

have influenced America. It is impossible to escape the influence of California, but why would you want to? The Golden State is picture-perfect and contains endless possibilities. Until I return, I will keep “California dreamin’.”

personality, happiness, and well-being. It's not that Atlanta is a miserable place to live, it's that California, specifically San Diego, is so golden—so prime—that nothing can compare. California is has become embedded in me. A friend described me as having “chic sophistication” and “an easygoing and relaxed personality.” After moving, I would expand on that statement and say I now have a strong appreciation of life's riches and opportunities as well—all of which are characteristics of California.

After realizing how California has influenced me, I decided to investigate how the Golden State has influenced America and other individuals as well. I conducted two interviews with my friends from California and found many commonalities: the acknowledgement of California's easygoing and relaxed vibe, the accessibility to almost anything anywhere, and the Kardashians. California fosters possibility through its accessibility. Unlike New York City, everyone drives and it is difficult to live without a car. There are so many hot spots or cities that are easily reached due to the ability to travel anywhere quickly in a car. Also, the Kardashians were brought up in both interviews, exemplifying the significance of celebrities and entertainment in California. Though not all Californians actually keep up with the Kardashians, their name and whereabouts are known and (in)famous. Social media and elite families are representative of California because, although not true for everyone, a privileged and/or high-class lifestyle is more common than not. Lastly, once again the vibe of California is unanimously considered relaxed and easygoing.

California is very special. The Eagles sing, “You can check out any time you'd like, but you can never leave.” California is established in us all, some more so than others. Its easygoing vibe has influenced our personalities, and its golden opportunities

against segregation and oppression, exemplified by immigrant and gay rights. This is likely due to the understanding of different cultures and types of people because the state is so diverse and attracts a wide range of people. California's diversity is contagious and will likely continue to grow in the future.

One of the first times mass groups flocked to California was when the California Gold Rush sparked in 1848. Dedicated and hopeful pioneers pursued through some of the roughest terrain to experience the exciting energy and intriguing riches despite the danger and high chance of disappointment. When pioneers first settled in the state, they inhabited Grizzly Bear territory; however, they did not let these fierce animals intimidate them. Each year, thousands of people move to California for various reasons and in each case, they rely on something similar—a chance: a chance success will result. There is a definite sense of hope that exists in the Golden State— an essence of young energy and success. There is a feeling that nothing can stop someone from exploring or pursuing his or her dreams. This is the essence of California.

Trying to understand California through its stereotypes is inevitable; however, until one visits the golden coast and its powerful cities, it is impossible to truly value the essence of California. I recently realized the greatness of California when I moved away for the first time to Atlanta. Although I am an experienced traveler and wouldn't label myself as naïve, I never understood how good life in California was until I left. The big things that seem so trivial to us native Californians are what I miss most. The ocean, the consistent forecast of 72 degrees and sunny, and the easy and Zen living full of Whole Foods runs, frozen yogurt, hot yoga, coastal hikes, and sunset photography were all such common aspects of my life that I never realized how influential they were to my

## Calm, Cool, Collected: The Essence of California

While California basks next to the gleaming and wavering waters of the seemingly endless ocean, millions of people idolize the Golden State and its natural beauty. California's beauty is not only found in its picture-perfect environment, but exists in its vibe of such milieu as well. Unlike any other state, California's laidback and relaxed vibe fosters an easygoing atmosphere. I often wonder, do the people create this attitude or does the land naturally encourage it?

Similar to how the waves ebb and flow off the Golden Coast, Californians approach life on a day-to-day basis and tend to let things happen. Californians also acknowledge the natural beauty in the world and appreciate life's opportunities as they transpire—rarely missing a moment of greatness. Whether it is the glistening ocean waters, the dazzling lights of the busy cities, the progressive activity, or the overwhelming dreams and realities of the people, California is never stagnant with hope. This hope can be felt by not only the citizens of the state, but by people from around the world as well. These people all travel to California in hopes of experiencing the wonder, mystery, and awe that resides in the Golden State. It is home to some of the most diverse people resulting in a mixing pot of cultures, trends, aspirations, and accomplishments.

Just recently, the number of Hispanic or Latino citizens of America outnumbered the number of Caucasian residents. Overall, around 74% of people identify as white (including Caucasian, Hispanic, and Latino) while 21% identify as Asian or African American. The remaining 5% identify as American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. California's proximity to Mexico explains the high percentage of Hispanic and Latino residents. The state typically has strong opinions