



Bodie State Historic Park David Toussaint/Getty Images

# Ghost Towns

As gold-mining fever gripped California in 1849, fortune seekers journeyed to the deserts and mountains with picks, shovels, and high hopes. Miners built entire towns in the state's most remote outposts. Some struck it rich. Most didn't. When the ore ran out, so did the people, leaving behind sagging storefronts and mining detritus. Take a tour through California's most fascinating abandoned towns on this far-flung road trip through the Old West.



## 1 Shasta State Historic Park

West of Redding on Highway 299, Old Shasta was the queen city of California's northern mining district. Tour the town's crumbling brick buildings, visit the Blumb Bakery and its 1870s wood-fired oven, and see mining memorabilia at the 1861 County Courthouse. *Distance to next stop: 165 miles*

## 2 Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park

North Bloomfield's picturesque main street was briefly the world's richest gold mine—until 1884, when hydraulic mining was outlawed. Stroll around the saloon, barbershop, general store, and former dance hall northeast of Nevada City. *Next stop: 20 miles*

## 3 Empire Mine State Historic Park

Just off the Golden Chain Highway, Grass Valley's Empire Mine was California's richest hard-rock mine, with 367 miles of underground tunnels. Enter the Secret Room to view a scale model of the tunnels and tour the mine owner's stately home. *Next stop: 195 miles*

## 4 Bodie State Historic Park

East of U.S. 395 near Bridgeport, Bodie was the West's rowdiest city in 1880, with a population of 10,000 and nearly 50 saloons. Now it's California's largest unrestored ghost town, with dozens of deserted buildings waiting to be explored. *Next stop: 42 miles*



Catch a colorful sunset in the once bustling Bodie.

## 5 Bennettville

This silver-mining camp was built at an elevation of 10,000 feet next to what is now Yosemite National Park. A short hike leads to the mine's assay office, a bunkhouse, and a tunnel lined with ore-car tracks. *Next stop: 212 miles*

## 6 Ballarat

See adobe ruins and weathered wooden shacks at this lonely Death Valley outpost north of Trona. In 1898, the town's population soared to 400 after successful gold strikes in the Panamint Mountains. *Next stop: 63 miles*

## 7 Randsburg

South of Ridgecrest, this living ghost town saw its heyday in the 1890s. Order a root beer float from the General Store's 1904 soda fountain and marvel at the Desert Museum's mining machinery. *Next stop: 75 miles*



## 8 Calico

Take a ghost tour or go on an off-road adventure in this former silver mining hub. Explore Calico's attractions—including the Mystery Shack, a mining museum, and a working train—or bring a mountain bike to ride the surrounding trails.