

**IMPERIAL VALLEY**

# **ESCAPE TO ADVENTURE**

*2nd Edition*

A RECREATIONAL GUIDE  
TO IMPERIAL COUNTY

# Escape to Adventure

## Tourist Attractions and Events

### Imperial Valley Joint Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce offices throughout Imperial County carry a host of information on local tourist attractions and events.

#### **Brawley Chamber of Commerce**

204 South Imperial Avenue, Brawley 92227 (760) 344-3160. [brawleychamber.com](http://brawleychamber.com)

#### **Calexico Chamber of Commerce**

1100 Imperial Avenue, Calexico 92231 (760) 357-1166. [calexicochamber.net](http://calexicochamber.net)

#### **Calipatria Chamber of Commerce**

150 North Park Avenue, Calipatria 92233 (760) 348-5039.

#### **El Centro Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau**

1095 S. 4th Street, El Centro 92243 (760) 352-3681. [elcentrochamber.com](http://elcentrochamber.com)

#### **Holtville Chamber of Commerce**

101 West Fifth Street, Holtville 92250 (760) 356-2923. [holtvillechamber.com](http://holtvillechamber.com)

#### **Imperial Chamber of Commerce**

400 S. Imperial Ave. #2, Imperial 92251 (760) 355-1609. [imperialchamber.org](http://imperialchamber.org)

#### **Westmorland Chamber of Commerce**

P. O. Box 699, Westmorland 92281 (760) 344-3411.

**Desert Area Information** – For information about the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area or other remote areas of Imperial County contact the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) El Centro Field Office, 1661 S. 4th St., El Centro, CA 92243, (760) 337-4400. [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html).

#### **Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area** –

Visitor information and emergency medical services are available weekends during the winter season (October-May) at BLM's Cahuilla and Buttercup Ranger Stations. Visit [www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html), [uniteddesertgateway.org](http://uniteddesertgateway.org), [americansandassociation.org](http://americansandassociation.org).

**Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area** – 5172 Highway 78. For visitor information call (760) 767-5391. [ohv.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=1217](http://ohv.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1217).

**Salton Sea Information** – Both the Salton Sea State Recreation Area, 100-225 State Park Rd., North Shore, CA 92254, and the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, 906 W. Sinclair Rd., Calipatria CA 92233 (760) 348-5278, have extensive information about the Salton Sea. [www.fws.gov/saltonsea.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=639](http://www.fws.gov/saltonsea.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=639).

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Historic Blue Lake  
Commemorative Monument

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# An Escape “Under the Sea...”



## Exploring Imperial County’s Agriculture and Irrigation System

Supported by an extensive and highly efficient below sea level irrigation system, Imperial County ranks among the top 10 agricultural counties in the nation. Total agricultural production value annually exceeds \$1 billion. Imperial County's fertile soil and mild climate allow farmers to enjoy year-round planting, cultivation and harvest. More than 500,000 acres of Imperial Valley land is farmed, producing

many field and vegetable crops. Providing the water is Imperial Irrigation District (IID), the largest irrigation district in the nation. Since 1942, water has been diverted at Imperial Dam on the Colorado River through the 82-mile-long All-American Canal. Three main canals – East Highline, Central Main and Westside Main – receive water from the All-American Canal and are used to deliver water to many local canals throughout Imperial County. Farmers then divert water directly from these canals to irrigate farmland. Another important component of IID’s distribution system is the seven regulating reservoirs and three interceptor reservoirs that have a total storage capacity of more than 3,300 acre-feet of water. IID operates and maintains more than 1,438 miles of lateral canals, 230 miles of main canals and the All-American Canal. It also maintains approximately 1,406 miles of drainage ditches used to collect surface runoff and subsurface drainage from 32,227 miles of tile drains underlying 462,202 acres of farmland. Most of these drainage ditches ultimately discharge water into either the Alamo River or New River which flow into the Salton Sea.





## Follow the Flow

To follow the flow of the water, and get a first-hand look at Imperial County's vast agriculture industry and irrigation gravity-flow system, take a driving tour. Start at Calexico, near the western end of the All-American Canal. You are at sea level there. Continue north on State Highway 111 to westbound Interstate 8. While you will not feel it, you are gradually descending. Continue west on Interstate 8 towards El Centro. Just past Imperial Valley Mall and east of the Fourth Street exit on your left, there is a large tank with a Sea Level mark. At this point, you are about 52 feet below sea level. Take the Imperial Avenue exit and head north. Imperial Avenue becomes State Highway 86. Continue on State Highway 86 through El Centro, north to Brawley.

## Continuing Below Sea Level

About 10 miles north of El Centro there is a stoplight at Keystone Road. To the right is Spreckles Sugar, a large sugar beet processing plant. A "Sea Level" indicator is painted on a large silo at the plant showing you how far you have dropped since Calexico –

about 100 feet. Continue north on State Highway 86 through the City of Brawley and rejoin State Highway 111 there. Continue north on State Highway 111 to the City of Calipatria, "The Lowest Down City in the Western Hemisphere." There you will see a very tall flag pole. At 184 feet, it is the tallest in the western hemisphere. Its top is at sea level. Continue north on State Highway 111 and turn left on Sinclair Road. If you drive to the end of the road, you will pass another prominent feature in the Imperial County: geothermal energy plants. At the end of Sinclair is the entrance to the Sonny Bono National Wildlife refuge, located on the shores of the Salton Sea, a lake with a surface more than 200 feet below sea level. It is also the repository of the Imperial County's irrigation drainage water.



184 FT. BELOW  
SEA LEVEL

# Escape to off-highway Adventure in the Imperial

Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) is the most prominent feature of Imperial County's off-highway recreational region. This 40-mile-long dune system is one of the largest in the United States. This mecca for off-highway adventure also has served as the backdrop for many motion pictures over the years. Formed by windblown beach sands of a prehistoric sea, some dune crests reach heights of over 300 feet. These expansive dune formations offer picturesque scenery, opportunities for solitude, a chance to view rare plants and animals and a playground for off-highway vehicles. The dunes, though, are just a sampling of Imperial County's off-highway adventure opportunity. Have fun, but please observe restricted areas, including military ranges. All closed areas are clearly marked.

**Buttercup Valley** – This southern section of the Imperial Sand Dunes covers about 12,000 acres and is located 45 miles east of El Centro on Interstate 8. From the Grays Well Road exit on Interstate 8, travelers can access the Buttercup Ranger Station; Buttercup and Midway Campgrounds, as well as the historic Plank Road. Campgrounds offer hard surface parking and vault toilets. Map Number 16.

**Glamis/Gecko** – This central section of the Imperial Sand Dunes covers about 22,000 acres, and is located 25 miles east of Brawley on Hwy 78. Two BLM campgrounds along the paved Gecko Road, near Glamis, provide hard surface parking and vault toilets. Osborne Overlook, three miles east of Gecko Road on State Highway 78, offers scenic views of the recreation area, the North Algodones Dunes Wilderness and surrounding area. The overlook is located among the largest and tallest dunes. Day use parking can be found at the east end of the overlook. The overlook is a popular staging area for photography and the filming of commercials and movies. Map Number 46.

**Geocaching** – Start your desert adventure by visiting the hundreds of geocaching sites located in Imperial County. For information on locations visit [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com)

# Sand Dunes Recreation Area



## *Fee and Permit Information*

### **Who needs a permit?**

– One permit (weekly or seasonal) is needed per primary vehicle entering the ISDRA. A primary vehicle is any street legal vehicle used for transportation to the recreation site. A permit

is required at all times while in the fee area and may be required to exit the area. Please keep your permit until you exit the fee area. Visitors are encouraged to purchase permits before arriving at the ISDRA. For information on where to purchase permits visit [www.imperialsanddunes.net](http://www.imperialsanddunes.net).

**Where does it apply?** – The entire Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area and its one-mile planning area boundary. This includes, but is not limited to, Buttercup, Gecko Rd, Glamis, Gordon’s Well/Dune-buggy Flats, Mammoth Wash, Ogilby, Osborne, along both sides of the Coachella Canal and Ted Kipf Rd. See map. Additional permit information is available at [www.imperialsanddunes.net](http://www.imperialsanddunes.net).

**Border Safety** – Although recreational opportunities exist throughout the desert, use caution when near the United States-Mexico border. Both U.S. and Mexican authorities patrol the border area. Do not under any circumstances cross the border without using a port of entry. Entering the U.S. or Mexico without using a port of entry is dangerous and illegal.

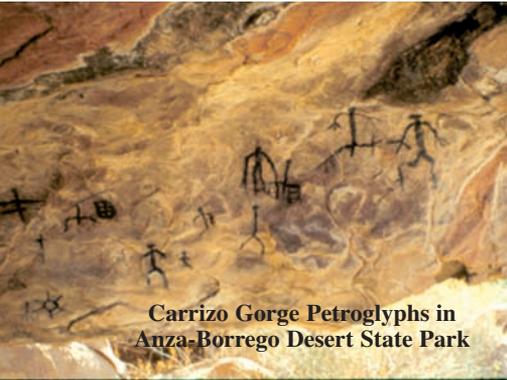
ISDRA Information is found at [uniteddesertgateway.org](http://uniteddesertgateway.org), BLM El Centro Field Office, 1661 S. 4th St., El Centro, CA 92243, (760) 337-4400. [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html).

**Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)** – Certain lands managed by the BLM, have been designated ACECs. ACECs are areas that contain significant natural, archeological, or historical resources. Please respect all signs regarding ACECs and their management.

**Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard** – The flat-tailed horned lizard inhabits areas in and around the Borrego Badlands, Yuha ACEC, West Mesa ACEC, East Mesa, Ocotillo Wells area, and Yuma Desert. It is one of several sensitive animal and plant species that exist in the deserts of California. A conservation effort is in effect in the above areas. Please obey all signs regarding the management of the flat-tailed horned lizard or any other sensitive animal or plant species. For more information contact the BLM El Centro Field Office.

# An alphabetical Desert Activities Guide

**Anza Borrego Desert State Park** – At 600,000 acres, Anza Borrego is California’s largest and oldest state park. It has great variety in scenery. The park offers developed and primitive campsites, a visitor center in Borrego Springs, and outstanding opportunities for hiking, backpacking, nature study and vehicle touring. Significant winter rains will often bring blooms of colorful wildflowers in the spring. Access is by State Highway S2, State Highway 78 and the Borrego Salton Seaway (S22). [parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=638](http://parks.ca.gov/?page_id=638). Map Number 6.



**Carrizo Gorge Petroglyphs in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**

**Coyote Mountains Wilderness** – The Coyote Mountains, a fishhook shaped mountain range, make up 40 percent of this wilderness. Part of the Carrizo Badlands lie within the northern portion. A group of unusual sandstone rock formations, believed to be six million years old, adds to the character of this region. This wilderness can be accessed from Painted Gorge Road off Old State Highway 80 in southwestern Imperial County. [blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/coyote\\_mountains/html](http://blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/coyote_mountains/html). Map Number 139.



**Crucifixion Thorns Natural Area** – South of State Highway 98 on BLM Route 282 is a stand of crucifixion thorns. Although a relatively common plant in the desert basins of Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, the crucifixion thorn is rare in California. This stand is one of the most extensive and least disturbed in the state. The intricately branched shrub received its name from its resemblance to the “crown of thorns” plant said to have been placed on Christ’s head during His crucifixion. [blm.gov/ca/s/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/crucifixionthorn.html](http://blm.gov/ca/s/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/crucifixionthorn.html). Map Number 26.

**Desert View Tower** – A rock tower that overlooks the Imperial Valley and Interstate 8 near the California / Mexico border. Built in the 1920’s by a man named Burt Vaughn, to commemorate pioneers crossing the desert to get to San Diego, it is now privately owned. Nearby are some unusual rock carvings of skulls and animals, done by W. T. Ratcliffe, a retired engineer, in the 1930’s. Open to visitors for a nominal fee. Six miles east of Jacumba on the In-Ko-Pah Road off Interstate 8. Map Number 30.



**Felicity (Center of the World)** – “The Official Center of the World” is a dot on a bronze plaque within the pyramid located in Felicity, California.

Jacques-André Istel, who first saw its potential when he was in the U.S. Marine Corps on his way to Korea, bought the land after the war. He and his wife, Felicia, moved there and began building their own town. The idea of making Felicity the “Center of the World” came to Jacques-André when he was “mayor” only a few months. He convinced the Imperial County Board of Supervisors to recognize his claim as well as the Institut Geographique National of France. The Center of The World is based upon a popular 1985 book for children, “COE, The Good Dragon At The Center Of The World.” Jacques-Andre also acquired a staircase from the Eiffel Tower in Paris when the tower was renovated. Felicity also features a church, sundial and museum of history in granite. Felicity is 55 miles east of El Centro on Interstate 8. [felicity.us](http://felicity.us). Map Number 35.



**Fish Creek Mountain Wilderness** – This rugged area of jagged ridges and peaks appears above twisting canyons and small valleys, creating a pristine natural environment. The steep mountain slopes contain limestone outcrops that have resisted erosion. Reach this wilderness by traveling south on Split Mountain Road off State Highway 78 at Ocotillo Wells. [blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/fish\\_creek\\_mountains.html](http://blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/fish_creek_mountains.html). Map Number 142.

**Heber Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area** – This area has 343 acres of sand dunes, primarily used for off-highway recreation. However, picnicking and baseball are also popular activities in the park. Restrooms with showers are available. The old Alamo River stream bed formed the area with deposits of sand where tamarisk trees have taken hold. Much of the outer border of the park is native vegetation and the park as a whole creates the effect of being an island of dunes in a sea of agricultural fields. Heber Sand Dunes is owned by and under the jurisdiction of the Ocotillo Wells State Recreation area. This park is eight miles east of the community of Heber on Heber Road. [parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=408](http://parks.ca.gov/?page_id=408). Map Number 51.



# An alphabetical Desert Activities Guide

**Indian Pass** – Located in the eastern portion of Imperial County, the Indian Pass Wilderness is a distinctive part of the Chocolate Mountains, a range that extends from south central Riverside County to the Colorado River near Yuma. The area's proximity to the river and the Arizona desert contributes to the presence of wildlife



species, like Desert Mule Deer, not commonly found in other California deserts. A large field of ancient scratched petroglyphs are alongside Indian Pass Road at its highest point, just before descending into Gavilan Wash. Access this wilderness from Ogilby Road (S-34), which runs north-south between Interstate 8 and State Highway 78. Indian Pass Road runs eastward from Ogilby Road to Picacho State Recreation Area on the Colorado River. [blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/indian\\_pass.html](http://blm.gov/ca/pa/wilderness/wa/areas/indian_pass.html). Map Number 62.

**Mammoth Wash Open Area** – This off-highway vehicle area wash covers about 11,000 acres and is located 10 miles southeast of Niland on Ted Kipf Road. Be cautious of military ordnance, some dating from World War II. It is extremely dangerous and can cause serious injury or death. Map Number 69.

**Mesquite Mine Overlook Trail** – This self-guided interpretive trail is about a quarter of a mile uphill with a great view of the mine. The trail introduces visitors to the gold mine and the unique desert environment in which it is located. The trail is located four miles east of Glamis and three miles north of State Highway 78 along Gold Fields OC Mine Road. It is not wheelchair accessible. Map Number 70.





## Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area

– This desert landscape consists of mud hills, washes and sand dunes. Elevations run from sea level to 260 feet above sea level. These areas can challenge the best of off-highway riders or give the new rider an introduction to off-roading. This huge labyrinthine area can be very confusing so extra caution is advised. Ocotillo Wells has

80,000 acres of open desert riding. No fees are collected for camping or day use. Open camping is permitted throughout the unit for up to 30 days per calendar year. Vault toilets, shade ramadas, picnic tables and fire rings are located in the Quarry, Main Street and Holmes Camp areas. Bordering Ocotillo Wells is the Arroyo Salada Open Area, approximately 7,200 acres of rolling and open desert terrain. Ocotillo Wells is located on State Highway 78 about 15 miles west of State Highway 86. [ohv.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=1217](http://ohv.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1217). Map Number 80.

**Ogilby Historic Townsite** – Not much remains of Ogilby except an old cemetery with unmarked graves. Early in the twentieth century there was a store, train stop and school made from a converted boxcar. Ogilby is on the west side of Ogilby Road where it crosses the railroad tracks about four miles north of Interstate 8. Map Number 81.

**Historic Route 80** – Historic State Route 80 begins in Imperial County in Winterhaven across the Colorado River from Yuma, AZ. Much of the Historic Route has been replaced by Interstate 8, but travelers can still experience the historic splendor of Route 80 as it parallels I-8 west through the Quechan (Fort Yuma) Indian Reservation where it continues as a frontage road through the world-famous Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. At the junction of SR115, Historic Route 80 heads north through the cities of Holtville and El Centro and the towns of Seeley and Ocotillo where it merges back onto I-8. At the In-Ko-Pah exit, Historic Route 80 once again becomes the old highway and signs direct travelers toward its termination point near downtown San Diego. Detailed travel information can be found at [westcoastroads.com/california/us-O80\\_ca](http://westcoastroads.com/california/us-O80_ca). Maps of the old highway can be found at [oldhighway80.com](http://oldhighway80.com). Map Number 82.



# An alphabetical Desert Activities Guide



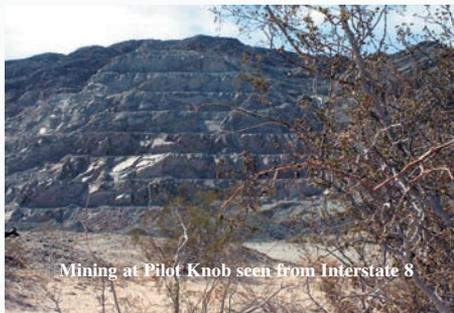
## **Painted Gorge and Fossil Canyon –**

These narrow canyon walls, located in the Coyote Mountains, are colored by the weathering of rocks containing copper, sulfur and iron deposits. The upper gorge contains ancient marine coral reefs with fossilized marine life. Primitive camping and staging for day use can be found east of the gorge entrance. To access Painted Gorge, proceed approximately 22 miles west of El Centro on Old Highway 80, turn north on Painted Gorge Road. Use BLM's

WECO Route of Travel Map. [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/poi/el-centropoi.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/poi/el-centropoi.html). Map Number 86.

**Pilot Knob –** The area in and around Pilot Knob is rich in both human and natural history. At one time, General Patton's troops trained here in preparation for desert fighting in World War II. A State of California Historic Marker lies on the site of Patton's camp. The marker is located just north of Interstate 8 on Sidewinder Road. The Fort Yuma Indian Reservation borders public lands near Pilot Knob. A famous horse geoglyph is located on the south side at the base of the mountain.

Pilot Knob Long Term Visitors Area (LTVA) is a popular camping spot. Since only minimum camping facilities are available, only self-contained camping units are allowed. The LTVA camping area is open September 15 through April 15. Pilot Knob is south of Interstate 8 near Sidewinder Road. [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ltvas/pilot\\_knob.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ltvas/pilot_knob.html). Map Number 97.



Mining at Pilot Knob seen from Interstate 8



**Historic Plank Road –** Remnants of a "floating" wooden plank road that was used from 1916 to 1926 can still be seen in the Imperial Sand Dunes located on Gray's Well Road off Interstate 8 between Yuma and El Centro. (See additional Site Historic Marker description on page 33.) A small remnant is exhibited off Grays Well Road. Brochures are available at Buttercup Ranger Station. [desertusa.com/sandhills/planked.html](http://desertusa.com/sandhills/planked.html). Map Number 83.

**Plaster City Open Area** – This off-highway vehicle area provides ample opportunity to test individual driving skills over a variety of terrain. Two staging areas, Plaster City East and Plaster City West, are popular primitive camping and day use areas. Located approximately 17 miles west of El Centro on Historic Old Highway 80. [blm.gov/ca/elcentro/plaster\\_city.html](http://blm.gov/ca/elcentro/plaster_city.html). Map Number 100-101.

**Salvation Mountain** is a colorful art creation covering much of a small hill north of Calipatria near Slab City and several miles from Salton Sea. It is made from adobe, straw and thousands of gallons of paint. Salvation Mountain reflects its creator Leonard Knight's tribute to God's love. Visitors to the Mountain will also see images of flowers, trees, waterfalls, suns, bluebirds and many other fascinating and colorful objects. Take Highway 111 to Niland, turning east on Main Street (turns into Beal Road) and traveling three miles to Salvation Mountain. [salvationmountain.us](http://salvationmountain.us).



**Superstition Mountain Open Area** – Recognized in 2008 as one of BFGoodrich's Outstanding Trails, this off-highway area is located north of the Plaster City Off-Highway Vehicle Open Area. This area presents an array of challenging off-highway vehicle riding opportunities. From County Highway S80, take Huff Road north to Wheeler Road. Follow Wheeler Road to one of several popular primitive camping areas or to the base of the Superstition Mountains. [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ohvs/superstition.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ohvs/superstition.html). Map Number 119.



**Tumco Ghost Town** – Tumco is an abandoned gold mining town which experienced several periods of boom and bust. Little can now be seen of structures, with only a few crumbling walls and cellars visible. But during the boom time of the 1890's, it supported a population of at least 500 people, and the stamp mills of the mine produced

\$1,000 per day (1890's dollars) in gold. Brochures are available to supplement a self-guided walking tour featuring mine shafts and key town locations. Beware of open shafts and weak support timbers. Entering mines is extremely dangerous. Tumco is located about 44 miles east of El Centro. Take Interstate 8 east to Ogilby Road (S-34). The townsite is about 8 miles north of the Interstate on Ogilby Road. [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/tumco.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/tumco.html). Map Number 125.

# Escape to the Distant Past

While modern settlers arrived in Imperial Valley at the turn of the 20th Century, its heritage as home to Native Americans goes back at least 12,000 years. Ancient Indian trails branch throughout the desert. Geoglyphs and “rock art” are common in remote areas, many of which are protected and in restricted areas.

**Yuha Desert** – The Yuha Desert is rich in both human and natural history. The area contains several unique attractions: the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (BLM Route 274. Four-wheel drive recommended), geoglyphs created by Native Americans, an area of rare crucifixion thorns, ancient oyster shell beds and the Yuha Well. The Yuha Desert is 14 miles west of El Centro along Interstate 8. Exit the Interstate at Dunaway Road south. Use BLM’s WECO Route of Travel Map to locate points of interest in the Yuha Desert. [blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/pdfs/elcentro\\_pdfs.par.of9ac3ac.file.pdf/yuha\\_blm.pdf](http://blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/pdfs/elcentro_pdfs.par.of9ac3ac.file.pdf/yuha_blm.pdf). Map Number 136.



Prehistoric matched oyster shells

**Yuha Geoglyphs** – These geoglyphs are a sample of Imperial Valley’s archeological assets. Constructed by prehistoric Native Americans, the Yuha Main Site Geoglyph is a nationally famous example of primitive ground design. A geoglyph is a large symbol etched into the ground by clearing lines or dark rock with a scraping tool to expose the lighter soil underneath. These symbols usually depict shamans, animals or geometric shapes. Do not walk on geoglyphs, as they are extremely fragile. Many Yuha geoglyphs are protected by fenced enclosures. [blm.gov/ca/elcentro/poi\\_elcentro.html](http://blm.gov/ca/elcentro/poi_elcentro.html). Map Number 137.



**Yuha Well** – Led by Indian guides, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza and the members of his expedition were the first Spanish explorers to visit the Yuha. Some 200 years ago, de Anza’s party replenished their water supplies at this well before continuing on their journey. The Yuha Well became an important oasis for later travelers and settlers following the de Anza Trail through the desert. [ohp.parks.ca.gov/listed\\_resources/default.asp?num=1008](http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/listed_resources/default.asp?num=1008). Map Number 138.

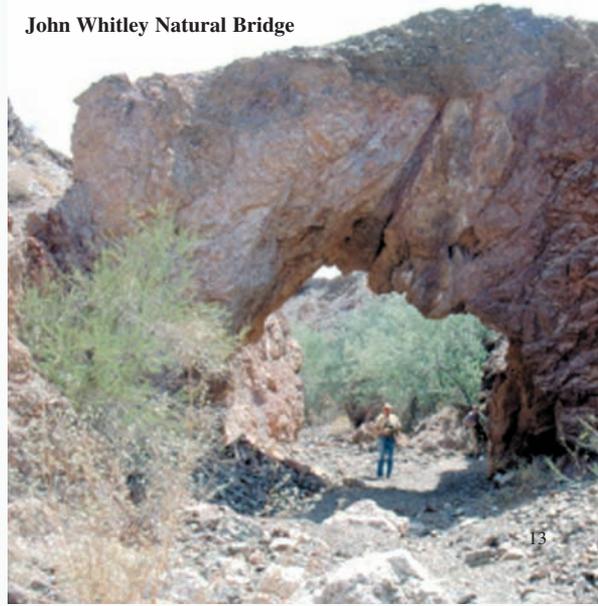
# Adventures Along the Colorado River

The Colorado River forms the border between Imperial County and the State of Arizona. From numerous headwaters in Nevada, Utah, Wyoming and Colorado, the Colorado flows 1,450 miles to the Gulf of California, traversing six states and descending more than 10,000 feet. The Imperial County-Yuma, Arizona waters are the last in the United States before the river continues its flow into Mexico where it empties into the Sea of Cortez. The Colorado is the primary source of water for Imperial County and provides much of the water throughout Southern California. It also offers many water recreation opportunities and boat tours.

**Imperial Dam** – Imperial Dam, 28 miles northeast of Yuma, diverts Colorado River water into Imperial County by way of the All-American Canal. It also provides opportunities for camping, hunting, boating, fishing and other popular water-related recreation activities. Imperial Dam Long Term Visitors Area provides camping opportunities for thousands of visitors each winter. The Long Term Visitors Area is open September 15 through April 15. Winter visitors who wish to stay may purchase either a long-term or a short-term permit. During the summer months (April 15-September 15) camping is free, although limited to 14 days in a 28-day period. Services available are trash facilities, dump station, drinking water and showers. [publiclands.org/explore/site.php?id=955](http://publiclands.org/explore/site.php?id=955). Map Number 55.

**Picacho State Recreation Area** – Located along the Colorado River, Picacho State Recreation Area offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities. Water skiing, canoeing, inner tube floating, fishing and off-highway vehicle activities are some of the more popular activities. The area also supports an abundance of plants and animals. Gambel's quail, roadrunners, coyotes, desert big-horn sheep, deer and wild burros inhabit the area. Adjacent is the Picacho Peak Wilderness and the Little Picacho Wilderness. Easiest access is to leave Interstate 8 and travel 20 miles north of Winterhaven on Picacho Road. [parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=641](http://parks.ca.gov/?page_id=641). Map Number 93.

**John Whitley Natural Bridge**



# Adventures Along the Colorado River

**Senator Wash Reservoir** – Twenty-five miles north of Interstate 8 at the Arizona Border (about 60 miles east of El Centro), Senator Wash Reservoir provides recreational opportunities such as fishing and water play. During the summer months, this site is a favorite of jet skiers and small boats. Lake shore camping is communal on the south shore of the lake while the north shore offers many small coves and bays. Summer visitation is limited to 14 days in a 28-day period. [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/poi/yuma.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/poi/yuma.html). Map Number 112.

**Squaw Lake** – Located east of Senator Wash Reservoir, Squaw Lake is a premier developed recreation site. The lake is a popular day use and camping area, with holiday weekends attracting large crowds. Camping is limited to 14 days in a 28-day period and there is a



per-vehicle fee. Amenities include handicapped accessible restrooms, outdoor showers, fire rings, potable water, trash removal, and two boat ramps. Call 928-317-3200 or [blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/poi/yuma.html](http://blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/poi/yuma.html). Map Number 116.

**Walters Camp** – Walters Camp is a popular starting point for fishing, boating, hunting and canoeing trips on the river. Amenities include RV hookups, boat launch, showers and store. It is located about 25 miles south of Blythe about four miles south of State Highway 78 on Walters Camp Road. Map Number 132.



# How to Have a Safe Desert Adventure

While there is plenty of literature available that discusses desert survival, the tips below are from Imperial County's De Anza Search and Rescue Unit, a volunteer rescue group with many years of desert search and rescue experience. Imperial County Sheriff Department's Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement Safety Team also works in the desert to enhance the safety and security of residents and visitors.



## **PLANNING A DESERT TRIP:**

If you are planning a trip into the desert during the months when high temperatures can occur, (June through September), consider if the trip is really necessary. The most elaborately planned desert trip could result in your being placed in a survival situation.

### **BEFORE YOU GO:**

1. Plan your trip carefully. Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. Stay with your planned itinerary. Should you have trouble and need assistance, you will be much easier to locate. A call for assistance should not be delayed if you do not arrive home at the time you specified.
2. Carry plenty of water, preferably good tasting, cool (iced in a cool can) water – five gallons per person per 24 hours (3 1/2 gallons for drinking, 1 1/2 gallons for emergencies). It is better to carry some water out than to run short.
3. Make sure your vehicle is in good working order and carry the necessary equipment, spare parts and know how to keep your vehicle operating properly. Although there are many “dead” areas in remote desert locations, it is wise to carry a cell phone.

### **DESERT SURVIVAL:**

If you don't have it with you, don't expect to find it in the desert. Carry everything you will need to survive until help arrives should you become lost or stranded. The primary survival items are:

1. Water (5 gallons per day per person)
2. Signaling devices; metal match and steel wool (fire starting), signal mirror, signal flares (road flares) and flare gun
3. Food
4. Clothing: long trousers, long sleeved shirt, hat and shoes

### **SHOULD YOU BECOME LOST OR STRANDED:**

1. It is generally better to stay with your vehicle. In virtually all searches, the victims' abandoned vehicle is found long before they are.
2. Conserve sweat, not your water. It's the water in your body that prevents dehydration, not the water in your canteen.
3. Signalling: Your chances of being found can largely depend upon making your location known to the searchers through the use of signaling devices. This could be smoke signals, aerial or road flares, flashes from a signal mirror or distress signals laid on the ground are also effective.

### **HIKERS AND BIKERS:**

A hiker or biker is physically unable to carry a sufficient amount of water to sustain them in a survival situation, especially in hot weather. These individuals should have positive backup with regard to water – or limit the range of their activity. Remember, in the early stages of dehydration mental impairment can occur, often causing disorientation, making survival virtually impossible. It has been shown that a 154-pound person carrying a 20-pound pack and walking in the sun at 100 degrees would require 1.3 quarts of water per hour to replace that which is lost due to sweating.

# Military Adventures

## U.S. Naval Air Facility

– The El Centro Naval Air Facility (NAF) is located about seven miles west of El Centro on Historic Route 80. Exits are clearly marked and admission to the base is restricted. The Navy and Marine Corps use this very busy air base for basic and advanced training of pilots. Because of Imperial County's excellent year-



round flying weather, training squadrons from across the United States and around the world frequent the base. In addition, fleet pilots from squadrons all along the West Coast use NAF for sharpening their flying skills. The NAF is also the winter training home of the Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, from January to March. The Blue Angels annually hold their first air show of the season in March at the NAF. During the three-month training period, the Blue Angels can frequently be seen perfecting their show west of El Centro and Imperial in the skies over the base. [cnic.navy.mil/elcentro/index.html](http://cnic.navy.mil/elcentro/index.html). Map number 127.



## Historic Military Sites –

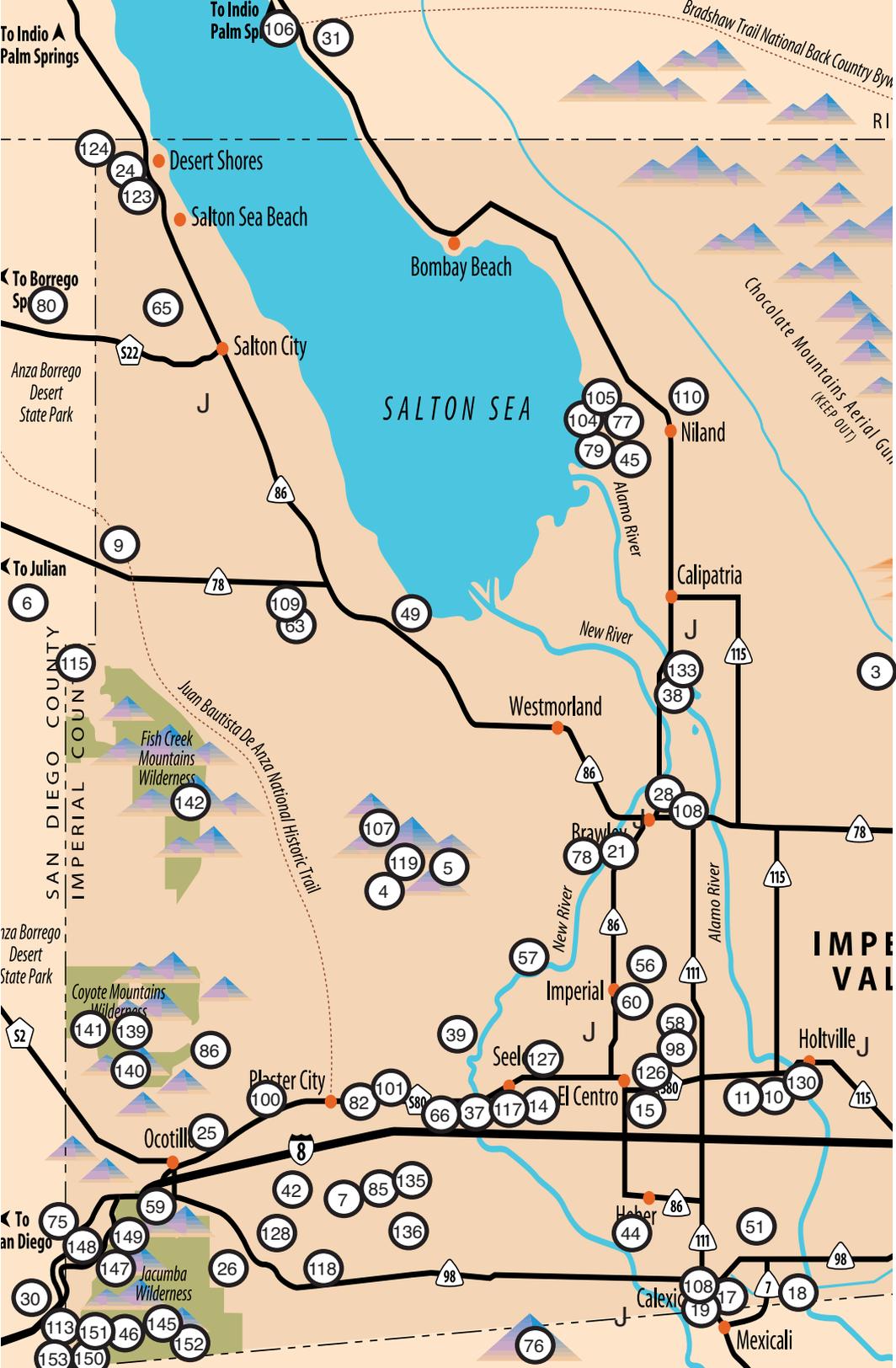
For military buffs, there are abandoned World War II camps in Imperial County. The Patton Desert Camp is commemorated by a plaque at Sidewinder Road. Map number 29.

# 163 Points of Interest in Imperial County

1. Hernando de Alarcon Expedition(P. 32)
2. American Girl Mine(4WD)
3. Amos Historic Cemetery(4WD)(ISD)
4. Ancient Dry Lake Bed(2WD)(SM)
5. Ancient Rock Circle(4WD)(SM)
6. Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (P. 6)
7. Anza's Well(4WD)(YD)(P. 12-33)
8. BLM Cahuilla Ranger Station(2WD) (ISD)
9. Arroyo Salada Open Area(4WD)
10. Barbara Worth Golf Resort
11. Tecolote Rancho–Harold Bell Wright(P. 33)
12. Bear Canyon Dry Falls(4WD)(PSRA)
13. Black Mountain(4WD)
14. Blue Lake Monument (Silsbee Road)(2WD)
15. Broken Spoke Golf Course(P. 34)
16. Buttercup Valley(4WD)(ISD)(P. 4)
17. Calexico Downtown Port of Entry
18. Calexico East Port of Entry
19. Camp Salvation(P. 32)
20. Carrizo Falls(PSRA)
21. Cattle Call Arena(P. 29)
22. Charlie's World of Lost Art(P. 33)
23. Cibola National Wildlife Refuge(2WD)
24. Coolidge Springs
25. Coyote Wells
26. Crucifixion Thorns Natural Area(2WD)(P. 6)
27. Davis Lake(2WD)(CR)
28. Del Rio County Club(Golf)
29. Desert Training Center–Gen. Patton(P. 10-33)
30. Desert View Tower(P. 6)
31. Dos Palmas Preserve(2WD)
32. Draper Lake(2WD)(CR)
33. Dunes/Mines RV Camp Site(2WD)(ISD)
34. Eye of Picacho Natural Arch(4WD)(PSRA)
35. Felicity(Center of the World)(P. 7)
36. Ferguson Lake(2WD)(CR)
37. Fig Lagoon(P. 23)
38. Finney-Ramer Lake Unit  
Imperial Wildlife Area(P. 23)
39. Fort Romualdo Pacheco(P. 33)
40. Fort Yuma(P. 32)
41. Fort Yuma Indian Reservation
42. Geoglyphs(4WD)(YD)(P. 12)
43. Geothermal Power Plants(East Mesa)
44. Geothermal Power Plant(Heber)
45. Geothermal Power Plants(Salton Sea)
46. Glamis/Gecko(4WD)(ISD)(P. 4)
47. Gold Rock Ranch(2WD)
48. Hanlon Heading Historic Site(P. 36)
49. Harper's Well
50. Hauser Geode Beds(4WD)
51. Heber Dunes  
State Vehicular Recreation Area(P. 7)
52. Herman Schneider Memorial Bridge  
and Gordon's Well
53. Hot Springs Long Term Visitors Area
54. Imperial Dam Long Term Visitor Area(P.13)
55. Imperial Dam(2WD)(P. 13)(CR)
56. Imperial Historic Cemetery (Inactive)
57. Imperial Wetlands
58. Imperial Valley College
59. Imperial Valley College Desert Museum  
and Information Center
60. Imperial Valley Expo  
(California Mid-Winter Fair)
61. Imperial National Wildlife Refuge
62. Indian Pass(2WD)(P. 8)
63. Kane Spring(4WD)
64. Laguna Dam(2WD)
65. Lake Cahuilla Shore Line  
(Fish Traps)(4WD)
66. Lakeview Golf Course  
(Rio Bend RV & Golf Resort)
67. Lonesome(4WD)(PSRA)
68. Mammoth Wash(4WD)(ISD)
69. Mammoth Wash Open Area(4WD)(ISD)(P. 8)
70. Mesquite Mine Overlook Trail(2WD)(P. 8)
71. Midway Well (2WD)
72. Milpitas Wash (4WD)
73. Mission La Purisima Concepcion(P. 32)
74. Mission San Pedro y  
San Pablo de Bicuener(P. 33)
75. Mountain Spring Station  
and Ox Pens(P. 32)
76. Mt. Signal (Mexico)
77. Mud Volcanoes (Mud Pots)(SS)(P. 22)
78. New River Wetlands Project
79. Obsidian Butte(SS)
80. Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular  
Recreation Area(4WD)(P. 9)
81. Ogilby Historic Townsite  
and Cemetery(2WD)(P. 9)
82. Old Highway 80(P. 9)
83. Historic Plank Road Display(4WD)(ISD)(P. 10-33)
84. Osborne Overlook(2WD) (ISD)
85. Oyster Shell Beds(4WD)(YD)(P. 12)
86. Painted Gorge(4WD)(P. 10)
87. Palo Verde County Park(2WD)(CR)(P. 24)
88. Pasadena Mine  
(Cargo Muchacho Mountains)(4WD)
89. Patton Valley(4WD)(ISD)
90. Paymaster Mine(4WD)
91. Phil Swing Park(2WD)
92. Picacho Mines(P. 32)

## LEGEND

CR—Colorado River  
 ISD—Imperial Sand Dunes  
 PSRA—Picacho State Recreation Area  
 SS—Salton Sea  
 SM—Superstition Mountains  
 YD—Yuha Desert





# 163 Points of Interest in Imperial County

- 93. Picacho State Recreation Area (2WD)(PSRA)(P. 13)
- 94. Picacho Peak(4WD)
- 95. Picacho Historic Cemetery(2WD)(PSRA)
- 96. Picacho Historic Railroad(4WD)(PSRA)
- 97. Pilot Knob  
Long Term Visitors Area(2WD)(P. 10)
- 98. Pioneers Museum(P. 35)
- 100. Plaster City Open Area (East)(4WD)(P. 11)
- 101. Plaster City Open Area (West)(4WD)(P. 11)
- 102. The Plug(4WD)
- 103. Pre-Cambrian Indian Trail Exhibit(2WD)
- 104. Red Hill Marina(SS)(P. 24)
- 105. Salton Sea Sonny Bono  
National Wildlife Refuge(SS)(P. 22)
- 106. Salton Sea  
State Recreation Area(SS)(P. 21)
- 107. Sand Dam(4WD)(SM)
- 108. San Diego State University Campus
- 109. San Sebastian Marsh/San Felipe Creek
- 110. Slab City (Salvation Mountain)
- 112. Senator Wash Reservoir(2WD)(P. 14)(CR)
- 113. Smuggler's Cave(4WD)
- 114. South Dunes Operations Center(ISD)
- 115. Split Mountain(4WD)
- 116. Squaw Lake(2WD)(P. 14)(CR)
- 117. Sunbeam Lake Park(P. 24)
- 118. Sunrise Butte(2WD)
- 119. Superstition Mountain Open Area(P. 11)
- 120. Tamarisk Long Term Visitors Area(2WD)
- 121. Taylor Lake(4WD)(CR)
- 123. Torres-Martinez Indian Reservation
- 124. Travertine Rock(2WD)
- 125. Tumco Ghost Town  
and Historic Cemetery(2WD)(P. 11-32)
- 126. University of California Division  
of Agricultural Science–Meloland
- 127. U.S. Naval Air Facility  
(NAF–El Centro)(P. 16)
- 128. Vista De Anza Monument(2WD)(YD)
- 129. Vista Mine Road Geoglyphs  
(Singer Geoglyphs)(4WD)
- 130. Earl Walker County Park
- 131. Walker Lake(4WD)(CR)
- 132. Walters Camp(2WD)(P. 14)
- 133. Wiest Lake County Park(P. 24)
- 134. Wildlife Viewing Area(4WD)(ISD)
- 135. Yuha Buttes(4WD)(YD)
- 136. Yuha Desert(YD)(P. 12)

## LEGEND

- CR—Colorado River
- ISD—Imperial Sand Dunes
- PSRA—Picacho State Recreation Area
- SS—Salton Sea
- SM—Superstition Mountains
- YD—Yuha Desert

## WILDERNESS AREAS

- (Camping, Hiking, Horseback Riding, etc.)  
(Mechanized, motorized transport  
is restricted)
- 139. Coyote Mountains Wilderness(P. 6)
- 140. Fossil Canyon  
Coyote Mountains Wilderness(4WD)
- 141. Wind Caves – Coyote Mountains Wilderness
- 142. Fish Creek Mountains Wilderness(P. 7)
- 143. Indian Pass Wilderness
- 144. Three Arch Hill  
Indian Pass Wilderness
- 145. Jacumba Wilderness
- 146. Davies Valley  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 147. Boulder Canyon  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 148. Devil's Canyon  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 149. Meyer Valley  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 150. Pinto Wash Palm Oasis  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 151. Pinto Wash Petroglyphs  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 152. Skull Valley – Jacumba Wilderness  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 153. Valley of the Moon  
Jacumba Wilderness
- 154. Little Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness
- 155. Little Picacho Wilderness
- 156. Unnamed Wash (Arturo's Arch)
- 157. Copper Basin – Little Picacho Wilderness
- 158. Eye of the Needle  
Little Picacho Wilderness
- 159. Ferguson Wash  
Little Picacho Wilderness
- 160. Little Picacho Peak  
Little Picacho Wilderness
- 161. John Whitley Natural Bridge  
Little Picacho Wilderness
- 162. North Algodones Dunes Wilderness
- 163. Palo Verde Mountains Wilderness

## HISTORIC LANDMARK PLAQUES

- 125. No. 182 Tumco Mines(P. 11-32)
- 92. No. 193 Picacho Mines(P. 32)
- 75. No. 194 Mountain Springs Station(P. 32)
- 73. No. 350 Misión La Purísima Concepción(P. 32)
- 1. No. 568 Hernando de Alarcón Expedition(P. 32)
- 40. No. 806 Fort Yuma(P. 32)
- 19. No. 808 Camp Salvation(P. 32)
- 83. No. 845 Historic Plank Road(P. 10-33)
- 74. No. 921 Site of Misión San Pedro Y  
San Pablo de Bicuener(P. 33)
- 22. No. 939 Twentieth Century Folk Art  
Environments(P. 33)
- 39. No. 944 Site of Fort Romualdo Pacheco(P. 33)
- 29. No. 985 Desert Training Center(P. 10-33)
- 138. No. 1008 Yuha Well(4WD)(YD)(P. 12-33)
- 122. No. 1034 Tecolete Rancho Site(P. 33)

# Escape to California's Largest Lake

**Salton Sea** – Occupying a portion of land once part of ancient Lake Cahuilla, Salton Sea is the largest lake in California. It is currently undergoing a transformation due to reduction of agriculture drainage inflows. Over the next several decades, the Salton Sea will be getting much smaller as water that once flowed into the lake is transferred to metropolitan areas. While intermittent lakes have occupied this basin for thousands of years, the modern Salton Sea was created during Colorado River floods from 1905 to 1907. Fed today by agriculture irrigation runoff, the Sea covers a surface area of 376 square miles and is 50 feet at its deepest point. Over the years it has been considered to be one of the world's most productive fisheries and the state is currently working to preserve these wetlands. Recreationists visit Salton Sea year-round for bird watching, boating, hiking and fishing. With 95 percent of the wetlands areas of the Pacific Coast gone, the Salton Sea is one of the last remaining stopovers on the Pacific Flyway for migratory birds. Eighteen-thousand-year-old Obsidian Butte, an extinct volcano, is located near Salton Sea Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge and Red Hill Marina. Prehistoric Indians quarried the black obsidian to make arrow points and cutting tools. [fws.gov/saltonsea](http://fws.gov/saltonsea).

**Salton Sea State Recreational Area** – Located on the northeastern side of the Salton Sea, the park hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year at five different campgrounds with 1,400 campsites. The five campsites, New Camp, Covina Beach, Salt Creek, Bombay Beach and Mecca Beach, offer a variety of camping experiences. This area offers miles of sandy beaches, a boat ramp and lots of shore fishing. Hiking opportunities include a one-mile self-guided nature trail. The visitor center is open daily 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. early October through mid-May. Salton Sea State Recreation Area is located at 100-225 State Park Road,

North Shore,  
California.  
Contact 760-  
393-3052 or  
[parks.ca.gov/  
?page\\_id=639](http://parks.ca.gov/?page_id=639).  
Map Number  
106.



## Salton Sea Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge

– This refuge, established in 1936, annually attracts thousands of outdoor enthusiasts. It is considered one of the premiere bird watching “hot spots” in the nation. Other recreational activities include wildlife observation, photography, picnicking, waterfowl hunting, fishing and nature trails. The refuge provides habitat for over 375 bird species. Endangered species observed on the refuge include the southern bald eagle, peregrine falcon, California brown pelican, Yuma clapper rail and desert pupfish. Sensitive species using the refuge include the fulvous whistling-duck, wood stork, long-billed curlew, mountain plover, western snowy plover, burrowing owl and white-faced ibis. The refuge is open from sunrise to sunset, and the Visitor Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., April through September. October through March, the Visitor Center is also open Saturday and Sunday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There is no user fee. Take State Highway 111 south from Niland or north from Calipatria. Turn west on Sinclair Road. Entrance to refuge is well marked. Outside, a self-guided trail will introduce you to the habitats found in a desert ecosystem. There is also an observation tower and picnic area located near the main parking lot. [fws.gov/saltonsea](http://fws.gov/saltonsea). Map Number 105.



## Mud Volcanoes (Mud Pots)

– The mud volcanoes are natural cones built up by viscous mud that bubbles up through central vents. This area is near a former commercial carbon dioxide gas field. The age of these mud pots is not known, but surveys in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s reported mud pots and steam vents in the area. These mud volcanoes can be found near the Salton Sea shore at the corner of Davis and Schrimpf Roads. The Wister mud pots are found on Hot Mineral Spa Road just off State Highway 111. Map Number 77.



# Adventures in Bird Watching



Imperial Valley's irrigation system has created an extensive wetlands region that annually attracts over 375 species of birds of all sizes and varieties to breed and feed in the agriculture fields, canals and drains and lakes from the border to the Salton Sea.



**Finney and Ramer Lakes** – This 3-mile-long body of water attracts post-breeding visitor birds from Mexico, including the wood stork and yellow-footed gull. Some of the land birds include the ladder-backed woodpecker, black-tailed gnat-catcher, Abert's towhee and the distinctive large-billed “species” of savannah sparrow. The lakes are located between Brawley and Calipatria east of State Highway 111 at Jacobsen Road. Map Number 38.

**Fig Lagoon** – Included in the National Watchable Wildlife Program, Fig Lagoon was created while repairing a drain damaged during tropical storm Kathleen in September 1976. The area in and around the lagoon features an array of habitats ranging from desert, lake, wetland and ocean. These habitats are defined by a multitude of bird species that call Fig Lagoon their home at various times during the year. The lagoon is located west of El Centro just off I- 8, south of Seeley. Map Number 37.



# Escape to Imperial County's Recreational Lakes

**Palo Verde Park** – Palo Verde Park offers visitors access to the beautiful Colorado River. It is an excellent spot for fishing and boating and is just minutes from hiking trails and the world famous Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area and other off-highway vehicle playgrounds. A boat launch, 20 camp sites, water and toilets are at the facility. From Interstate 10 take Hwy. 78 south past Palo Verde and signs will be posted directing visitors to the park. Map Number 87.



**Red Hill Marina Park** – Red Hill Marina Park is a 10-acre park on an island on the southeastern shore of Salton Sea, northwest of Calipatria. The park is seven miles from Hwy. 111, the nearest major road. The park is connected by a causeway to Garst Road, which is a county-maintained road that runs north to south. The park includes boat launches, RV hookups, a designated camping area, restrooms, ramadas, picnic tables and plenty of shoreline for fishing. Map Number 104.

**Sunbeam Lake Park** – Sunbeam Lake Park, a 117-acre county-maintained park, offers visitors a variety of amenities that include fishing, boating, swimming, playground, basketball court, shuffleboard, picnic tables, barbecue grills, BMX, baseball fields, soccer fields and a walking trail. The main feature of the park is a lake that can be used for jet skiing and boating and a swimming lagoon. The park includes improved onsite parking and is easily accessible from Interstate 8 at Drew Road exit. Map Number 117.

**Wiest Lake** – Wiest Lake Park is a 62.6-acre park located northeast of Brawley off Hwy. 111. The park features a lake for boating, fishing and swimming. The park includes RV spaces with full hookups, partial hookups and dry camping. You will also find barbecue grills, ramadas, picnic tables, restrooms with showers and a recreation hall. The park is easily accessible from Rutherford Road and includes improved onsite parking. Map Number 133.

## County Parks –

Day Use:  
\$2.00 per vehicle  
Fishing Permit:  
\$2.00 per person  
Boat Launch:  
\$5.00 per boat/  
ski trailer per day  
Information:  
[icpds.com](http://icpds.com)



# Escaping with Activities throughout the year

## January to March Adventures

NOTE: The events listed below are a sampling of annual activities throughout the Valley and are subject to change. For updated information, please visit local chambers' of commerce and cities' Web sites.

**Snowbird Breakfast** – Each January, winter visitors to Imperial County are welcomed with a free breakfast sponsored by El Centro Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau. Breakfast is served by members of local service clubs and chamber directors. Local businesses and agencies set up displays. Contact El Centro Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau.



### **Imperial Valley Business Showcase**

– Imperial County businesses come together annually in January for a four-hour business show sponsored by the Imperial Valley Joint Chambers of Commerce. In addition to over 100 business displays, the show features samples of food from Valley restaurants. The event is open to the

public and there is a fee to attend. Contact any Imperial County chamber of commerce for details.

**Niland Sportsmen and Tomato Festival** – For more than six decades, the community of Niland has hosted this festival in late January-early February to celebrate its heritage as a tomato growing area. Events include a parade, a tomato-packing contest, a carnival, queen contests, food and other contests and events meant to bring the community and the Imperial County together. It is sponsored by the Niland Chamber of Commerce.

# Escaping with Adventures throughout the Year

## January to March Activities

**Salton Sea International Bird Festival** – Held each winter, usually around the Presidents Day weekend in February, this festival brings in several hundred bird watchers from throughout the country. The festival consists of tours, lectures and exhibits. Contact any Imperial County chamber of commerce.



**Mardi Gras Light Parade and Street Fair** – The City of El Centro hosts this event which is held during February. Mardi Gras celebration takes place in downtown El Centro and features a street fair, parade, live entertainment and food vendors along Main Street. For more information contact City of El Centro at (760) 339-3858.

**Farmers Market** – This outdoor market is held each winter in downtown El Centro. Organized by the Downtown El Centro Association, this event includes live entertainment, farm equipment displays, fresh produce, arts and crafts and food vendors. Local businesses and agencies also set up displays.



**Children's Fair** – A celebration for children takes over El Centro's Bucklin Park each spring for the annual Children's Fair, sponsored by the Children and Parents Council. The event offers food, games, walk-around characters and information for families. Its purpose is to bring the community together and display resources available for families. About 35,000 people turn out for the event each year. Contact the Children and Parents Council at (760) 353-8300.

**NAF-El Centro Air Show** – Featuring the Blue Angels, this air show is held in March at the end of their three-month training period. The show kicks off the Blue Angels season with displays and aerial demonstrations. The annual



Food Fest is held the evening prior to the air show.

**Carrot Festival** – The Carrot Festival is the annual harvest of carrots celebration held in the City of Holtville. To celebrate its status as "The Carrot Capital of the World" the Holtville Chamber of Commerce hosts a variety of events. A golf tournament, week-long carrot cooking contest, and midway carnival follow the opening

dinner banquet. The festival hits its peak when downtown Holt Park comes alive with the annual 10K run, parade, arts and crafts fair, antique car and tractor show, student art exhibit, local entertainment and a variety of food booths. Contact the Holtville Chamber of Commerce.

**World-Famous Rib Cook-Off** – Sponsored by the Holtville Athletic Club, the "World-Famous Rib Cook-Off," is held annually in Holtville, complete with their to-die-for homemade ice cream. Contact the Holtville Athletic Club at (760) 356-5426. [holtville.net](http://holtville.net).

### **California Mid-Winter Fair and Fiesta**

– Showcasing the talents, products and cultural wealth of Imperial County, the California Mid-Winter Fair and Fiesta is held annually in late February or early March. It is a production of the 45th District Agricultural Association. Carnival rides, livestock, games and booths abound on the 100-acre Imperial Valley Expo grounds. The fair consists of more than 50,000 square feet of exhibit area in five buildings, grandstand and race track. From Adams



Avenue in El Centro, take Imperial Avenue north for 4.5 miles. The Imperial Valley Expo is located in the City of Imperial. The Imperial Valley Expo is 12 miles south of Brawley on State Highway 86. Contact the Imperial Valley Expo at (760) 355-1181. [ivexpo.com](http://ivexpo.com).

## April to June Activities

**Mariachi Festival Sin Fronteras** – Join the City of Calexico in celebrating this annual week-long festival. Held the third week of May, Mariachi Festival Week kicks-off with a mixer, Salsa Tasting Contest, Store Front Decorating Contest, Feria del Tequila (tequila tasting fair), Mexican arts & crafts exhibits and sales. The week concludes with the Annual Mariachi Festival Concert featuring world renowned and local Mariachi groups. The concert attended by approximately 6,000 spectators is held on the Mariachi Festival Stage located at Calexico's Crummett Park. A food court is available providing the best in Mexican cuisine and beverages. Mexican arts and crafts are for sale along with concert t-shirts and Mariachi music CD's. A Firework's Extravaganza is part of the conclusion of the show. For information contact the Calexico Chamber of Commerce.

**Sweet Onion Festival** – The Brawley Main Street Association holds a Hawaiian themed Sweet Onion Festival every year in May. Local restaurants and organizations compete for the “King of the Ring” title, and cook their best onion rings for the crowd to eat and vote for their favorite. For more information, contact the Brawley Chamber of Commerce at (760) 344-3160.



**Sugar Festival** – The Brawley Main Street Association holds a seventies themed Sugar Festival every year in June. There is live entertainment, a sugar beet toss and fun for the whole family. The event was created to recognize the sugar beet industry in the Valley. For more information, contact the Brawley Chamber of Commerce at (760) 344-3160.

## July to September Activities

**Freedom Fest Independence Day Celebration** – This event, the biggest synchronized music and fireworks show in Imperial County, is held at Imperial Valley College. There is live entertainment, food booths as well as numerous military aircraft and vehicles that are on display on the campus. Contact any chamber of commerce.

**Ice Cream Social** – Held in the month of July in El Centro, this event brings thousands of people out to enjoy a fun-filled evening of ice cream, cobbler, and sundaes at El Centro's Town Square. El Centro Fire Department's *Rain on Main* is a refreshing playground for kids of all ages. Organized by the Downtown El Centro Association.



# October to December Activities

**Cattle Call** – Brawley helps Imperial County recapture the pioneering spirit of its early residents each November with a rousing rodeo celebration that attracts some of the top professional cowboys in the nation. The week-long Cattle Call festivities include events such as Chili Cook-Off, Dia De La Fiesta, Mariachi Night and the Cattle Call Parade. Capping the celebration are PRCA performances at the Cattle Call Rodeo, one of the largest professional rodeos in California. Contact the Brawley Chamber of Commerce for more information at (760) 344-3160. For Rodeo information or tickets call (760) 344-5206 or [cattlecallrodeo.com](http://cattlecallrodeo.com).

**Happy Days in the Park** – The Brawley Main Street Association holds a fifties themed Happy Days in the Park in October of every year. This event features live entertainment and fun contests such as bubble gum blowing, hula hoop and best dressed. Classic cars are displayed for all to enjoy. For more information, contact the Brawley Chamber of Commerce at (760) 344-3160.



**Westmorland Honey Festival** –

Each November, the City of Westmorland is home to the Annual Honey Festival, recognizing Imperial County's Honey Bee industry, much of which is headquartered in Westmorland. The festival, sponsored by the Westmorland Chamber of Commerce, features a day full of activities that kicks off with a Lions Club Pancake Breakfast and includes a Spelling Bee, boxing matches, pony rides, entertainment—lots of fun for the whole family. Contact Westmorland Chamber of Commerce.

**Los Vigilantes/El Centro Chamber Christmas Parade** – El Centro's official greeters "Los Vigilantes" and the El Centro Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau kick off the holiday season with their traditional Christmas parade on the first Saturday in December. There are various marching bands, drill teams, color guards and floats to enjoy. The event concludes with a Christmas Bazaar held at Bucklin Park. Contact the El Centro Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau.

**Calexico Annual Christmas Parade** – The Calexico Chamber of Commerce and the 20-30 Club celebrate the holiday shopping season with its annual Christmas Parade held the second Saturday of December. The parade travels its route through historic downtown Calexico. It includes participants from the Imperial Valley, San Diego, Yuma, Arizona and Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. Contact Calexico Chamber of Commerce.

**Christmas in a Small Town** – Santa Claus sneaks into Imperial each year, days before his "official" visit, to help the City of Imperial celebrate *Christmas in a Small Town*. In excess of 5,000 people participate in this day-long event which also features booths selling homemade Christmas crafts, carolers and plenty of food stalls.

Contact the Imperial Chamber of Commerce.



**Christmas On Main** – The Brawley Main Street Association holds the Christmas On Main at Plaza Park. Carolers fill the air with Christmas joy, while participants are treated to fun holiday activities such as cookie decorating and coloring contests. Local service clubs give away refreshments all in anticipation of Santa's arrival with his stocking filled with toys for kids. Contact the Brawley Chamber of Commerce.

# Escape into Arts and Culture

## Performing Arts Organizations

**The Calexico Arts Commission** and the **Calexico Arts Council** are headquartered in the Cultural Arts Center, located downtown at the historic De Anza Hotel where artistic, cultural and instructional programs are offered through the Calexico Arts Commission.

**Calexico Border Players** – This group holds performances throughout the year at the Elk's Lodge in Calexico and the Calexico Cultural Arts Center. Contact the Calexico Arts Commission (760) 768-2170.

**Imperial Valley Symphony** – has been performing classical music for three decades. It is a member of the American Symphony Orchestra League and is licensed by ASCAP. This small (35-50 member) symphony orchestra is sponsored by the Imperial Valley Symphony Association, Inc. The annual concert schedule generally includes three programs: a Fall Concert, a Mid-Winter Concert and a Spring Concert. Imperial Valley College, (760) 355-6287.



**Imperial Valley Choral Society** – Imperial Valley Choral Society was formed in 1994 to foster choral music in Imperial County. It is the primary sponsor of three performing groups:

- **Imperial Valley Master Chorale** – The Master Chorale members, 40-50 in number, come from all over the Valley to make beautiful music and to share in giving joy to others with their singing. The Master Chorale performs music from Big Band to Broadway, as well as classical choral works. This choir rehearses on Monday evenings from 6:15 to 9:00 p.m. at Imperial Valley College. For more information call 760-352-2338.

- **Imperial Valley Chamber Singers** – Open to experienced singers, by audition, this ensemble focuses on preparing music for public performances. Singers range in age from high school students to senior citizens. Repertoire includes a variety of musical styles with an emphasis on vocal jazz and pop. Performances may include concerts, dinner shows, or special engagements for large or small audiences. Chamber Singers meets on Thursday evening from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Southwest High School Choral Room in El Centro. For information call (760) 370-0885 or write to P. O. Box 3531, El Centro, CA 92244.

- **Imperial Valley Musick-Mixers Fun Concert Band** – This band specializes in a wide range of literature for wind instruments. Its primary objective is to provide continuing musical performance opportunities for adults, music educators and advanced high school and younger students. Contact Aaron Buckle, (760) 550-1205.

**Imperial Valley Youth Chorus** – This singing group for school age students, grades 5 to 12, performs in several concerts annually, including joint performances with the Master Chorale. The chorus is open to all students grade 5 to 12. Students will have the opportunity for solo performances as well as scheduled group performances. Call (760) 370-0885 or visit the society Web site at [IVChoralSociety.com](http://IVChoralSociety.com).

**North County Coalition for the Arts** – North County Coalition for the Arts (NoCCA) is headquartered at Palmer Performing Arts Center in Brawley. NoCCA's programs include its School Concert & Arts Series, and its summer arts camp, ARTSparks. NoCCA also produces plays, musicals and concerts. North County Players and the Valley Jazz ensemble are a part of NoCCA. To receive mailings, contact NoCCA, P. O. 1253, Brawley, CA 92227.

**Valley Jazz** – For nearly two decades, Valley Jazz has been entertaining local audiences and mentoring young students in Jazz. Membership is based upon recommendation and audition. They annually hold a Christmas concert in Palmer Auditorium. Contact Clark Baker Music in El Centro, (760) 352-3363.

# Escape into Arts and Culture

## Performance Venues



**Old Post Office Pavilion** – The Old Post Office Pavilion, located at 230 S. Fifth Street in El Centro, was El Centro’s Post Office from 1934 until 1985. The building is one of the last Beaux Arts-style public structures in the United States. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. It is available for art exhibitions and community events. Its auditorium is used for performances and presentations. Contact the City of El Centro, (760) 337-4540.

### **Palmer Performing Arts Center** –

Concerts, theatrical productions, school and community events are presented throughout the year in this facility on the campus of Brawley Union High School. Palmer Performing Arts Center is also headquarters for the North County Coalition for the Arts. The lobby is Palmer Art Gallery, and regularly features exhibits of local artists’ works. The 1,023 seat auditorium has a traditional

proscenium stage with fly. To use the facility, contact Palmer’s Technical Director, at (760) 312-5819 or 312-6086.

**Southwest Theatre for the Performing Arts** – Productions are staged throughout the year in this facility on the campus of Southwest High School in El Centro. It is also the home of the Southwest Academy for the Visual and Performing Arts. The theater has 1,100 seats and a large modern stage. Contact Southwest Theatre for the Performing Arts, (760) 336-4229.

**Rodney Auditorium** – Since 1927, Rodney Auditorium has been the focal point for major performances in Calexico, including musical events and concerts. The 450-seat theater is located on the Imperial Valley Campus of San Diego State University in Calexico. Together with the John Stepling Art Gallery, these venues provide academic and cultural resources for the entire community. Contact SDSU Imperial Valley Office of Advancement and Public Relations (760) 768-5569.

# Historic Landmark Plaques

**Historic Landmark No. 182 – Tumco Mines** – Pete Walters of Ogilby discovered the first gold vein at Gold Rock on January 6, 1884. From his Little Mary Claim began a gold camp which reached its peak development between 1893 and 1899 as Hedges, with 3,200 residents. Nearly closed from 1900-10, it was reopened as Tumco from 1910-13 and was worked intermittently until 1941. Tumco has since become a California ghost town. Location: On Gold Rock Ranch Road, 1.0 mile east of Ogilby Road (S34), 9.0 miles north of I-8, 4.5 miles northeast of Ogilby. (P. 20)(Map No. 125)

**Historic Landmark No. 193 – Picacho Mines** – Opened by placer miners after 1852, the gold mines expanded into hard rock quarrying by 1872. Picacho employed 700 miners at its peak from 1895 to 1900. Mill accidents, low ore quality, and the loss of cheap river transport with the building of Laguna Dam led to numerous periods of inactivity. With ores far from worked out, the Picacho Mines, using modern techniques, again resumed operations in 1984. Location: On Picacho Road, 18.2 miles north of Winterhaven. (Map No. 92)

**Historic Landmark No. 194 – Mountain Springs Station** – From 1862-70, Peter Larkin and Joe Stancliff used a stone house about a mile north of here as a store from which ox teams pulled wagons up a 30 percent grade. The San Diego and Fort Yuma Turnpike Co. used the site as a toll road station until 1876. The crumbling house was replaced in 1917 by another, still visible, to its east. But road changes, beginning in 1878 and culminating in today's interstate highway, have left the older stone house ruins almost inaccessible. Location: Site is 200 feet west of westbound lanes of I-8, just north of Mountain Springs Road, 2.3 miles east of the county line, Mountain Springs. Plaque is located adjacent to Desert View Tower, approximately 100 yards distance from the Desert View Tower landmark plaque. (Map No. 75)

**Historic Landmark No. 350 – Misión La Purísima Concepción (site of)** – In October 1780, Father Francisco Garcés and companions began Mission La Purísima Concepción. The mission/pueblo site was inadequately supported. Colonists ignored Indian rights, usurped the best lands and destroyed Indian crops. Completely frustrated and disappointed, the Quechans (Yumans) and their allies destroyed Concepción on July 17-19, 1781. Location: St. Thomas Indian Mission, Indian Hill on Picacho Road, Fort Yuma, one mile south of Winterhaven. (Map No. 73)

**Historic Landmark No. 568 – Hernando de Alarcón Expedition** – Alarcón's mission was to provide supplies for Francisco Coronado's expedition in search of the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola. The Spaniards led by Hernando de Alarcón ascended the Colorado River by boat from the Gulf of California past this point, thereby becoming the first non-Indians to sight Alta California on September 5, 1540. Location: On Algodones Road, State Highway 186, 0.5 mile south of I-8, 0.4 mile north of U.S.-Mexico border at Andrade. (Map No. 1)

**Historic Landmark No. 806 – Fort Yuma** – Originally called Camp Calhoun, the site was first used as a U.S. military post in 1849. A fire destroyed the original buildings. By 1855 the barracks had been rebuilt. Called Camp Yuma in 1852, it became Fort Yuma after reconstruction. Transferred to the Department of the Interior and the Quechan Indian Tribe in 1884, it became a boarding school operated by the Catholic Church until 1900. Location: On bank of Colorado River, 350 Picacho Road, Winterhaven. (Map No. 40)

**Historic Landmark No. 808 – Camp Salvation** – Here, on September 23, 1849, Lieutenant Cave J. Coats, Escort Commander, International Boundary Commission, established Camp Salvation. From September till the first of December 1849, it served as a refugee center for distressed emigrants attempting to reach the gold fields over the Southern Emigrant Trail. Location: Rockwood Plaza, Sixth Street east at Heber Avenue, Calexico. (Map No. 19)

# in Imperial County

**Historic Landmark No. 845 – Historic Plank Road** – This unique plank road, originally seven miles long, was the only means early motorists had of crossing the treacherous Imperial Sand Dunes. The 8-by-12-foot sections were moved with a team of horses whenever the shifting sands covered portions of the road. Double sections were placed at intervals to permit vehicles to pass. Location: 35 miles east of El Centro on Grays Well Road 3.3 miles west of I-8 interchange. (P. 10)(Map No. 83)

**Historic Landmark No. 921 – Site of Misión San Pedro y San Pablo de Bicuñer** – To protect the Anza Trail where it forded the Colorado River, the Spanish founded a pueblo and mission nearby on January 7, 1781. Threatened with the loss of their land, the Quechans (Yumans) attacked this strategic settlement on July 17, 1781. The Quechan victory closed this crossing and seriously crippled future communications between upper California and Mexico. Location: On S24, 0.2 miles west of intersection of Levee and Mehring Roads, 4.4 miles northeast of Bard. (Map No. 74)

**Historic Landmark No. 939 – Twentieth Century Folk Art Environments (thematic) – Charley’s World of Lost Art** – Charles Kasling began sculpturing near Andrade in 1967, and his creations now fill a site of approximately two and a half acres. His style, best described as eclectic, was inspired partly by his world travels with the U.S. Navy and partly by the desert terrain. Location: On dirt road, 0.5 miles northwest of Andrade, 7 miles southwest of Winterhaven. (Map No. 22)

**Historic Landmark No. 944 – Site of Fort Romualdo Pacheco** – In 1774, Spain opened an overland route from Sonora to California but it was closed by Yuma Indians in 1781. In 1822, Mexico attempted to reopen this route. Lt. Romualdo Pacheco and soldiers built an adobe fort at this site in 1825–26, the only Mexican fort in Alta California. On April 26, 1826, Kumeyaay Indians attacked the fort, killing three soldiers and wounding three others. Pacheco abandoned the fort, removing soldiers to San Diego. Location: West bank of New River, south of Worthington Road, 6-1/2 miles due west of Imperial. (Map No. 39)

**Historic Landmark No. 985 – Desert Training Center, California-Arizona Maneuver Area – Camp Pilot Knob** – Camp Pilot Knob was a unit of the Desert Training Center, established by General George S. Patton, Jr., to prepare American troops for battle during World War II. It was the largest military training ground ever to exist. At the peak of activity here at Pilot Knob, June–December, 1943, the 85th Infantry Division, and the 36th and 44th Reconnaissance Squadrons of the 11th (Mechanized) Cavalry trained here for roles in the liberation of Europe, 1944–45. Location: On Sidewinder Road, 200 yards north of I-8, near town of Felicity. (P. 10)(Map No. 29)

**Historic Landmark No. 1008 – Yuha Well** – Known as Santa Rosa de Las Lajas (Flat Rocks), this site was used on March 8, 1774, by the Anza Exploring Expedition, opening the land route from Sonora, Mexico, to Alta California. On December 11 to 15, 1775, the three divisions of Anza's colonizing expedition used this first good watering spot beyond the Colorado River on the way from Sonora, Mexico, to San Francisco. Location: 14 miles west of El Centro go south from Interstate 8 at Dunaway Road. Use BLM's WECO Route of Travel Map to locate Yuha Well. (P. 12)(Map No. 138)

**Historic Landmark No. 1034 – Tecolote Rancho Site** – Prolific author Harold Bell Wright purchased 160 acres here in 1907. While living in a tent he built Rancho El Tecolote, constructing a woven arrowweed studio in 1908 and a ranch house in 1909. From 1907 to 1916 he wrote three best sellers, including the historical novel, *The Winning of Barbara Worth*, a chronicle of desert reclamation and the Colorado River flood of 1905. As Wright's most successful and important book, it brought the Imperial Valley and its agricultural wealth to the attention of the nation. The book's heroine Barbara Worth became an icon for the region. Location: At southwest corner of entry drive at Barbara Worth Country Club, Holtville. (Map No. 11)

# Imperial County's Golf Adventures

**Barbara Worth Golf Resort** – This resort is on the site where Harold Bell Wright wrote his fourth novel “The Winning of Barbara Worth” in 1911. It is the exciting story of the reclaiming of the Imperial Valley desert by diverting the Colorado River. The private resort is home to one of the Valley’s largest 18-hole golf courses. Also available are golf lessons and a fully-stocked pro shop. It is located on Historic Route 80, between El Centro and Holtville. [bwresort.com](http://bwresort.com). Map number 10.



**Broken Spoke Golf Course**– Located just south of Interstate 8 on Wake Avenue in El Centro, Broken Spoke offers a nine-hole Executive Course, 250-yard driving range, cart and club rentals and golf lessons. Contact Broken Spoke, 225 Wake Avenue, El Centro. Map number 15.



**Del Rio Country Club** – This semiprivate 18-hole traditional tree-lined golf course is home to the Lettuce Tournament, one of the oldest golf tournaments in the state. Anyone is welcome to use the driving range and there is a fully-stocked pro shop at the country club. Banquet facilities also are available. Del Rio is located at 102 East Del Rio Road just off State Highway 111 north of Brawley. Map number 28.

**Lakeview Golf Course** – Lakeview Golf Course is a challenging Executive nine-hole course with two tees per hole, giving the golfer 18 different holes to play. It has a golf shop and snack bar serving the golf pro and amateur alike with golf apparel, clubs, balls and refreshments. Located at Rio Bend RV & Golf Resort, 1589 Drew Road, El Centro. Map number 66.

# Escape to the Past

**Historic Military Sites** – For military buffs, there are a number of abandoned World War II camps in Imperial County. Typical is The Patton Desert Camp commemorated by a plaque at Sidewinder Road. During World War II, Generals George S. Patton Jr. and Walton Walker were instrumental in developing a facility to train U. S. troops for the North African Theater. The Desert Training Center/ California-Arizona Maneuver Area (1942-1944) spanned from Searchlight, Nevada south through eastern California and western Arizona to the United States/Mexico International Border. The Imperial Sand Dunes offered a unique training environment for combat maneuvers. Tank tracks in desert pavement from those maneuvers are evident in various locations throughout the area.

## **Desert Museum and Information Center**

– The museum was founded in 1969 to educate people about the desert. A new facility is under development in Ocotillo. As archaeological knowledge of Imperial County has grown through the research of many scholars, so has Imperial Valley College Desert Museum's collection of artifacts which helps lead to a better understanding of life in our arid desert. Beyond serving as a scientific and cultural resource, the museum serves as a center for tourism. The museum also offers desert archeological tours and holds an annual Indian Fair each fall. The Nature Trail is open to the public Tuesday and Thursday from October 15 through May 1. Self-guided brochures are available in the restrooms or at the El Centro BLM office at 1661 South 4th Street, El Centro. Visit the museum's website at [www.imperial.edu](http://www.imperial.edu). Go to the community link and click on IVC Desert Museum.



## **Pioneers Museum and Cultural Center – Imperial County Historical Society**

– This unique museum is home to galleries honoring the different ethnic communities and their history of settlement in the Imperial County. It features displays of Imperial County's cattle industry, its irrigation systems and a wide range of memorabilia on scouting in the Valley, schools and veterans. Pioneers Park is a place where a visitor can learn what it took to develop Imperial County. Pioneers Park grounds include the main museum, several historical buildings – including two former school buildings – that have been moved onto the park as well as farm and railroad equipment. Museum hours: Tuesday-Sunday 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. or by appointment. School tours October-May. Adults – \$4.00; Children under 13–\$.50. Located at 373 E. Aten Road, Imperial, across the road from Imperial Valley College on State Highway 111 three miles north of Historic Route 80.



# Adventures in Mexico

**Algodones** – This small Mexican village is located about 55 miles east of El Centro. Take Interstate 8 east to Algodones Road and go south to the border crossing. The remains of Hanlon Heading is yards from the Algodones Port of Entry. Visitors to Algodones have excellent shopping and dining opportunities and a chance to experience the border culture.

**Mexicali** – The city of Mexicali is the capital of the Mexican state of Baja California Norte. This city of approximately a million residents is located adjacent to the Imperial Valley city of Calexico. Mexicali is home to more than a hundred *maquiladora* plants and offers a number of world class tourist facilities as well as a variety of interesting places to visit. It is recommended that motorists obtain Mexican auto insurance before driving into Mexico. For additional information on Mexicali, visit the city's tourism web site at [www.mexicaliturismo.com](http://www.mexicaliturismo.com).



**San Felipe** – This Baja California desert community enjoys the benefits of a warm winter climate, the world's most prolific salt-water aquarium, and an incomparable pre- and post-Columbian history. It is located 125 miles south of Mexicali via Mexico's Federal Highway 5. Mexico's Gateway to the Sea of Cortez, San Felipe began as a commercial fishing port and still operates a sizeable shrimp-fishing fleet. But the pueblos' principal income has changed from fishing to tourism with as many as 250,000 Americans and Canadian annual visitors. San Felipe is not an Acapulco, it is not a Cancun, it is not a Tijuana. It is uniquely San Felipe. See San Felipe's website, [www.sanfelipe.com.mx](http://www.sanfelipe.com.mx).

**U.S. Passport Required When Traveling To and From Mexico** – If you are driving into Mexico, check with your auto insurance carrier. Most companies exclude coverage in a foreign country. If you need Mexican Auto Insurance, it can be purchased in Imperial County.

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