

## California Architecture

When you drive through your hometown or visit other areas of California, you may notice that many buildings have a similar design. Stuccoed or plastered white walls, tiled roofs, arched doors or windows, and courtyards are a few features that might catch your eye. This architectural style is called Mission, and it's been an important part of California's history and culture for over 200 years. Architecture is the art and science of designing buildings and structures. The design of a building can say a lot about the history and culture of the people who built it.

In California, some of the first architects were Spanish priests who arrived in 1769 when the territory was a colony of Spain.

They established mission churches to convert local Indians to Christianity. Permanent settlements, called pueblos, grew around these churches. By 1823, 21 missions stood along the California coast. Some became major cities, such as San Diego and San Francisco. These early mission settlements were the foundation for California's rich history and cultural diversity.

Franciscan missionary Junipero Serra led the first expedition of Spanish soldiers and priests up the California coast in 1769. These men weren't trained carpenters or builders, so they tried to copy structural designs that were common back in their homeland. As a result, California missions featured different Spanish architectural styles. The two major influences were Roman and Moorish design elements. Built in 1786, Mission Santa Barbara had an arch-and-dome construction similar to structures seen in Spain or other parts of Europe.

About 2,000 years ago, the Roman Empire controlled much of Europe, including Spain. One of their lasting legacies was architecture. The Romans used half-round arches in most of their public buildings, like the Colosseum, and it was a design element seen throughout Europe. Other Roman elements in mission design included belfries, or bell towers, and stone facades. A facade is the front of a building. And at Mission Santa Barbara, the facade was patterned after an ancient temple in Rome. The original vaulted roof of Mission San Gabriel Archangel near Los Angeles was modeled after a cathedral in Cordoba, Spain.

Here Moorish design elements and patterns were used, including horseshoe-shaped arches and detailed carvings in the stonework. The Moors were a Muslim people from northern Africa who ruled Spain until 1492. They left a lasting influence on Spanish culture, art, and architecture. In fact, the cathedral in Cordoba, Spain, that Serra used as a model for Mission San Gabriel Archangel was originally a Moorish mosque. Carmel Mission, in Northern California, also shows a Moorish influence. While some missions showed Roman design elements and others Moorish patterns, most all of them had fountains in their courtyard, beautiful gardens, and large, open spaces where people could gather or hold religious celebrations.

When you think of New York City, you think of skyscrapers. Georgia and other Southern states remind you of plantation homes.

New England states like Massachusetts bring to mind colonial buildings. Now when you think of California, you'll recognize that Spanish Mission is the state's signature architectural style.

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