



'49ers took many different routes to get to California as fast or as easily as possible. Take a look at the data on the three most common routes to California and figure out which one is the best for you and your party!



- Oregon Trail
- California Trail

THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAIL

Starts in Missouri, splits off in Idaho to lead to either Oregon City or CA gold fields.

Distance: about 3,000 miles

Travel Time: 3 to 7 months

Benefits: Shortest of all established routes

Drawbacks: 2,000 miles of walking, sometimes in the hot sun during the summer months and through snow in the winter. Cholera, pneumonia and diphtheria are common along this trail. You will not only have to provide for family, but for animals as well.

Best time to take this route: April-May, when winter has passed but summer heat hasn't started in earnest yet.



THE PANAMA SHORTCUT

Leaves from the east coast and goes through Panama then up the West coast.

Distance: 7,000 miles

Estimated travel time: 2 to 3 months

Benefits: 8,000 miles shorter than the Cape Horn route.

Drawbacks: Malaria and cholera were common on this route. Have to get out and walk when you get to Panama and pass through disease-ridden jungle.

Best time to take this route: December – February: May–November is rainy season in Panama.

CAPE HORN ROUTE

Leaves from the East coast and the South, goes all the way down to Cape Horn (the southernmost tip of South America), then back up the western coast of South America, Mexico, and finally the United States.

Distance: 15,000 miles

Estimated travel time: 4 to 8 months

Benefits: pretty in good weather. Probably the safest of all routes.

Drawbacks: Seasickness was a serious risk, hot weather spoiled the food quickly, and a single ticket could be expensive (\$100 to \$1000). There are cold, harsh winds around the cape, and if your ship gets lost you are on your way to Antarctica.

Best time to take this route: Leave in American fall or winter, so that by the time you get to the Cape it will be their summer – since you're on the other side of the Equator, the seasons are reversed!

THINK ABOUT IT

If you were leaving from: New Orleans with: 7 people
What route and time of year would be best for your party? Why?

If you were leaving from: Philadelphia with: 50 people
What route and time of year would be best for your party? Why?

If you were leaving from: Wisconsin with: 15 people
What route and time of year would be best for your party? Why?

What would the best way to get there be nowadays? Explain.