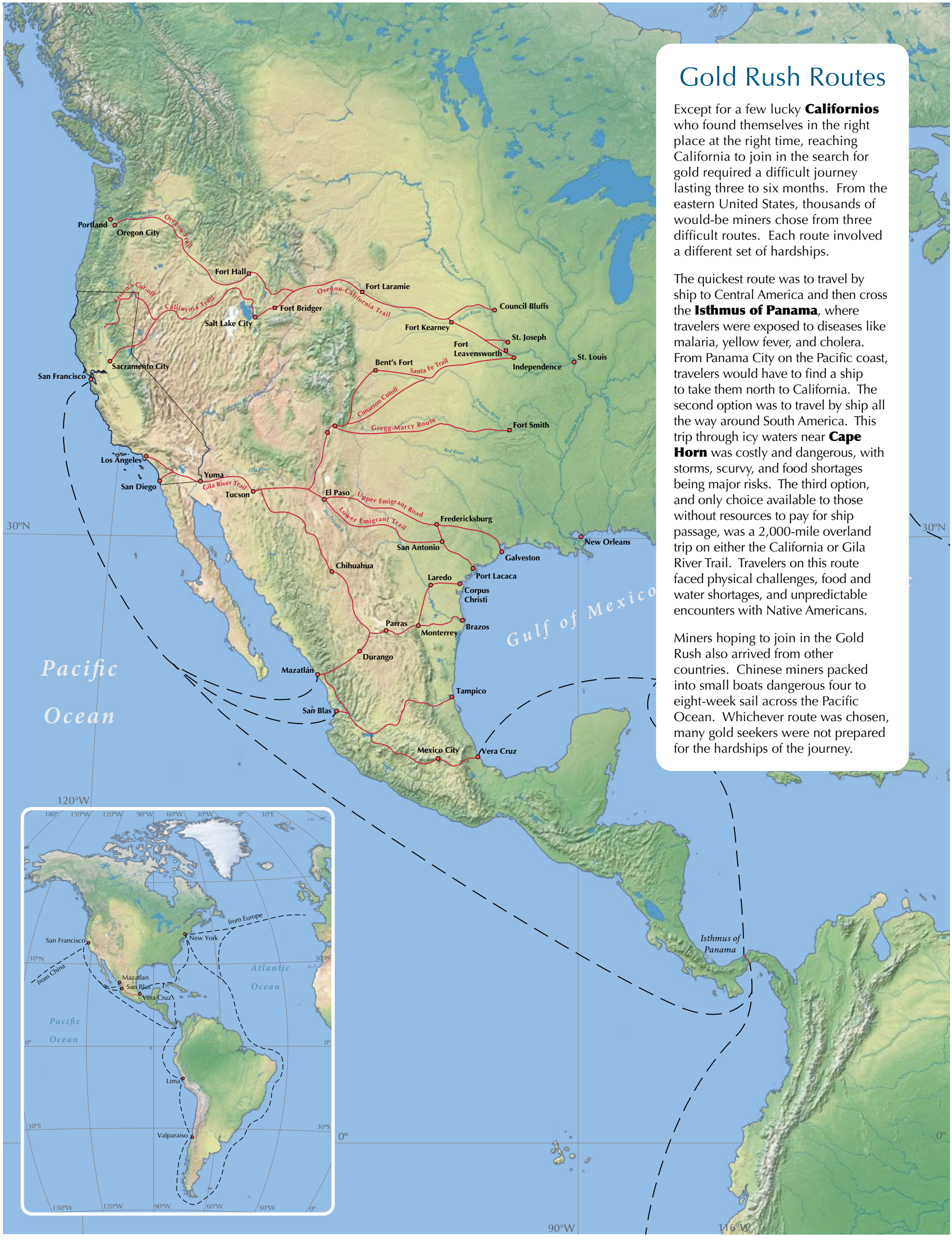
Gold Rush Routes

Except for a few lucky **Californios** who found themselves in the right place at the right time, reaching California to join in the search for gold required a difficult journey lasting three to six months. From the eastern United States, thousands of would-be miners chose from three difficult routes. Each route involved a different set of hardships.

The quickest route was to travel by ship to Central America and then cross the **Isthmus of Panama**, where travelers were exposed to diseases like malaria, yellow fever, and cholera. From Panama City on the Pacific coast, travelers would have to find a ship to take them north to California. The second option was to travel by ship all the way around South America. This trip through icy waters near **Cape Horn** was costly and dangerous, with storms, scurvy, and food shortages being major risks. The third option, and only choice available to those without resources to pay for ship passage, was a 2,000-mile overland trip on either the California or Gila River Trail. Travelers on this route faced physical challenges, food and water shortages, and unpredictable encounters with Native Americans.

Miners hoping to join in the Gold Rush also arrived from other countries. Chinese miners packed into small boats dangerous four to eight-week sail across the Pacific Ocean. Whichever route was chosen, many gold seekers were not prepared for the hardships of the journey.



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