



HUMBOLDT
COUNTY
CALIFORNIA



County Profile

Geography

Located on the far North Coast of California, 200 miles north of San Francisco and about 50 miles south of the southern Oregon border, Humboldt County is situated along the Pacific coast in Northern California's rugged Coastal (Mountain) Ranges, bordered on the north by Del Norte County, on the east by Siskiyou and Trinity counties, on the south by Mendocino County and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. The county encompasses 2.3 million acres, 80% of which is forestlands, protected redwoods and recreational areas. A densely forested, mountainous, rural county with about 110 miles of coastline, more than any other county in the state, Humboldt contains over forty percent of all remaining old growth Coast Redwood forests, the vast majority of which is protected or strictly conserved within dozens of national, state, and local forests and parks, totaling approximately 680,000 acres (over 1,000 square miles). Humboldt's highest point is Salmon Mountain at 6,962 feet. Its lowest point is located in Samoa at 20 feet. Humboldt Bay, California's second largest natural bay, is the only deep water port between San Francisco and Coos Bay, Oregon, and is located at the midpoint of the county. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 4,052 square miles of which 3,568 square miles is land and 484 square miles (12%) is water. Located inside Humboldt County is Cape Mendocino, the westernmost point in California (longitude 124 degrees, 24 minutes, 30 seconds).

U.S. Highway 101 links the county to the rest of coastal California to the south and the coast of Oregon to the north. Highway 299 links the county to Interstate 5 to the east. The county's regional airport in McKinleyville has daily flights to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Denver, Colorado.

Humboldt County's major rivers include (in order of largest to smallest): Klamath River, Eel River, Trinity River, Mad River, Redwood Creek, Van Duzen River, Eel River syncline group (composed of the South Fork, the North Fork, and the Salt River), Mattole River, Salmon River, Elk River, Bear River and Little River.

Scenery

The Humboldt county climate is ideal for growth of the world's tallest tree - the coastal redwood. Though these trees are found from southern Oregon to the Big Sur area of California, Humboldt County contains the most impressive collection of Sequoia sempervirens. The county is home to Redwood National and State Parks, Humboldt Redwoods State Park (The Avenue of the Giants), and a number of other groves of these magnificent trees.

Humboldt County also contains more than 40 parks, forests, reserves and recreational areas, numerous beaches, six wild and scenic rivers and an impressive collection of Victorian structures from the early days of county history. Lonely Planet picked California's Redwood Coast as the best U.S. place to visit in 2018.

Climate

The coastal zone of the county experiences very wet, cool winters and dry, mild foggy summers. Winter rainstorms are frequent, with averages from 30 inches to 100 inches a year, varying with elevation. The coastal zone experiences a number of frosty nights in winter and early spring, though snowfall is rare. Winter temps range from the high 50's to low 30's. Inland areas of the county also experience wet, cool winters. Snowfall is common at elevations over 3,000 ft throughout the winter months.

Coastal summers are cool to mild, with frequent fog. Temps range from 70's to upper 40's with average highs in the 60's. Summer displays the sharpest difference between the coastal and inland climates. Maximum readings for the year often do not exceed 80 on the coast, while 100 degree plus readings occur frequently in the mountain valleys in eastern and southern parts of the county including Orleans, Hoopa, Willow Creek, Garberville, Honeydew and inland river valleys.

Humboldt County is an area of moderate temperatures and considerable precipitation. In most years, rainfall is experienced each month of the year, although amounts are negligible from June through August. Seasonal totals average more than 40 inches in the driest area, and exceed 100 inches in the zones of heavy precipitation. Because of the moisture

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and moderate temperature, the average relative humidity is high. Largely as a result of the proximity to the Pacific Ocean, the adjoining coastal area has one of the coolest, most stable temperature regimes to be found anywhere. The marine influence is less pronounced in the inland areas and experiences wider variations of temperature and lower humidity.

Historically, Humboldt County and the entire far north coast have had many earthquakes over 6.0 magnitude. The 1992 Cape Mendocino earthquakes were a series of three major earthquakes that occurred off the coast of Cape Mendocino, California on April 25 and 26, 1992, the largest being a 7.2. Ninety-five people were injured and property in the county sustained considerable damage. In 2010 a 6.5 magnitude earthquake struck offshore, 33 mi. (53 km) west of Eureka, resulting in only minor injuries and some structural damage to houses and utilities, and no fatalities reported. On Dec. 20, 2022, a 6.4 magnitude struck Humboldt County. Following the initial earthquake, the county experienced over 200 aftershocks, one of which being a 5.4 magnitude on Jan.1, 2023 that resulted in a significant increase of reported structural damages. As a result of these earthquakes, approximately 381 dwelling units were affected, impacting approximately 24.58% of the City of Rio Dell's housing stock, including 90 structures deemed unsafe to occupy.

Demographics

As of the 2020 census, the population was 136,463. The county seat is Eureka. Its primary population centers are Eureka, the site of College of the Redwoods main campus and the smaller college town of Arcata, the site of Humboldt State University. The racial makeup of Humboldt County was 71.9% White, 1.4% African American, 6.2% Native American, 2.7% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander, 5.7% from other races and 11.8% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 13.2%. Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka (county seat), Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell and Trinidad are all incorporated cities

Industry

Humboldt County is known for its redwood trees and many acres of private redwood timberland make Humboldt the top timber producer in California. The lush river bottoms adjacent to the ocean are renowned for producing rich, high-quality dairy products. Somewhat more inland the warmer valleys have historically produced abundant apples and other fruit. More recently vineyards have been planted in the Trinity, Klamath, Mattole and upper Eel River valleys. With nearly 1,500,000 acres of combined public and private forest in production, Humboldt County alone produces 20% of total volume and 30% of the total value of all forest products produced in California.

Humboldt County is also known for its family operated dairy farms. The Humboldt Creamery, a significant producer of high grade ice cream and other dairy products, still operates from the original headquarters located at Fernbridge adjacent to the Eel River. Humboldt County also locally produces specialty goat cheese, or chevre, products and farms oysters, which are sold throughout the world.

Humboldt County has gained notoriety for its cultural attributes associated with the cultivation and proliferation of cannabis. In the years before marijuana legalization (early 1970s-late 1980s), Humboldt County saw a large migration of the Bay Area counter-culture to its region. The rural culture and hippie scene eventually collaborated to create a rural community in which cannabis became the center of the economy. The 2008 independent feature film Humboldt County centers on the county's cannabis cultivation subculture. The region has also been featured on several nationally broadcast investigative journalism television series and specials related to local law enforcement eradication activities and area culture. In 2017, Humboldt added secure track and trace protocols for cannabis to its list of regulatory accomplishments. The program is based on security protocols that have been perfected over decades in other industries, including pharmaceuticals, tobacco and alcohol.

History

The original inhabitants of the area now known as Humboldt County include the Native American Wiyot, Yurok, Hupa, Karuk, Chilula, Whilkut, Tsnungwe, Tolowa and the Eel River Athapaskan peoples, including the Wailaki, Mattole and Nongatl. One of the largest Wiyot villages, Tolowot, was located on Indian Island in Humboldt Bay. Founded around 900 BC, it contains a shell midden (or shell mound, an archaeological feature consisting mainly of mollusk shells, associated with past villages and debris of human activity as a designated village dump site) 6 acres in size and 14 feet deep. It was the site of the February 26, 1860 massacre of the Wiyot people that was recorded by author Bret Harte, living in Union

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(present-day Arcata). Between 60 and 200 Wiyot men, women, and children were killed that night. Tolowot is now a restricted site and a National Historic Landmark. Humboldt County has eight Indian reservations lying within its borders: Big Lagoon Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation, Karuk Indian Reservation (partly in Siskiyou County), Rohnerville Rancheria, Table Bluff Rancheria, Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria and Yurok Indian Reservation (partly in Del Norte County). Only four other counties in the United States have more: San Diego County, California; Sandoval County, New Mexico; Riverside County, California and Mendocino County, California. The Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation is the largest in the state of California, a state that generally has very small reservations (although very numerous) relative to those in other states.

Humboldt County proper was formed in 1853 from parts of Trinity County to the east. The first recorded entry by people of European origin was a landing by the Spanish in 1775 in Trinidad. The first recorded entry of Humboldt Bay by non-natives was an 1806 visit from a sea otter hunting party from Sitka, AK employed by the Russian American Company. The hunting party included Captain Jonathan Winship, an American, and some Aleut hunters. The bay was not visited again by people of European origin until 1849 when Josiah Gregg's party visited. In 1850, Douglas Ottinger and Hans Buhne entered the bay, naming it Humboldt in honor of the great naturalist and world explorer, Alexander von Humboldt, which is the name that was later applied to the county as a whole.

Government

Humboldt County is in California's 2nd congressional district, represented by Democrat Jared Huffman. In the state legislature, Humboldt is part of the 2nd Senate District, represented by Democrat Mike McGuire, and the 2nd Assembly District, represented by Democrat Jim Wood. At the local government level, incorporated cities are run by councils made up of a mayor, city manager, and councilmembers. Unincorporated areas and communities are represented by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, who direct the county's elected and appointed department heads.

Education

Post-secondary education is offered locally at the College of the Redwoods community college and California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt (Cal Poly Humboldt) well known for its exceptional forestry, botany, anthropology, and marine biology programs. Cal Poly Humboldt is one of three polytechnic universities in the California State University system. Blue Lake's Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre offers accredited three-year Masters of Fine Arts in Ensemble Based Physical Theatre.

Travel & Tourism

The only commercial airport in Humboldt County, the California Redwood Coast - Humboldt County Airport formerly known as the Arcata-Eureka Airport, is located in McKinleyville (north of Arcata). Other (general aviation) airports are located in Dinsmore, Garberville, Kneeland, Murray Field (Eureka), Samoa Field and Rohnerville (Fortuna).

Area cities and towns are known for hundreds of ornate examples of Victorian architecture.

Humboldt has five national parks including Redwood National Park and Six Rivers National Forest; fifteen state parks including Redwood State Park, Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, Trinidad State Beach, Patrick's Point State Park, Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, Richardson Grove State Park and Azalea State Reserve and thirteen county parks including Big Lagoon County Park, Freshwater County Park, Moonstone Beach and Van Duzen Pamplin Grove.

Throughout the year, Humboldt hosts a variety of events, including the Redwood Coast Jazz Festival, Tour of the Unknown Coast (by Bicycle), World-Championship Kinetic Sculpture Race, Rhododendron Festival and Parade, Arcata Oyster Festival, Blues by the Bay, Redwood Acres Fair, Fourth of July Festivals, Fortuna Rodeo, Humboldt County Fair, Trinidad Fish Festival, Blackberry Festival, Apple Harvest Festival, Redwood Run and Truckers Christmas Parade.

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Movies filmed in Humboldt include Swiss Army Man, Woodshock, The Love Witch, The Ritual, Willow Creek, After Earth, Humboldt County, The Majestic, Almost Heroes, Jurassic Park: The Lost World, Outbreak, Halloween III and Star Wars: Return of the Jedi. TV shows include episodes of 48 hours, Survivorman, Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives, Finding Bigfoot, Intervention, Marijuana, Monster Fish, Lonely Planet, Hoarders, Crime Watch Daily With Chris Hansen, On the Case with Paula Zahn and California Gold With Heull Howser.