

# Fresno County

The Fresno County Courthouse in Fresno.  
Part 1 of 6: Fresno.





## **Fresno County Data**

**Population: 799,407 (Rank: 10)**

**Land Area (square miles): 5,963 (Rank: 6)**

Fresno County was created in 1856 out of Mariposa County.

Fresno in Spanish means “ash tree.” There are numerous ash trees in the county.

Fresno County stretches from the Coast Ranges to the crest of the Sierras. Most of the county lies on the flat valley floor. The Sierra portion is made up of the Sierra National Forest and Kings Canyon National Park. It also includes part of the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

Fresno is in an arid area and it did not develop until irrigation brought water to the land. Moses Church developed the first canals, called “Church Ditches.” The first major crop was wheat. Francis Eisen began the wine industry. He also began the raisin industry in 1875 when he accidentally let his grapes dry on the vine. A.Y. Easterby and Clovis Cole developed extensive grain and cattle ranches.

Today Fresno is the number one farm county in the nation. It produces nearly \$3.5 billion in farm products yearly. Grapes, poultry, cotton, tomatoes, milk, cattle and calves, almonds, lettuce, plums and peaches lead the list of farm products.

Real prosperity didn’t come to the county until large amounts of irrigation water arrived through the Central Valley Project. The San Joaquin River forms the northern border of the county. Friant Dam is located on the river forming Millerton Lake. The water from the river is sent north through the Madera Canal and south through the Friant-Kern Canal.

The Kings River flows through the middle of the county. It is at this point the valley tips to the south. Instead of flowing to the San Joaquin, the river flows south and splits into many channels. Most of the water is removed from the river for irrigation. Pine Flat Dam on the river stores water in the Sierras.

On the west side of Fresno County is land that had been the scene of real estate developments to promote farming early in the century. Ground wells worked for a while but with drought there was an attempt to pump water from Fresno Slough that runs along the west side of the county. A lawsuit was filed by Henry Miller who owned most of the land on the west side of the valley. The matter really wasn’t settled until

the arrival of Central Valley Project Water in the 1940’s. The Westlands Water District was formed to distribute the water in 1952. This nearly 700-square-mile district stretches along the east side of I-5 from Mendota to Kettleman City.

For fifty years this area has grown cotton and other crops. The farmers have not only received cheap water, for as little as \$2 an acre-foot, but also received crop subsidies to make up for the low price of cotton. This double subsidy has sparked considerable political controversy. With low crop prices and changes in the CVP that require more water to be devoted to wildlife, it all may come to an end. The Water District has proposed to take a third of the land out of production if the federal government will buy the land.

A glance at the map will tell you a significant difference between the farming practiced on the west side of the county and the farming practiced on the east side of Highway 41 that runs through the middle of the county. There are fewer roads and fewer towns on the west side. The towns lack a middle class and suffer from neglect. Most people are either poor farm workers or one of the 600 farmers that make up the Westland Water District. On the east side, the farms are smaller and have orchard crops. The towns are neat, tree-covered and have a middle class. There is a sense of community that is lacking on the west side.

Highway 180 runs east/west through Fresno and into the Giant Sequoia National Monument. It also borders the Mendota Wildlife Area. I-5 runs along the west side of the valley. At Highway 145 you can smell and see the Harris Ranch Feed Lot, the largest in California, with the capacity to produce 250,000 cattle a year.

**Cities: Fresno, Clovis, Reedley, Orange Cove, Sanger, Selma, Parlier, Fowler, Kingsburg, Coalinga, Kerman Caruthers, Mendota, Huron, Firebaugh, San Joaquin, Tranquillity. Towns: Raisin City, Minkler, Centerville.**

# Fresno County

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## Downtown Fresno

With a population of 510,00 it is the fifth largest city in California and the 34th largest in the country. It was incorporated in 1885. (April 2002)





# Fresno

A mall has been developed parallel to Van Ness, the main street. These pictures were taken on a Sunday. The mall was busy. (April 2002)





# Fresno

Fresno had a very funny comedy series in 1986 starring Carol Burnett and Dabney Coleman. It was titled "Fresno." It was a spoof of "Dallas." (April 2002)









# Fresno

(April 2002)





# Fresno

(April 2002)





# Fulton Mall

(April 2002)





# Van Ness Avenue

(April 2002)





# Fulton Mall

(April 2002)





# Fulton Mall

(April 2002)





# Catholic Cathedral

(April 2002)





# Civic Center

(April 2002)





# Fresno Water Tower

(April 2002)





# Olmec Statue

(April 2002)





# Public Building

(April 2002)





# Public Building

(April 2002)





# Warnors Theatre

(May 2003)





# Wilson Theatre

(May 2003)





# Crest Theatre

(February 2006)





# Tower Theatre District

The Tower District is the entertainment area that is close to the college campuses. (May 2003)





# Tower District

(May 2003)





# Tower District

(May 2003)





# Fresno City Hall

The controversial city hall was designed by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson. It was completed in 1991. (February 2006)





# Fresno Civic Mall

(February 2006)





# Fresno City Hall

(February 2006)





# Fresno City Hall

(February 2006)





# Fresno State

(June 2009)









# Fresno State

(June 2009)





# Fresno State

(June 2009)





# Fresno Community College

Fresno Junior College was the first in the nation. Fresno also has another first – the credit card. It was introduced by the Bank of America in 1958. (June 2009)





# Fresno Community College

(June 2009)





# Fresno Community College

(June 2009)





# Fresno Community College

(June 2009)





# Fresno Community College

(June 2009)





# Historic buildings along Van Ness

(June 2009)





# Historic buildings along Van Ness

(June 2009)





# Historic buildings along Van Ness

The old Fresno Bee newspaper building. (June 2009)





# Historic buildings along Van Ness

(June 2009)





# Historic buildings along Van Ness

(June 2009)





# Historic Fresno High School

(June 2009)





# Historic buildings along Van Ness

(June 2009)





# Fulton Mall Downtown

(June 2009)





# Fulton Mall Downtown

(June 2009)





# Fulton Mall Downtown

(June 2009)





# Fulton Mall Downtown

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**Fresno**

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