park. Founded in 1823 to become the 21st and last of the missions in Alta California. 2023 is the 200th anniversary of the founding of the mission. Three years after the mission's founding, Native American residents burned down some of the mission's wood buildings during an uprising. In 1832 the mission's enclosure included a 27-room padres' quarters, a great adobe church at the east end, a wooden storehouse at the west end, workshops where indigenous men were taught to be tradesmen, and living quarters and workrooms for young girls.

The mission chapel today is the parish church built in 1841 after the original deteriorated. The 1841 parish church was restored beginning in 1813 and completed in 1844. The restored mission complex includes the church, the padres' quarters which now house a museum, and a large courtyard. On the west side of the mission is a commemorative wall with the names of the Native Americans, including members of the Pomos, Coast Miwoks and Wappo tribes, who lived and died here.

The plaza area was the site of the Bear Flag revolt that briefly established the independent Republic of California in 1846. Go to: sonomaparks.org/location/mission-san-francisco-solano.

The church facade was remodeled to its original one-tower design and embellished with the carved wooden statues of the saints. Interior walls are in painted in cactus juice in pastel pink and blue. Careful copies were made of the reredos and of the painted ceiling. The university library is home to the mission's relics



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and archival material. Go to: scu.edu/missionchurch/. 19. MISSION SAN JOSE - Located in Fremont at Mission San Jose Park, adjacent to CA 238/Mission Boulevard. Founded in 1797 by Father Lasulin to become the 14th Spanish mission in Alta California. The mission became famous for teaching the indigenous people music.

Much of original mission complex was destroyed by earthquakes except for the monastery wing which now houses the mission's museum. The parish church was rebuilt in 1895 as an authentic replica of the original with relics that include a hammered baptismal font, altar bells, and vestments. Go to: missionsanjose.org.

20. MISSION SAN FRANCISCO DE ASSIS - Located in San Francisco at 16th and DeLores Streets. Dedicated in 1776 by Father Serra to become the sixth Spanish mission in Alta California.

The mission is the oldest intact building in the city and the only intact mission chapel of all twenty-one missions established by Father Serra.

The mission was plagued by disease and a high mortality rate. By 1832, 5,000 Native Americans had died at the mission. Some people blamed the high death rate on the Bay Area's inclement weather and for European diseases which the Native people had no immunity, was never moved.

Today the mission church's interior is adorned with gilded reredos. Colorful wall paintings and a stunning ceiling were painted by indigenous people and are good examples of early California Native art. For more information, call (415) 621-8203.

21. MISSION SAN RAFAEL ARCANGEL - Located in San Rafael, west of US 101 on Fifth Avenue. Founded in 1817 to become the twentieth, or second to the last of twenty-one Spanish missions in California. Named for Rafael, the angel of bodily healing, this mission was originally planned to be a sub-mission to care for the sick Native people from Mission San Francisco.

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CALIFORNIA BEFORE THE MISSIONS

Native American tribes have lived in California for millennia. Prior to first contact, there were approximately 400 tribes and 100 distinct languages spoken in the region. Each of these languages was as different as Russian is from French. The indigenous people were not hunters and gatherers as they are often referred. Indigenous people stewarded the land, and these life practices were integral to their spirituality and relationship to Creator.

Day-to-day rituals and larger ceremonies within and between tribal groups maintained a connection to land that honored its sacredness. Indigenous people also had complex family and inter-tribal structures that were maintained over hundreds of generations. They had doctors, political practices, and long-range trade routes. They did not attempt to build empires or seek to dominate or destroy others.

The gentle climate and fertile soil enabled tribes to live by harvesting wild nuts and berries and catching fish from the streams and the Pacific Ocean. Early California Native Americans never left their survival to fate. California Tribes soon learned to manage and steward landscapes by using cultural burning techniques to reduce the threat of fire and to enhance landscapes to provide abundant plant foods such as seeds, corns, bulbs, leafy plants and more. These plants provided the resources not just for food, but also medicines, basketry, tools, cordage, regalia and so much more.

These stewarding techniques also allowed for wildlife to flourish. California's ample food supply and gentle climate contributed to a Native American population estimated to be between 350,000 and 1 million by the 18th Century when the Europeans arrived.

SPANISH COLONIZATION OF CALIFORNIA

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a military officer who helped lead the conquest and massacres in Mexico City, claimed California for Spain in 1542. But Spain did not attempt to explore or occupy the land until the late 1700s after Spain established missions in Baja, or lower, California. Spain's King Charles III wanted to secure Spain's claim on the land by establishing missions with presidios (forts) to guard them, followed by the pueblos (towns) which were to be settlements for the Spanish and Mexicans.

Father Junipero Serra, a Franciscan missionary, was selected as the expedition's religious leader. The instructions to Father Serra were to teach Catholicism to California's Native Americans who would then eventually become Spanish subjects.

In 1769, the military expedition led by Captain Gaspar Portola and Father Serra set out to explore and colonize "Alta" or upper California. The expedition's route followed well established Indian trade routes that existed for thousands of years.

The expedition was armed and led by the military, prepared to use violence to lay claim to lands for Spain. The expedition route was called El Camino Real, or the Royal Road, named in honor of the Spanish monarchy who financed the expedition. The Spanish missions in California were to be located so they would be within one day's walk from the next mission on the El Camino Real.

Today, Interstate 5 follows the historic route from San Diego to Los Angeles. Take US 101 from Los Angeles to Santa Clara. State Highway 82 follows the route from Santa Clara to San Francisco. Highway 101 follows the route north of San Francisco to San Rafael, where Highway 37 follows the route to the last mission at Sonoma.

El Camino Real or Royal Road soon became the trade route between the missions. The missions were not originally intended to be permanent. The Spanish government thought that within ten years California Native Americans would become loyal Spanish citizens and contribute to the Spanish economy.

MISSION LIFE FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

The conversion of California Native Americans at the missions was seldom

voluntary. This conversion often included forced captures, slavery, physical brutality, rape and very high rates of death. Converts were called neophytes and were largely required to live within the missions' walled compounds, preventing them from returning to their former lives. The neophytes were taught Catholicism, Spanish, and trained in skills designed to benefit the missions and new colonial society. They were taught European approaches for tilemaking, construction, agriculture, raising livestock, blacksmithing, weaving, and tanning hides.

California Native Americans performed the manual labor that built the missions, farmed the land to provide the food for the missionaries and presidios, and did the work that helped the mission rely less on imported goods.

The missions created new types of communities where life was controlled by the mission padres and enforced by the military. Californian Native Americans had to choose between accepting the strict life in the missions or fighting Spanish soldiers who had more lethal weapons. Flogging and punishment were frequent and at times severe. Many of the Christianized neophytes attempted to flee the missions. Spanish military expeditions were routinely dispatched to look for runaways and forcibly bring them back to the mission.

The missions caused great loss and trauma for California Native Americans. The missions attempted to destroy indigenous culture, spirituality, knowledge and environments. The Spaniards also exposed the neophytes to new diseases for which they had no immunity. Thousands died in epidemics. The crowded living conditions in the missions contributed to the health problems. Infant mortality and the death rates of young children soared. Anthropologists estimate that approximately 150,000 California Native Americans died by the time the mission period ended in 1834.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE AND SECULARIZATION

The Spanish monarchy's ability and willingness to fund the California missions and the presidios became a problem. The trip by sea from Spain to Baja California was dangerous and took four months. By the 1780s Spain was losing interest in California because there was no silver or gold mined there. After 1810 Spain was involved in wars in Europe and made little effort to ship supplies to the California missions or presidio forts. By that time, Mexico was striving for independence and, due to the work of Indigenous peoples, the California missions were producing much of what they needed.

Mexico achieved its independence from Spain in 1821 and California then became a part of Mexico. But the new Mexican government didn't want to devote the needed resources to support the California missions or the soldiers in the presidio forts. The California missions had to provide for themselves and the presidio soldiers. Many of the soldiers were not paid and took out their frustrations on the missions' Native Americans.

In 1833 the Mexican congress passed a bill that secularized the missions, which meant that mission land was taken from the Catholic Church and placed under the control of local Mexican government officials. There was a small effort to return some of the mission land to the California Native Americans who had lived and worked in the missions. But many Mexican officials wanted the land for themselves and for their supporters, so little went back to California Native Americans. By the early 1840s some mission buildings were sold, and others fell into ruin.

NATIVE CALIFORNIANS TODAY

Although missionization forever altered many Californian Native American cultures, it could not erase them. Californian Native Americans are integral to contemporary life today. They own businesses, work in the public sector, and hold political offices. Many also continue aspects of their pre-colonization cultural traditions. Elders teach younger generations their native language, songs, ceremonies, they share their indigenous knowledge on traditional land stewardship, they are restoring their traditional foods practices.

CALIFORNIA'S MISSION TRAILS

AUTO TOUR



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Collaboration and review of historic text by Valentin Lopez, Chairman, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band; and Michelle Glowa, volunteer with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, Assistant Professor, Anthropology and Social Change, California Institute of Integral Studies.

For more information regarding the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, go to: AmahMutsun.org and amahmutsunlandtrust.org.

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If you enjoy your California's Mission Trail experience, consider becoming a member of the Oregon – California Trails Association so this history can be preserved for future generations.

An American legacy is at risk. The historic trails crossed by pioneers, gold rushers, adventurers, families – people in pursuit of a better life in the West – are under constant threat from development including energy-related projects. Many miles of wagon ruts and swales still exist in silent testimony to those hardy souls who built the nation as we know it today.

Join OCTA and get involved. You can donate to the Save the Trail cause. Your donation will help fund important trail preservation work. You can also donate to OCTA Specialty Funds for Endowment, Preservation, and

Legal Defense of the historic trails. The Oregon-California Trails Association is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

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