

CALIFORNIA

Hello, my name is Mark Bosse and I'm a political officer here at the U.S. Embassy in Vienna. I'm here to talk you about my home state of California, the most populous state in the United States of America.

I was born and raised in Orange County, just south of Los Angeles in southern California. Orange County is famous for the TV show "The O.C.", which was filmed here, its beautiful beaches, and of course, Disneyland. When my parents moved to California from the state of Nebraska in the 1950s, much of the state was still orange trees and scrub brush. Today California boasts the world's sixth largest economy and is home to some of the world's leading companies such as Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and Pixar, as well as famous sports teams such as the Los Angeles Lakers and the San Diego Chargers.

And of course there's Hollywood, which serves as one of the iconic creators and sellers of the California culture. If you go to Hollywood, you might even run into a fellow Austrian!

The name California comes from the mythical Spanish queen Califa, who was featured in a romance novel written around the time the first Spanish explorers came to California in the 1500s. The Spanish explorers originally thought that California was an island. They couldn't have been more wrong, but with the miles of rugged coastline and pristine beaches, it was an easy mistake to make!

Those Spanish explorers left California with more than its name. As I learned in grade school, most of the major cities in California, starting with San Diego and going all up through Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, and San Francisco, had their humble beginnings as Spanish missions founded in the 17 and 1800's. Any Californian school kid can tell you that each major California city is one day's donkey ride from the next one. That's because the Spanish missionaries didn't want to spend more than one day on a donkey travelling from one mission to the next. Who can blame them! And believe me, in rush hour traffic in LA, riding a donkey doesn't seem like such a bad option.

California's nickname is the golden state, which many people believe comes from the endless days of perfect weather, but actually refers to California's experience during the gold rush era. In 1849 gold was discovered in the hills

outside of San Francisco. This brought waves of treasure seekers from other parts of the United States, and from all over the world.

Though only a few got rich in the gold rush, it helped establish California as a destination for people seeking a new life and a new start. That tradition continues today, with California boasting large and vibrant immigrant communities from all over the world. This has earned California the nickname “The melting pot within the melting pot.”

Like many Californians, my roots come from other places. My great grandparents came from Germany to start a new life in America. When my father joined the U.S. Marine Corps and was stationed in southern California, he brought his new bride, my mother, with him. Their plans were to spend two years in California and then return home to Nebraska. Fifty-seven years, fourteen kids, and 33 grandkids later they are still living the California dream, the dream that still pulls thousands of new immigrants to California every year.

I hope you'll have the chance to visit California soon. If you do, I'm sure you'll have an experience that is as unique as California itself. And be sure to keep your eye out for Queen Califa! Hasta pronto amigos, adios!