

# Top Attractions for California Gold Rush Fans

The California Gold Rush was an historic event in the nineteenth century that attracted people from all over the world to what became known as "The Golden State." The frenzy began after carpenter James Marshall discovered gold in the American River. The Gold Rush marked an amazing population expansion in Northern and Central California, as pioneers sailed into San Francisco Bay then continued on the Sacramento River, which connects with the American River in Sacramento.

Unfortunately, many of these world travelers never found gold and went broke. But it sure helped local merchants sell shovels and saloons sell whiskey to gold miners. In many ways, the Gold Rush story teaches people a valuable lesson about greed. Today, travelers may explore the remains of once famous towns and mines. Visit the top Gold Rush places in California.



## **Sutter's Mill, Coloma**

The property where gold was first discovered in the small town of Coloma was owned by John Sutter, who hired Marshall to build a sawmill that became known as Sutter's Mill. That was where Marshall struck gold on January 24, 1848. This location has been restored to resemble the original mill and is now part of Marshall Gold Discovery Historic Park, not far from Placerville. The park includes a monument of James Marshall.

## **Sutter's Fort, Sacramento**

Sutter's Fort is a state historic park that was owned by John Sutter even before Marshall discovered gold. Sutter had set up the base as an agricultural trading post in 1839. It marked the first settlement in the region started by an outsider of the Native American culture. In 1961 the fort became a National Historic Landmark. Today it remains a destination for school field trips and includes the California State Indian Museum. It is one of the most important landmarks of the Gold Rush and the history of Sacramento.

## **Old Sacramento**

Sacramento's Gold Rush heritage is preserved in Old Sacramento, which is a small community with restaurants, antique shops and galleries that sits between Downtown and the Sacramento River. Old

Sacramento is a great place to find artifacts of the Gold Rush and witness staged shows that recreate the Old West. These shows are presented as the "Gold Rush Days" festival every Labor Day weekend. Old Sac is also the site of the California Railroad Museum, since Sacramento was where the First Transcontinental Railroad was built following the Gold Rush.



## **Folsom**

Folsom is a small town near Folsom Lake between Sacramento and Placerville where gold miners populated in the 1850s. An early Gold Rush pioneer in the Folsom area was Sam Brannan, a Mormon sent to the region on a mission from Brigham Young. Brannan was a journalist who founded the San Francisco newspaper the California Star, which became the first publication that reported on the Gold Rush. Brannan later helped Sutter plan out the subdivisions that eventually became Sacramento. Folsom has a number of interesting Gold Rush landmarks including Folsom History Museum.

## **Hangtown**

Placerville is a small town in the Sierra foothills between Sacramento and South Lake Tahoe where gold mining activity took place. In 1849, the year the Gold Rush started to become widely publicized, the area earned the nickname "Hangtown" because it became known for many hangings during the Gold Rush. The name was changed to Placerville in 1854 to give the town a friendlier image. It is located about eight and a half miles from Sutter's Mill. The city of Placerville, which has a population of about 10,000 people, is now an official California Historical Landmark.

## **Crocker Art Museum**

The Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento offers displays of art depicting the Gold Rush, California and American history. The collection includes paintings, sculptures and crafts. This recently renovated museum is now one of the 25 largest historic museums in America. The museum itself is named after gold miners who became leaders in the development of the railroad industry. Guided tours, which educate people about the Gold Rush, are offered to the public. The museum is located a few blocks from Old Sac near the Sacramento River.



## **Golden Gate Bridge**

Once thousands of travelers began sailing into San Francisco Bay in the 1850s on a mission to mine for gold, the straits that lead into the Bay became known as "The Golden Gate." In 1937 construction was completed on the bridge that connects San Francisco with Marin County, making it longest suspension bridge at that time. The Golden Gate Bridge is easily California's most famous landmark, where guided tours educate tourists about its history. The bridge not only represents modern engineering history, it's the most recognizable reminder of how California got its nickname of the Golden State, even though the color of the bridge is actually "international orange."

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