

Top 15 Best Banks in California | 2016 Ranking Comparison

2016 RANKING & REVIEWS TOP BANKS IN CALIFORNIA

Intro: Finding the Best Banks in California, U.S.

Being considered one of the best banks in California is no small achievement.

While the banking landscape in California may have changed significantly over the past two-plus decades, the state remains a highly competitive battleground for financial services companies.

There is a dynamic mix of national and regional banks in California, with local, private, public, and international ownership structures as well as non-bank lenders and other financial services providers.

This includes banks in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and other areas in Southern and Northern California.



Award Emblem: Top 15 Best Banks in California

According to usbanklocations.com, there are currently more than 240 banks actively operating across Southern and Northern California, with almost 7,200 branch banking locations.

The top banks in California, as selected using AdvisoryHQ's proprietary ranking methodology, represent some of the best managed and financially vibrant institutions in the state as well as in the nation.

While we were able to identify some of the best banks in Los Angeles, best banks in San Diego, and other best banks in Southern California, several of the institutions on our top banks in California list represent smaller markets in Northern and Central California.

Other banks have extensive retail branch networks that span wide areas of the state.

AdvisoryHQ's List of the Top 15 Best Banks in California

- **Bank of the West**
- **BBVA Compass Bank**

- [CIT Bank/OneWest Bank](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [City National Bank](#)
- [Comerica Bank](#)
- [East West Bank](#)
- [MUFG Union Bank](#)
- [Pacific Western Bank](#)
- [Rabobank](#)
- [Tri Counties Bank](#)
- [U.S. Bank](#)
- [Umpqua Bank](#)
- [Wells Fargo Bank](#)
- [Westamerica Bank](#)

List is sorted alphabetically (click any of the names above to go directly to the detailed review section for that bank)

AdvisoryHQ’s Methodology for Selecting the Top Banks in California

What methodology did we use in selecting this list of best banks in California?

Using publicly available sources, AdvisoryHQ identified a wide range of banks that provide services in California and the surrounding areas.

We then applied AdvisoryHQ’s [“Breakthrough Selection Methodology”](#) to identify the final list of top banks that provide services to communities in and around Northern, Central, and Southern California.

The Top 15 Best Banks in California

Banks in California	Location
Bank of the West	A Lot of Areas in CA
BBVA Compass Bank	Southern and Northern California

CIT BANK	Southern and Northern California
Citibank	A Lot of Areas in CA
City National Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA
Comerica Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA
East West Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA
MUFG Union Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA
Pacific Western Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA
Rabobank	A Lot of Areas in CA
Tri Counties Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA
U.S. Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA
Umpqua Bank	Numerous Areas in CA
Wells Fargo Bank	Southern and Northern California
Westamerica Bank	A Lot of Areas in CA

(List is sorted alphabetically)

Detailed Review – Top Ranking Best Banks in California

Below, please find the detailed review of each institution on our list of top banks in California.

We have highlighted some of the factors that allowed these best banks in California to score so high in our selection ranking.

Bank of the West Review

With a history dating back to the gold rush days of the American West, [Bank of the West](#) has grown as a result of both new branch openings and acquisitions in recent decades to become one of the largest banks in California. Established in the Golden State in the 1870s, the bank now operates more than 600 retail branches and business offices in 22 U.S. states, including New York and Chicago as well as branches in the Cayman Islands. The bank has more than [\\$60 billion in assets](#).

Bank of the West is a subsidiary of [BNP Paribas](#), one of the largest financial companies in the world and headquartered in France. In 2015, [Relbanks](#) ranked BNP Paribas the 8th largest bank in the world by asset size, with total assets of more than US\$2 trillion.

Within California, Bank of the West operates more than 240 retail branch locations. [According to bankbrief.com](#), Bank of the West is the largest among banks in San Francisco based on assets size. Within the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose California region alone, Bank of the West has more than 110 retail branches. The company is also one of the larger banks in Los Angeles, with more than 70 branches in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Key Factors That Enabled This Firm to Rank as One of the Top Banks in California

Below are key factors that enabled Bank of the West to be rated as one of this year's top banks in California.

Consumer Loans

Bank of the West has a wide range of loans, credit lines, and easy-to-use online account management tools. In addition to mortgage, secured and unsecured lines of credit, and credit cards, Bank of the West is among the best California banks that provide loans for building improvements and RV purchases. Available credit products for qualified borrowers [include](#):

- **Personal loans:** Unsecured personal loans that can be used for anything from a medical procedure to a wedding or home improvement project
- **Personal lines of credit:** Unsecured lines of credit which can be tapped into without having to repeatedly apply for a loan

- Military unsecured loans: Unsecured loans for those who serve in the U.S. Armed Forces and for U.S. veterans
- Home equity lines of credit: Use your home's equity to secure funds for renovation, debt consolidation expenses, and more
- Mortgages: A wide variety of financing solutions, as well as a mortgage comparison tool, to see what will work best for you
- Construction financing: Loans for major renovations and home additions
- Car, RV, and boat loans

Small Business Lending

Bank of the West is ranked as the [24th largest Small Business Administration \(SBA\) lender](#) as of the second quarter 2016. This best bank in California participated in 120 SBA-backed loans to small business borrowers in the past year, totaling more than \$80 million in loan proceeds.

Beyond SBA loans, Bank of the West also excelled among the largest banks in California in other small business lending activities. According to the [FDIC's review](#) of Bank of the West, the bank originated almost 11,000 small business loans in 2012 and 2013 *in California alone*, for a total of \$1.5 billion. Based on accessibility to credit and loan volume in the market, Bank of the West is among the best banks in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the surrounding Central-Southern California region for small business credit products and services.

Online Banking

With the power of a multi-national financial concern behind it, Bank of the West offers a very functional [web-based banking platform](#). Deposit, loan, investment, and business customers can access their accounts in a single location on the web. Cash management tools and online bill pay makes accessing money and information easier than ever.

Online Bill Pay and Popmoney

Bank of the West has a very functional online bill payment service and is also one of the top banks in California that offers the Popmoney payment product. Popmoney allows customers to send and receive payments to and from virtually anyone with a bank account.

Providing responsive products, like Popmoney, and delivering small business capital in emerging communities are just two of the reasons that Bank of the West made the list of the top banks in California. Check out its [website](#) for more information.

CIT/OneWest Bank Review

Top news in California banking in recent years included the [August 2015 merger of CIT Group and OneWest Bank](#). As one of the biggest banks in Southern California, OneWest has about 70 retail branches located throughout the area, including in Los Angeles, Riverside, and Anaheim as well as banks in San Diego, CA.

Headquartered out of Pasadena, CA, [CIT Bank/OneWest Bank](#) provide customers with consumer, small business, and middle-market banking services, specializing in companies in specific industry segments as well as consumers within its retail branch network.

The parent company, CIT Group (NYSE: CIT), is a New York-based public company founded in 1908. CIT Group is the holding company for [CIT Bank, N.A.](#), [OneWest Bank, N.A.](#) and also owns internet banking service [www.BankOnCIT.com](#).

OneWest bank operates as the company's retail, small business and wealth management banking arm. Closely aligned, CIT Bank operates in 30 industry segments providing middle-market banking and cash management services. CIT's global reach makes it one of the most diversified among the best banks in Southern California.

Key Factors That Enabled This Firm to Rank as One of the Top Banks in California

Below are key factors that enabled CIT Bank/OneWest Bank to be rated as one of this year's top banks in California.

Consumer Banking and Private Banking

Consistent with our other top banks in California, OneWest Bank provides traditional checking, savings, consumer and business loans, and other essential retail banking services via its branch system located

throughout Southern California. In addition, CIT/OneWest offers a wide variety of deposit and loan products for wealthier individuals, including high-yield demand deposit accounts, asset acquisition loans, jumbo mortgages, commercial real estate loans, interest-rate hedging, and foreign exchange services.

Commercial Banking

For small and mid-sized businesses, CIT Commercial Finance provides loans, leasing, and treasury management services throughout the United States. CIT's Commercial Finance Unit focuses on specific industries, [including](#):

- Aerospace & defense
- Business services
- Communications
- Energy
- Entertainment
- Gaming
- General manufacturing
- Health care
- Retail
- Restaurants
- Technology
- Sports & media

Equipment Finance

Among our best banks in California, CIT's Equipment Finance business stands out. The bank provides financing solutions to small businesses and middle market companies looking to acquire new equipment from a set of printers to a fleet of street sweepers. This specialty leasing business allows companies to identify the investments they need to grow and to tap into a financial partner to assist in the financing of such large-scale capital improvement projects.

Real Estate Finance

CIT's Institutional Real Estate Group is also a standout among our best banks in CA. CIT provides senior secured commercial debt to real estate developers and other commercial real estate investors. CIT offers financing to qualified commercial borrowers to develop or acquire

office, retail, industrial, apartment, and condominium properties as well as hotel and resort properties.

Business and Commercial Aircraft Financing

Fairly unique to our group of top banks in California, CIT Business Aircraft Finance provides financing to business jet operators such as charter companies. Serving clients globally, CIT provides financing that includes term loans, leases, pre-delivery financing, fractional share financing, and vendor/manufacturer financing.

CIT provides leasing and financing services to commercial airlines as well. According to the [CIT Bank website](#), the company owns a fleet of more than 350 commercial aircraft that it leases to airlines, and has more than 100 commercial air financing customers in about 50 countries.

Maritime and Rail Finance

Two other differentiators among our best banks in Southern California, CIT Maritime Finance offers secured loans, sale-leasebacks, and bareboat charters to owners and operators of oceangoing cargo vessels. CIT Rail offers customized leasing and financing solutions as well as access to its own diversified fleet of railcar assets. CIT Rail serves freight shippers and carriers throughout North America and Europe.

City National Bank Review

[City National Bank](#) offers its customers an upscale banking experience. As the company's tag line – *The way up*® – suggests, this member of the list of top banks in California focuses on assisting successful consumers and entrepreneurs in achieving their financial and business goals.

City National offers its clients highly-personalized consumer banking, trust management, and investment services through 75 branch offices in Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Nevada as well as New York City, Nashville, and Atlanta (in all, 63 of the bank's 75 branches are in California). City National Bank and its affiliates hold nearly \$32 billion in deposits and more than \$36 billion in total assets.

The information below is from City National Bank's Company Overview:

CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (CITY NATIONAL BANK AND AFFILIATES)	AT 01/31/16	AT 01/31/15
Total assets:	\$36.4 billion	\$32.3 billion
Total deposits:	\$31.8 billion	\$27.7 billion
Total loans:	\$23.4 billion	\$20.2 billion
Assets under management*:	\$40.3 billion	\$46.1 billion
Assets under management or administration*:	\$53.9 billion	\$58.9 billion

In November 2015, City National Bank merged with Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) (RY TSX/NYSE). RBC is one of the largest banks in Canada and globally, based on overall market capitalization. In total, RBC serves more than 16 million personal, business, government, and institutional clients through banks in Canada, the U.S., and 37 other countries.

Key Factors That Enabled This Firm to Rank as One of the Top Banks in California

Below are key factors that enabled City National Bank to be rated as one of this year's top banks in California.

Starting with a basic premise that "business is personal," City National Bank stays very focused on a specific client base, business approach, and set of products and services when compared to other top banks in CA.

Working with the upwardly mobile, entrepreneurs, and their families as well as supporting local communities, City National is able to deliver a highly-personalized client experience. Combining high-end relationship management with quality financial products allows City National to deliver both atmosphere and results.

Banking, Lending, and Wealth Management

For its client base, City National provides a full assortment of traditional consumer banking and wealth management services. Like many of our other top banks in California, traditional banking products offered include checking and savings accounts as well as international banking and treasury and cash management services.

Loan product offerings include credit cards, mortgages and real estate financing, lines of credit, equipment financing, and working capital products. Finally, City National also provides investment and trust services as well as retirement planning.

Community Development

For the three years ending in 2012, City National Bank **reported** making \$1.13 billion in community development loans to promote economic development and to help revitalize low- and moderate-income communities. In April 2015, City National announced a new **\$11 billion, five-year commitment** to community development lending, investments, charitable contributions, supplier diversity, and other related activities.

As part of the \$11b community commitment to neighborhoods across the bank's retail branch footprint, City National committed to:

- \$4.2 billion in small business loans of \$1 million or less each
- \$4.4 billion in qualified community development loans for low- and moderate-income neighborhoods
- \$1.6 billion in qualified investments for lower-income communities
- \$700 million in residential mortgage loans earmarked for minority borrowers
- More than \$80 million in supplier resources for minority- and women-owned businesses
- \$30 million in charitable contributions to local nonprofit organizations

Reading is The way up

Reading is The way up® (RITWU) is City National's way of making a difference by promoting childhood reading and lifelong learning. This program is unique to City National, helping the bank to differentiate itself from other top banks in California. By providing direct grants to charitable organizations, volunteer opportunities for bank staff, and a variety of employee activities held throughout the year, RITWU provides

an opportunity for internal team-building and to make a difference in lives of local youth.

Since the RITWU program's inception, the program has:

- Awarded more than \$1,000,000 in teacher grants
- Placed numerous bank employees as volunteer readers in schools
- Placed more than 300,000 books in public school libraries

Going Green

City National administers its own [Green Ladder Council](#) which comprises staff from the organization. The council supports City National by finding ways to reduce environmental impact opportunities to encourage green development. The company has also stated specific goals toward environmental sustainability, including:

- Tracking and reducing the bank-wide carbon footprint
- Continuously increasing the use of renewable/reusable resources
- Creating a healthier environment for employees, clients, and the community

In addition to the Green Ladder Council, City National Bank has installed solar panels at the bank's Riverside, California offices.

According to City National, the solar units save over [77,000 kilowatt-hours \(kWh\) per year](#). This is part of a broader green building initiative to improve energy efficiency throughout the organization, setting an example for other banks in CA.

East West Bank Review

Opening its doors in 1973, [East West Bank](#) is unique among our best banks in California. East West Bank was the first federally-chartered savings institution focused primarily on serving the financial needs of Chinese Americans in Los Angeles.

Over the years, the organization has grown and evolved into a full-service commercial bank with over 130 locations in the U.S. and East

Asia. U.S. markets include California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Texas, and Washington.

Of the bank's 119 U.S. branch locations, 97 branches are located in the Golden State, covering Southern California and the San Francisco Bay Area as well as banks in Sacramento and San Joaquin County. In the Greater China Region, East West operates full-service bank branches in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Shantou, and Shenzhen as well as representative offices in Beijing, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Taipei, and Xiamen.

Below are key factors that enabled East West Bank to be rated as one of this year's top banks in California.

Consumer and Wealth Services

East West Bank offers a solid set of financial products to consumers and high-wealth clients, similar to our other best banks in California.

Deposit products include traditional checking and savings accounts, CDs, and money markets. Lending services include mortgage, personal unsecured loans, credit cards and home equity loans.

The company also offers an array of insurance products through its affiliate, East West Insurance Services, as well as a full-service wealth management and investment division.

Small Business

East West Bank provides Small Business Administration (SBA) loans to help businesses qualify for financing more easily and receive more flexible terms. Closely competing with other top banks in California, East West Bank was recently ranked the **33rd most active SBA lender**, with 118 loans and \$66M in SBA lending in FY 2016.

The majority of small business loans are made to support low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and minority business owners. East West Bank **reported** that, for 2012, small business loans totaled more than \$4 million nationally, with 36% of the loans going to lower-income areas. East West reported that 76% of its small business loans were made to minority borrowers.

Focus on International Trade

East West Bank has a full assemblage of commercial banking services for businesses that work in the import and export industry. With a stated goal of helping small businesses in the U.S. to compete globally, the company provides both banking services and technical assistance in the form of seminars, individual consultations, and collaborations with businesses and professional organizations.

Differentiating itself from many top banks in California, East West Bank is also an Ex-Im Bank-approved lender and offers a variety of services to small businesses involved in exporting to overseas markets.

Community Partnerships and Financial Education

Like many of the best banks in California, East West Bank has made it part of its mission to firmly back the communities in which it operates through community partnerships and support for financial education initiatives.

East West's goal is "to enhance the quality of life in the community by engaging in meaningful and effective programs that reduce homelessness, increase homeownership, preserve affordable housing, promote asset building, and enable more inclusive access to modern banking services."

East West Bank's community and financial education support includes:

- **Asset Building:** East West Bank partners with community organizations that help people to save and prepare for a brighter financial future. Some of the organizations that East West supports include the South Bay Center for Counseling, Community & Economic Development (SBCC) and Bank On
- **Homeownership Workshops:** East West Bank regularly offers homeownership workshops throughout the communities in which it has branch locations. The company offers mortgage loan product information and assistance in qualifying for loans, grants, and subsidies.
- **Federal Home Loan Bank Grant Program:** As a member of the [Federal Home Loan Bank \(FHLB\) of San Francisco](#) since East West Bank's inception, the bank facilitates FHLB grant programs for its customers and assists local nonprofit organizations. The grant programs supported through East West Bank include the [Access to](#)

Housing and Economic Assistance for Development (AHEAD) Program and the Workforce Initiative Subsidy for Homeownership (WISH) for first time homebuyers.

- **Junior Achievement:** Junior Achievement is the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial awareness. East West Bank employees regularly volunteer to teach financial education classes at schools in low- and moderate-income communities to students ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade.
 - **Los Angeles Urban League:** East West Bank is also a community partner of the Los Angeles Urban League, supporting a variety of youth education and other Urban League initiatives.
-

To browse exclusive reviews of all top rated banks in California, please click on any of the links below.

- [Bank of the West](#)
 - [BBVA Compass Bank](#)
 - [CIT Bank/OneWest Bank](#)
 - [Citibank](#)
 - [City National Bank](#)
 - [Comerica Bank](#)
 - [East West Bank](#)
 - [MUFG Union Bank](#)
 - [Pacific Western Bank](#)
 - [Rabobank](#)
 - [Tri Counties Bank](#)
 - [U.S. Bank](#)
 - [Umpqua Bank](#)
 - [Wells Fargo Bank](#)
 - [Westamerica Bank](#)
-

Conclusion – Top 15 Best Banks in Northern, Central, and Southern California

As we conclude our review of the top banks in California, it is important to note that there are many important factors that go beyond the exhaustive analysis done by AdvisoryHQ. Through providing you with a listing of banks that objectively rose to the top of our analysis of the best

banks in California, we hope to provide you with a starting point for your own analysis.

Besides the company's financials, each bank possesses its own unique character, supports communities in its own way, and provides its own brand of customer service. Whether opening a bank account, looking for a business loan or investing in bank stocks, performing your own due diligence is the only way to make a well-informed decision.

We will leave you with some key questions you may want to ask before deciding what top bank in California to choose.

Here are some questions to get you started on your bank research:

- What is the bank's financial situation? Is it solvent? Is it prosperous? If you want to succeed, you will want a financial partner that is also moving in the right direction.
- What products and services does it feature? While banks can offer a wide array of products, they may only concentrate on certain ones. Ask yourself, is this bank an expert at the services that I need?
- What is the geographic distribution of the financial institution? Is it local, national or international? How large is its branch network? Are there ATMs around that I can access as well?
- Does the bank share my social values? Check out the bank's corporate responsibility report, annual report or its [Community Reinvestment Act](#) public file. Ask yourself, does this institution fit with me, and do I want to do business with or invest in it?

With these questions in mind, remember that your financial future is in the balance, and you deserve the best partner to help you save, pay bills, and work toward a bright financial future. We at AdvisoryHQ want to help you make that happen.

Follow [AdvisoryHQ](#) for insightful stories:

- [Like/Follow AdvisoryHQ on Facebook](#)
 - [Follow on Twitter](#)
 - [Follow on LinkedIn](#)
 - [Follow on Google+](#)
-

AdvisoryHQ Disclaimer:

Reasonable efforts have been made to present accurate information, however all info is presented without warranty. Review [AdvisoryHQ's Terms](#) for details. Also review each firm's site for the most updated data, rates and info.

Note: Firms and products, including the one(s) reviewed above, *may* be our affiliates. Click to view our [advertiser disclosures](#).

Image source:

<https://www.cnb.com/about/company-overview.asp>