



**40° North – Humboldt County, California**

I am sure everyone has an image of ‘sunny California’.

However, there’s another part of California that few people know about. At 40° North the scene changes.

To me, Humboldt County, on the North Coast, is remarkably similar to Tasmania. Wild winds blow off the Pacific Ocean slamming 40-foot [12-metre] waves against the rocky shores and building massive sand dunes that are miles long. Just as the roaring forties pound the West Coast of Tasmania, Pacific storms bring hurricane-strength winds. Fast-flowing rivers provide some of California’s best white-water rafting and, as well, world-class kayaking.

Eureka, the county seat and biggest city on the coast between San Francisco and Oregon, is home to only 27,000 people. Surrounded by 160,000 acres [64,752 hectares] of redwood forests it is a lumber town that has preserved much of its historic architecture. Victorian mansions adorn the city; the most famous of all, the William Carson Mansion, stands proudly on the waterfront.

Great seafood is a feature of life here. It’s a place where your favourite neighbour shows up on your doorstep with fresh fish caught earlier that day. As well, crab feeds are common in the winter. Regional delicacies also include fresh line-caught salmon and locally harvested oysters of every size. We enjoy an annual oyster festival, complete with an oyster-calling contest!

Grey whales migrate along the coastline on their annual journey from Alaska to Baja California.

The area is home to 30 local wineries and produces wonderful cheeses. Humboldt Fog, a soft goat cheese made with a thin layer of edible vegetable ash in the centre, is one of the local favourites that keeps winning international awards.

The revered redwood is as important to California’s culture and history as the Huon pine is to Tasmania’s. Much of San Francisco, 457 km to the south, was built with redwood lumber from Humboldt County. The durability of the lumber and exceptionally beautiful grain are prized by woodworkers. Recently it was confirmed that the world’s tallest tree, at a height of 115.5 metres, is located in Redwood National Park. (Some can live for as long as 2000 years.) Logging of these dense forests began in the mid-1800s, at times with crews working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. By 1856 seven sawmills were producing two million board feet of lumber each month. This proved to be unsustainable. With only three per cent of the old-growth redwoods still standing, logging has become highly controversial. Several California state parks and the Redwood National Park now protect the old growth from being logged. These parks – combined – are now a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve.

To the east is the Six Rivers National Forest where six major waterways flow.



The 360 miles [580 km] of wild, scenic rivers supply almost nine per cent of California’s total runoff, while offering many opportunities for recreation. The long, narrow band of woodland that stretches to the Oregon border supports, among other species, bald eagles, bears and mountain lions.

Miles of green farmland lie tucked in between the Pacific Ocean and the wild and wondrous mountains. The combination of a temperate climate with an average rainfall of 965 mm creates a long growing season, allowing farmers to raise grass-fed beef without antibiotics or synthetic hormones. Humboldt Creamery, a local dairy co-op, uses milk from cows that roam freely in open pastures for most of the year. Taking care of the environment is essential for our future and Humboldt County has taken a progressive stance in sustainable living.

California is like two different states. Most people visit the southern part, with its theme parks, beaches, and everything that city life has to offer. But the northern part is another world.

If you ever come to California, make sure you cross the Golden Gate Bridge and head north – you may want to stop in the Napa Valley for some wine tasting and gastronomic delights. Then get on the Redwood Highway and marvel at our natural surroundings. Escape the crowds and explore the beauty of northern California. As a Tasmanian, you’ll probably feel right at home.

**Betsy Husband**  
*California, USA*



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE RIGHT

- Eureka
- Carson Mansion, Eureka
- Surfers at sunset
- Wild elk
- Redwoods

<b>Average temperature:</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Winter</b>
Tasmania	11–22 °C	4–13 °C
Humboldt	11–19 °C	5–12 °C
<b>Average rainfall:</b>		
Tasmania	600 mm	
Humboldt	965 mm	
<b>Latitude:</b>		
Tasmania	40–44° South	
Humboldt	40–42° North	

