

California, 2276

A nation reformed, a coast reimagined

JULY 4, 2276 · 500TH YEAR OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE · PACIFIC REPUBLIC OF CALIFORNIA

By the 22nd century, California had ceased to be merely a state. Following the Pacific Secession Accords of 2089 — a decades-long negotiation born from water rights disputes, federal gridlock, and a coast reshaped by three feet of sea rise — California formally became the first American member-state of the Pacific Federation, a constitutional union also comprising Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. It retains all ties to the broader United States, but governs its own climate policy, immigration, and currency supplement. Sacramento remains the symbolic capital; the true center of civic life is now a newly built city called Tidal, constructed on elevated ground in what was once the Central Valley, engineered for the floods that come every forty years like clockwork.

“The coast did not retreat. We did — and then we built something better.”

— Premier Isadora Chen-Nakamura, 2241

Los Angeles, its famous basin now partially inundated along the old shoreline, has evolved into a vertical city of extraordinary density. Much of what was once Santa Monica and Venice is a managed wetland and marine sanctuary — an engineered reef system producing a quarter of Southern California's protein. Inland, on the high mesa from Pasadena through Glendale, towers of compressed earth and timber house eleven million people, cooled by passive systems that the twentieth century never imagined building. No one mourns the freeways; they were converted to linear parks and pneumatic freight corridors in the 2130s.

ECOLOGY

The Sierra Nevada snowpack, which collapsed catastrophically in the 2060s, has been partially restored through cloud-seeding programs and a vast network of atmospheric water condensers along the ridgeline. The condenser forests — solar-powered arrays of mesh towers that wring moisture from marine air — are now old enough that actual trees have grown up through them, making parts of the range look like some impossible hybrid of industry and wilderness. The Central Valley, no longer the world's produce basket, is a mosaic of restored native grassland, managed aquifer recharge basins, and vertical farming campuses. Agriculture is ninety percent

automated and twelve percent of the land; the rest has been rewilded by statute.

“The grizzly bear, absent from California since 1922, was reintroduced to the Sierra Nevada in 2178 — and has not been told it was ever gone.”

San Francisco, famously predicted to be underwater, is not — quite. Its famous hills remain above the bay, though the bay itself has crept three blocks inland along the Embarcadero. The Financial District's old towers now stand in a kind of neo-Venetian arrangement, their lower floors sealed and their ground-level entrances replaced by boat docks and elevated pedestrian bridges. The city is magnificent and slightly unreal, like a cathedral that has been renovated too many times and is the better for it. It is also, by most measures, the most expensive place to exist in the known world.

CULTURE & SOCIETY

Demographically, California of 2276 is a place its founders of 1850 would not recognize and its founders of 1976 would find hauntingly familiar. The state has always been a destination. The dominant languages are English, Spanish, Mandarin, Tagalog, and an emergent creole called Pacifican — a liquid, musical tongue born in the schools of the San Gabriel Valley and now heard in film, music, and political speeches. The great question of this century is not race or class in the old sense, but rather the divide between the augmented and the unaugmented: those who have integrated neural and biological technologies with their cognition and those who have not, by choice or access.

Hollywood — now a museum district and architectural heritage zone — gave way, gradually, to a distributed creative economy in which narrative entertainment is co-authored by human artists and AI collaborators under strict attribution law. The studios, ironically, still exist; they are just no longer in Los Angeles, no longer making what anyone in 2026 would recognize as a film. The California of 2276 is still the world's imagination — it has simply changed what it imagines.
