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Moving to California



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Introduction.

Relocating to **California** opens up a world of thrilling possibilities and transformative experiences.

Situated on the picturesque western coast of the United States, California is renowned for its diverse landscapes, vibrant cities, and **unique way of life**.

As a **global centre for technology**, entertainment, and innovation, the state offers a multitude of career prospects and a dynamic economy.

Moreover, California boasts an extensive network of highways and public transit, along with a comprehensive healthcare system and a strong commitment to sustainable practices.

However, just like any move, **there are certain challenges associated with relocating to California**, including understanding the local regulations, acclimating to the cultural tapestry, and perhaps adapting to the varied regional dialects.

Discover our comprehensive guide to relocating to California and learn how the experts at **Source Group International** can support you in ensuring a smooth and successful transition.



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Top Tips.

Relocating to California can be a thrilling adventure, but there are many things to consider before making the move. Here are some steps to follow:

1. Research the country:

Explore the Golden State: Before you take the leap, delve into all that California has to offer. Understand its diverse communities, vibrant cultures, and the opportunities available in your field.

2. Find a place to live:

California living offers a range of options. Whether you're drawn to the bustling cities or the serene suburbs, find a home that aligns with your lifestyle and financial goals.

3. Obtain a visa:

Depending on your nationality and the length of your stay, you may need a visa to enter California. Make sure to obtain the necessary documentation before leaving your home country.

4. Learn the language:

While English is the primary language, California's multicultural environment is enriched by various languages and traditions. Immerse yourself in local culture to build connections and thrive..

5. Open a bank account:

California's financial landscape is advanced and diverse. Open a local bank account to streamline your transactions and manage your finances seamlessly. **Chase Bank, Wells Fargo, Citi Bank** and **Bank of America** are all great options.

6. Obtain health insurance:

Access to quality healthcare is paramount. Prior to your arrival, arrange comprehensive health insurance to ensure you're covered for any unforeseen medical needs. Check with your employer to see what options you have for health insurance at your new placement

7. Register with the local authorities:

As a California resident, registration with local authorities is vital. This step is essential for obtaining a residency status and accessing essential services.

8. Find a Cell phone:

California's vibrant tech scene extends to cell phone providers. Research and choose a provider that aligns with your communication, data needs and budget. **Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile** and **Sprint** are all worth looking into.

9. Figure out transport information:

California's transportation options are diverse and efficient. But, familiarize yourself with your chosen mode of transport.

If renting a car is your preferred option, bring a valid licence issued from your home country

International customers renting in the U.S. are also required to present a valid international-issued driver's license at the time of rent **and** a valid passport in the same name, as a second form of identification



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Cost of Living.

The cost of living in California is 39% higher than the national average, and ranked 3rd most expensive state to live in the USA. So bare that in mind for factors such as the city or region you live in, your lifestyle choices, and your personal expenses.

Here are some estimated costs of living in California:



Accommodation:

Average Housing Costs in California: \$1,360 to \$3,649 per month

You're going to be hard pressed to rent or buy a place for less than \$1,000 a month in California. Here are some typical PCM rent prices.

Downtown:

1 bedroom – \$1,100 – \$2,500, 2 bedroom – \$1,600 – \$2,800

East:

1 bedroom – \$800 – \$2,000, 2 bedroom – \$1,600 – \$2,600

West Hollywood:

1 bedroom – \$1,200 – \$4,000, 2 bedroom – \$1,500 – \$4,500

Santa Monica:

1 bedroom – \$1,100 – \$3,500, 2 bedroom – \$1,700 – \$4,000



Utilities

Utility	Average Cost PCM
Electricity	\$124
Gas	\$63
Cable & Internet	\$117
Water	\$76



Healthcare:

While it's not always required, expat health coverage is usually a good idea. It helps to ensure that you can get quality medical attention in a variety of scenarios at an affordable price.



Food:

As far as food is concerned, prices are higher globally than in other cities. Your lifestyle may impact your budget for groceries. A couple should spend between \$400 and \$500 on monthly groceries and an average of \$328 for a single expat.



Travel:

A litre of gas (1/4 gallon) costs about \$1.50 in California and there are many options for car leasing and rentals from companies like Hertz, with an average of about \$400 PCM for a hatchback

Monthly public transport passes are also available for \$109



Entertainment:

A basic lunch for two at a pub/bar will be in the region of \$60 Cinema for two people around \$33. California has some of the most comprehensive hospitality and entertainment options in the United States so there are options for all!



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Finding Accommodation.

Securing housing in California can be demanding, especially in prominent cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles. Here are some pointers to assist you in discovering appropriate lodging:

1. Begin by researching the various neighbourhoods in the Californian city where you intend to settle. Take into account factors such as transportation options, proximity to your workplace or educational institution, and the availability of essential facilities like grocery stores and dining establishments.

2. Explore online property listings to identify apartments or houses that align with your preferences and budget. Some well-known websites in California for locating accommodations are Zillow, Apartments.com, and Trulia.

3. Engage with a real estate agency specializing in rentals. Many agencies in California cater to foreigners seeking housing and can assist you in finding a suitable residence. It's important to note that using a real estate agency may come with costs, often in the form of a brokerage fee.

4. Consider the option of sharing an apartment or house with roommates. This can be a cost-effective strategy for securing housing in California, particularly in pricier cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles.

5. Be prepared to furnish references and evidence of your income when applying for a rental property. Landlords in California typically request comprehensive documentation, so make sure to have all your paperwork organized.

6. Familiarize yourself with the local rental laws and regulations. For instance, in California, landlords might require a security deposit that usually amounts to one month's rent, and tenants are generally required to give a 30-day notice before moving out.

Remember that finding accommodation in California can take time and effort, so start your search early and be prepared to be patient. Good luck!



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Visa.

For expats relocating to California for work, understanding the most current visa requirements is vital. Depending on your expertise and situation, various visa categories are available, including the H-1B for specialized skills, L-1 for intra-company transfers, E-3 for Australians in specialty roles, and O-1 for those with exceptional abilities. Securing a job offer from a U.S. employer is typically a prerequisite for these visas, with the employer usually acting as the sponsor.

The process involves petition approval by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) after the employer files on your behalf. Documentation submission, including passport details, approved petitions, and application forms, occurs during the visa application phase at a U.S. embassy or consulate in your home country. Medical exams, background checks, and visa interviews might also be necessary depending on the specific visa type.

Once approved, a visa stamp in your passport permits entry to the U.S., and you'll need to go through customs and immigration checks upon arrival. However, due to potential changes in immigration policies, it's crucial to consult official sources or an immigration attorney for the latest and most accurate information.

[Admission requirements UK.Gov](#)

[California residency requirements](#)



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Visa FAQ.

"Can I work in California as an EU/EFTA citizen without a work permit?"

For EU/EFTA citizens relocating to California, it's important to note that work authorization is generally required to legally work in the United States. Commonly, individuals from the EU/EFTA region would need to obtain an appropriate work visa before engaging in employment within California or any other part of the United States.

The most prevalent work visa for skilled professionals is the H-1B visa, but there are other visa categories available based on specific circumstances and qualifications. These visas typically involve a process where the employer sponsors the individual, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approves the petition, and a visa is then issued at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

For accurate and up-to-date information regarding work authorization and visa requirements for EU/EFTA citizens intending to work in California or the United States, it's recommended to consult official sources such as the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), or seek guidance from immigration professionals.



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Tax & Pensions.

Tax and pensions are important aspects of living and working in California.
Here is some information about these topics:

Taxation:

California employs a progressive tax system, where tax rates generally increase as income levels rise. Tax rates can vary among counties and municipalities, and certain deductions and exemptions may apply to specific expenses like dependent care and education. It's crucial to acquaint yourself with the tax regulations applicable in your county of residence, as there can be variations across the state.

Social Security Contributions:

EU/EFTA citizens moving to California for work should note that the United States does not have a uniform social security system akin to those in European countries. Instead, there is a federal system that includes components like Social Security and Medicare. While there are mandatory contributions to Social Security and Medicare by both employees and employers, these contributions are not directly linked to the state of California and do not correspond to the OASI, DI, and UI elements mentioned. It's essential to understand the specifics of the U.S. federal social security system, which might differ from what is found in the EU/EFTA region.

Pension system

Pension System for EU/EFTA Expats in California, USA:

- Individual Approach:** Unlike centralized pension systems in Europe, the U.S. relies on individual retirement planning.
- Employer-Sponsored Plans:** Common options include 401(k) plans where employees contribute for retirement, often with employer matching.
- Social Security:** Eligible expats who work in the U.S. may qualify for federal Social Security retirement benefits based on earnings history.

It is important to understand the tax and pension system in California to ensure that you are contributing appropriately and receiving the benefits you are entitled to. If you have questions about your tax or pension situation, it is recommended that you speak with a local accountant or financial advisor.



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Payroll.

Payroll information in California can be quite complex due to USA's labour laws and high living costs. Here are some important and useful things to keep in mind:

Minimum wage: California enforces a state minimum wage that is regularly adjusted. As of 2023, the minimum wage in California is \$15.50 per hour. It's important to note that certain cities and counties within California may establish higher local minimum wage requirements due to variations in the cost of living.

Income taxes: California employs a progressive income tax system, wherein higher earnings correspond to higher tax rates. The state's income tax rates fluctuate based on factors such as your filing status and income level. Additionally, federal income taxes are applicable, further contributing to the overall tax responsibility.

Social Security contributions: In California, both employees and employers contribute to Social Security, which supports programs like retirement benefits and Medicare. The contribution rates are federally determined and remain consistent nationwide. They are calculated as a percentage of the employee's income, up to a specified earnings cap.

Bonus payments: in California vary based on company policies and may include performance-based, signing, or year-end bonuses.

Working hours: California's standard workweek is around 40 hours, with overtime pay for exceeding 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week, subject to legal limits.

Vacation days: for full-time employees in California aren't governed by a state law, giving employers discretion.

Sick Pay: California mandates paid sick leave for employees, accrued at about 1 hour per 30 worked, with usage for personal or family health needs.

It's important to note that payroll information can vary depending on your specific job, industry, and location. If you're moving to California or starting a new job, it's a good idea to speak with a local accountant or payroll specialist to ensure that you understand your rights and responsibilities as an employee.



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Vacation & Leave Entitlement.

The Vacation Regulation in short:

In California, the legal entitlement to paid leave varies. There is no fixed number of days specified by state law. Employers determine vacation policies, considering factors such as company policies and industry norms.

The Bank Holiday Regulation in short:

Bank holidays are not a mandated part of regular salary calculations in California. If an employee doesn't work on a recognized bank holiday (e.g., New Year's Day), there is generally no requirement to provide compensation for that day off.

Notice Periods:

Notice periods in California can vary depending on the employment contract and the nature of employment. During probation, notice periods are often shorter, typically around 2 days. For longer employment durations, notice periods might extend to 1 or 2 months.

Paternity Leave Conditions and Process:

California law provides for Paid Family Leave (PFL), which includes paternity leave. Eligible employees can take up to 8 weeks of PFL within a 12-month period following the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child. The compensation is calculated based on a percentage of the employee's earnings, up to a certain cap, as outlined in the state's PFL program. For more information, refer to the California Employment Development Department's website.

<https://edd.ca.gov/>



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Useful Websites.

California State Government Website

- <https://www.ca.gov/>

UK Government guidance for working in the USA

- [https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-the-usa#:~:text=You%20are%20only%20allowed%20to,green%20card%20\(permanent%20resident%20card\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-the-usa#:~:text=You%20are%20only%20allowed%20to,green%20card%20(permanent%20resident%20card))

Useful Websites – Accommodation

- Zillow - <https://www.zillow.com/ca>
- Homes - <https://www.homes.com/california/>
- Hertz - <https://www.hertz.com/rentacar/reservation/>
- Apartment finder - <https://www.apartmentfinder.com/>

More Useful Websites

- <https://expat-assurance.com>
- <https://www.britannia-movers.co.uk>
- <https://www.internationalcitizens.com/living-abroad/costs/usa.php>



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