

Amtrak California Zephyr

Amtrak's Route Guide - Train #5 & Train #6

San Francisco * Salt Lake City * Chicago

Welcome Aboard!

You're traveling on board Amtrak's Superliner train --- the California Zephyr. While on board, you'll be experiencing the utmost in train travel, along with some of the country's most spectacular and well-known scenery: the Rockies and Sierra Nevadas; the snow-topped mountains, the exciting golden sunsets of the West.

Route Guide of travel on the Amtrak California Zephyr. You may want to print this out and take it with you on your trip. Amtrak no longer provides a Route Guide that is this detailed.

Scenic Photo Tips

SCENIC SPOTS: Your train passes many beautiful and interesting sights. The "camera" symbol on your Route Guide Map marks the best spots, so have your camera ready!

OUTSIDE SHOTS: Medium-speed films (ASA 64 or higher) are recommended for shooting scenery through the train windows. If your shutter speed is adjustable and light conditions permit, set it at a higher speed (1/125 or 1/250 sec.) for the clearest results. Hold your lens close to the window to eliminate glare and reflections.

INSIDE SHOTS: Flash is recommended. To avoid glare and reflections, do not point the flash directly at the windows.

The California Zephyr

Explore the beauty, romance and exciting history of the western frontier.

Amtrak's Superliner Service to Chicago offers a wide variety of ways to explore the beauty, romance and exciting history of the western frontier.

This guide outlines highlights of the scenery and historic landmarks along the route of the California Zephyr.

This guide is written from west to east, noting how many minutes past the previous Amtrak station you can expect to see a particular sight, and whether you should look to your right or left. The first time reference tells you how far that point is from the next

Amtrak station to the west, and the second time, how far it is to the next Amtrak stop to the east. If you're traveling westward, just begin at Chicago or Salt Lake City or your point of origin and read the entries in reverse order. Remember to look left when we've indicated to look right, and right when we've indicated to look left.

Note that all *AMTRAK STATIONS* are in capital letters to set them apart from *towns and regions* through which the California Zephyr travels but makes no stop. Use this guide along with an Amtrak timetable to determine station times. All times in this guide are approximate.

The California Zephyr

The discovery of gold in the California hills brought thousands of pioneers by land and sea to the golden city of San Francisco. Eventually, the route of the historic overland trek would include railroads, telegraph lines and way stations throughout the hostile unmapped territory. In 1869, the nation was linked by the first transcontinental railroad when the Golden Spike was driven at Promontory, Utah. These are some of the same lines which the California Zephyr follows today.

The cross-country journey includes the awesome challenge of crossing the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains. Many of the cities and towns in the wild west survived boom and bust times because they were on the railroad lines that make up the route of the California Zephyr today. Sit back and enjoy the beauty of the world famous scenery along the California Zephyr route.

SAN FRANCISCO Unmatched charm and character are the trademarks of this city. The unusual skyline is marked by ultramodern skyscrapers, the red-tiled roofs of Spanish architecture, the quaint victorian homes of the Mission district and prestigious residential areas of Telegraph Hill, Nob Hill and Pacific Heights. This cosmopolitan cultural center is the home of world famous restaurants, galleries and shops. San Francisco has the west coast "Wall Street", a financial district comprised of several of the world's largest banks. It has world class ballet, symphony and opera companies. Amtrak passengers begin and end their journey to San Francisco with a bus ride across San Francisco Bay to or from the Oakland train terminal.

San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridge On the way to and from the Amtrak terminal in Oakland, passengers cross this bridge and Yerba Buena Island, passing the Treasure Island Naval Station. On the left is a spectacular view of San Francisco, the island of Alcatraz and, in the distance, the beautiful Golden Gate Bridge. On the Oakland side, the port of Oakland is on the right. The University of California at Berkeley's big Gothic clock tower, "Campanile," can be seen nestled on the hillside on the left.

EMERYVILLE This is the terminus for Amtrak trains serving San Francisco. Shuttle buses to and from San Francisco are waiting for passengers at trainside. The train starts its journey on the tracks of the Southern Pacific Lines, which it follows as far east as Winnemucca, Nevada.

RICHMOND This station is the interchange with the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system, offering connections to points throughout the region. BART trains can be seen on the right. Between Oakland and Richmond, look for the skyline of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge on the left, across San Francisco Bay.

San Pablo Bay and the Carquinez Strait (5 Min/10 Min) This large shipping lane and recreational waterway is also home of the Mare Island Shipyard, which can be seen across the water on the left side of the train. The California and Hawaii (C&H) Sugar plant is on the left track just after the Carquinez Bridge. Across the strait on the left of the bridge is the California Maritime Academy.

MARTINEZ Don Ignacio Martinez was the Spanish governor of this area and his surname graces the town. To the south of Martinez is the home of John Muir, naturalist and conservationist, who walked across most of America and convinced President Theodore Roosevelt that "wilderness is a necessity." Benicia, to the left across the bridge, was the capital of the state from 1853 to 1854 before the statehouse was moved to Sacramento. Here the train crosses the Carquinez Strait at the mouth of the Suisun Bay on the Martinez-Benicia Bridge. To the right is a loading dock where 150,000 automobiles per year are unloaded from Japan.

The "Mothball Fleet" (3 Min/7 Min) A fleet of ships has been mothballed in the **Suisun Bay** to the right of the train. These are mostly World War II ships, though some of them saw action in Desert Storm in 1991. The mountain in the distance to the far right is Mt. Diablo. The beacon on the top was shut off after the Pearl Harbor surprise attack. World War II veterans turn on the light once a year on December 7th.

Suisun Marsh (12 Min/8 Min) Winds over this marsh area provide an ideal site for an experimental wind farm which was developed here by the Boeing Corporation. Located up on the ridge to the left, it generates electricity, using the propellers you see; each propeller is 150 feet long. The flat land surrounding the Suisun Marsh allows the train to travel at approximately 79 miles per hour.

SUISUN-FAIRFIELD Large Air Force transport aircraft can be seen to the right of the train as they take off and land at Travis Air Force Base. Beyond the ridge to the left is the wine country of Napa Valley.

DAVIS Agriculture and veterinary medicine are specialties studied at this campus of the University of California. The school's farm animals include llamas and pygmy goats which can be seen from the left side of the train. Davis had the nation's first energy conservation building code. The 1913 Davis adobe train station is a historic landmark.

The Great Central Valley (10 Min/15 Min) This is part of the Great Central Valley and the Yolo Basin, which produces over one billion pounds of rice yearly. On both sides of the train is the Sacramento Valley. The Coastal Range can be seen to the distant left and the Sierras to the distant right. The railroad and nearby highway are elevated at some points along this stretch to allow for the controlled flooding of crops.

SACRAMENTO Sacramento was the western terminus for the 121 Pony Express riders who rode to this stop in 1860. It was also the starting point for the Central Pacific Railroad in 1863. West of the city, the train crosses the Sacramento River and passes by the California State Railroad Museum on the right. Sacramento is the capital of California Almond Growers Exchange. California grows over two million pounds of almonds annually, and 70% of these are processed on this 16-acre, \$35 million plant. The plant can be seen on both sides of the track on the eastern end of Sacramento. The train crosses the American River on the eastern edge of Sacramento.

McClellan Air Force Base (15 Min/10 Min) The airfield and depots are visible to the left. Also look for almond groves here in the Sacramento Valley. Beehives are placed in the fields to pollinate crops.

ROSEVILLE This railroad town is home to Southern Pacific Lines' huge diesel shops, to the right.

Auburn (22 Min/23 Min) To the south of Auburn is Coloma, the site of Sutter's Mill, where gold was discovered at Sutter's Run in 1848, setting off the California Gold Rush. Outlaws were tried and hanged in the gold-domed courthouse to the right built in 1894. Firehouse #1, on the right, was built in 1893.

COLFAX Notice the bank inside an old railroad car to the left and the old hotel by the depot, built in 1903. Colfax farmers grow Bartlett pears, Hungarian prunes and Tokay grapes. From here to Reno the train crosses the forbidding Sierra Nevada Range (Spanish for "snowy mountains").

Cape Horn (8 Min/118 Min) Just outside of Colfax is Long Ravine Trestle. Look out the right side and note the steep slope directly ahead of the train. This is Cape Horn, the steepest slope on the route of the Zephyr. The rail crews lowered Chinese laborers down in baskets in order to hack away a narrow ledge which was expanded into the present track. Colfax can be seen across the valley to the right.

Gold Run (21 Min/106 Min) The little town of Gold Run with the Post Office on the right is all that remains of an enormously successful hydraulic mining site that was later outlawed in 1884. Water from the Sierras was directed into an 8-foot brass nozzle called a monitor. Water blasted away the soil, leaving only the gold to be collected. Today the train crosses the mine site along a narrow stretch. Originally, this was all one hill. The pools down below the tracks are the only reminder of the acres and acres of soil washed away.

Alta (29 Min/97 Min) The water troughs just past Alta are flumes built by the gold miners. The water is now used to irrigate farms as far away as Roseville and Loomis at the base of the Sierras.

American River Canyon (33 Min/92 Min) The breathtaking vista to the right of the train is the valley of the North Fork of the American River, located 1,500 to 2,000 feet below

the track. Stretches of rock and slag on the far mountain are old gold mines, including the large Rawhide mine. The valley extends all the way to Sacramento.

Emigrant Gap (56 Min/70 Min) The train crosses I-80 at Emigrant Gap. On the left side is the beautiful Bear Valley. The nearby lake on the left is Lake Spalding, originally a reservoir for hydraulic mining and now used for hydroelectric power.

Soda Springs (92 Min/34 Min) The two Cascade Lakes are above the train. Two bridges allow their runoff to flow beneath the tracks at Soda Springs. The brown lodge of the Soda Springs Ski Resort can be seen on the right, next to Lake Van Norden. Across the valley on the left side of the train is Castle Park, a mountain with a rock formation that looks like a castle on top. To the left of this peak is Black Butte Mountain, 8,030 feet above sea level.

Norden (96 Min/30 Min) This is where the Southern Pacific Lines maintain a turntable and check station. It also has a few of the 16 original sheds that were built to protect a full 38 miles of track from snow, which averages over 34 feet yearly. Known as "The Hill," Donner Pass was one of the toughest of railroad tracks to lay down in the entire country.

Mt. Judah (98 Min/23 Min) When crossing the summit of the climb over the Sierras between Norden and Truckee, the train enters a tunnel through Mt. Judah, approximately 7,000 feet above sea level and named after Theodore Judah, the chief surveyor for the Central Pacific Railroad. The ski resort at the west portal of the tunnel is Sugar Bowl -- on the slopes of Mt. Lincoln and Crow's Nest Mountains. A ski lift on an overhead trestle carries skiers over the railroad track.

Donner Lake (107 Min/18 Min) On the eastern side of the tunnel, to the left of the train, is Donner Lake. It was here that the Donner Party, led by George and Jacob Donner, was stranded. These 89 Illinois settlers were en route to California when they were trapped in a snow storm near the western shore of the lake. After many attempts to escape, all but 47 of the pioneers died of starvation. Those who did survive had resorted to cannibalism.

Stanford Curve (113 Min/12 Min) This is a series of descending plateaus where the train crosses back and forth on the mountain in a horseshoe turn. Below the train is a panoramic view of the Truckee Basin.

TRUCKEE Tro-Key was a Paiute Indian chief and the father of Winnemucca. Truckee has eight winter resorts within ten miles, including Squaw Valley, Alpine Meadows and Sugar Bowl. You'll notice two signs on the right as the train passes through town, "Hotel/steam heated/\$1.00" and the renovated former Bank of America building that now proclaims it is the "Bar of America." The train follows the Truckee River to Fernley.

Boca (14 Min/40 Min) A bridge across the highway and a small dam to the left are all that remain of the town of Boca. It was called the "coldest place in the nation" because it

provided ice for San Francisco and the trains traveled through here. The rock formations that resemble dark castle spires are called "Hoodoo Pillars."

California/Nevada State Line (28 Min/20 Min) is indicated by a small marker to the left of the train.

Verdi (33 Min/16 Min) A hydroelectric power generator can be seen across the Truckee. It is powered by a water flume -- wooden troughs that collect water at four sites in the mountains. These flumes can be seen all through the Truckee Valley from Reno on both sides of the train. In 1870, the first train robbery in the West occurred in Verdi.

RENO Known as the "Biggest Little City in the World," Reno began as a quiet rail stop and later became a boom town. The city fathers legalized prizefights, hosting the Jim Jeffries vs. Jack Johnson fight in 1910. Gambling was legalized in 1931. Today, marquees on Reno's hotels on both sides of the train announce famous entertainers who draw people into the casinos. Reno's newest attraction is the William F. Harrah National Automobile Museum, featuring an extensive and comprehensive collection.

SPARKS The Nugget Casino and Hotel is to the left. This is a servicing stop where the train is refueled and serviced.