

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The vast open spaces of the California Desert are uniquely situated within a few hours' drive of over 12 million people. In recognition of the special challenges created by this situation, Congress established the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) in 1976. Approximately half of the desert's 25 million acres are public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Congress directed the BLM to provide for the administration of public lands in the CDCA in a way that would protect its unusual natural and cultural values while providing for the wise use of its resources. The administrative headquarters for the CDCA are located at the BLM's California Desert District Office in Riverside. Public lands are managed for a variety of uses, including minerals, livestock grazing, wildlife, watershed, wilderness, and recreation.

CALIFORNIA DESERT DISTRICT OFFICE  
1695 Spruce Street  
Riverside, CA 92507  
(714) 351-6394

BARSTOW RESOURCE AREA OFFICE  
831 Barstow Road  
Barstow, CA 92311  
(619) 256-3595

EL CENTRO RESOURCE AREA OFFICE  
333 S. Waterman Avenue  
El Centro, CA 92243  
(619) 352-5842

NEEDLES RESOURCE AREA OFFICE  
641 Front Street, Suite B  
Needles, CA 92363  
(619) 326-3896

RIDGECREST RESOURCE AREA OFFICE  
1415-A North Norma  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555  
(619) 446-4526

INDIO RESOURCE AREA OFFICE  
1695 Spruce Street  
Riverside, CA 92507  
(714) 351-6663

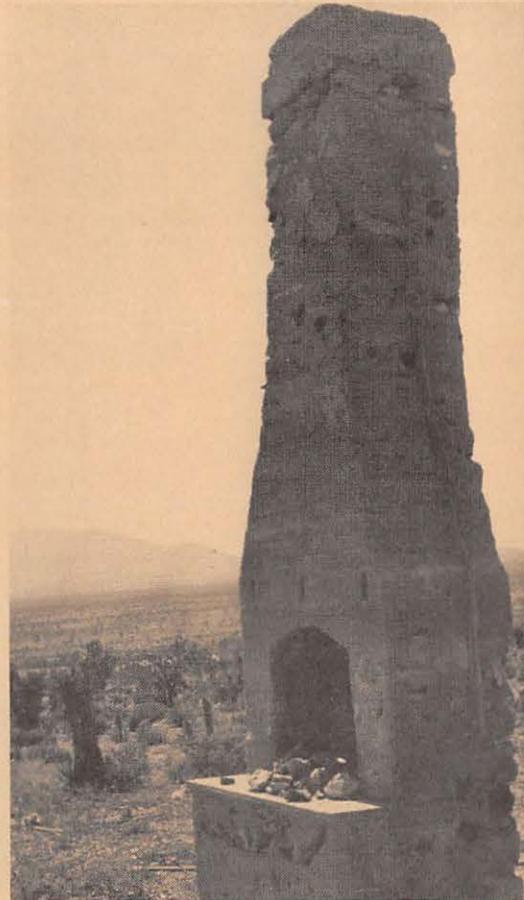


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# Cultural Resource Guide

## CALIFORNIA DESERT



Historic ruins — a chimney in the East Mojave.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

### Archaeology and Your Past

Cultural resources are the remains of human occupation and use of an area over the entire span of its history. They can teach us about every kind of human activity that has ever occurred, from the earliest times we know of right down to the present.

Scientists who study these remains in order to learn about the history of the human race are called archaeologists. In the United States, archaeology is a branch of anthropology, which is the study of all aspects of the human race, its history, and its many differing cultures and customs. What we learn from anthropology, including archaeology, may help us to understand not only our past but also our possible future. It can help us as well to understand better what makes us act, think, and feel the way we do right now.

People seem to have a need to know about their past. How many times have you discussed your nationality, even though your family may have lived in the United States for several generations? People who have never been to Holland or Italy or Spain, for instance, may take pride in telling others that their family is of Dutch or Italian or Spanish descent. Many people now are tracing their genealogies or family histories as far back as they can. People want to know that their roots go back into the past beyond their own memory or knowledge of that past. Archaeology has already told us much about our past, and potentially can add to what we already know.

Aboriginal trail, Picacho area, Imperial County.



Pictographs are symbols painted on rocks. These pictographs were found at a site in San Bernardino County.

### Native Americans and the California Desert

Archaeologists do not know for certain how long people have lived in the California Desert. Many archaeologists are working to answer this question.

We do know that people were living in the California Desert by 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. Some archaeologists believe people were here as early as 20,000 years ago and some believe it was even much earlier.

The first inhabitants were "hunter-gatherers." Hunter-gatherers are people who survived by providing all their daily needs through hunting animals and collecting plant products and other natural resources.

These hunter-gatherers entered California from the north, gradually drifted south, and became the ancestors of the Native Americans who occupied the California Desert when the first Europeans arrived. By that time, many different tribal groups speaking different languages occupied various portions of the desert. They had worked out very successful ways of surviving in and dealing with the harsh desert climate. They knew where all the water sources were and when water was available at each. They knew which plants were safe to eat or could be used for medicinal or other purposes. They knew where all these useful plants grew and when to collect them. They made clothing, basketry, nets, pottery, jewelry, tools, and cooking implements, temporary and permanent shelters, and objects of art all from the natural resources all around them. They had learned to survive and prosper in one of the harshest climates in the world.

## Historic Times on the California Desert

The first Europeans to arrive in the California Desert were Spanish explorers. The first of these, Hernando de Alarcon, arrived in 1540. For approximately three hundred years, Spanish military, missionary and exploring parties crossed the desert by various routes. They left a number of written records of their journeys, their discoveries, and their dealings with the Indians they encountered.

In the 1800's, American trappers and traders began to arrive, followed by military and survey expeditions, and emigrants from the east and abroad.

Mining, homesteading, and ranching began, railroads arrived, and finally, agriculture developed. Since 1900, increased access in the form of roads and highways has opened the desert. The development of modern vehicles, especially four-wheel-drive vehicles, has steadily increased the number of people able to visit the desert for a wide range of activities.

Fort Piute — stone foundations are all that remain of the fort along the old Mojave Trail.



Rock ring, Yuha Basin, Imperial County. This aboriginal rock ring may have been the foundation for a temporary brush shelter.



Dug-out shelter in the East Mojave.

## BLM's Cultural Resource Program in the CDCA

Many people enjoy observing and photographing archaeological sites when they visit the desert. Special permits allow scientists to study archaeological sites and the objects they contain so we may continue to learn more about the history and prehistory of the desert.

Most of these cultural resources are fragile and easily damaged. Since many of them are located on the desert floor, people may damage them unintentionally. Deliberate destruction of archaeological sites also sometimes occurs, and many thousands of historic and prehistoric objects have been removed by individuals for their own collections. When such objects are removed for private collections, no one else can have the pleasure of seeing them or photographing them, and archaeologists can never learn what they might have told us about our past.

Often, too, attempts to take something of value, like a petroglyph, may destroy it for all, including the thief. Many of these examples of "rock art" are on lava which fractures easily, but seldom in less than hundreds of small pieces.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), through the California Desert Plan, has developed a special program to preserve and protect special resources, including cultural resources. Many areas containing especially important cultural resources, have been designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). BLM archaeologists are preparing management plans for these special areas. The management plans provide primarily for these procedures within each ACEC: (1) study and inventory as needed to determine the full extent of cultural resources present; (2) installation of protective and interpretive facilities such as fences and signs; (3) establishment of monitoring programs to determine over a period of time whether or not additional protection is needed.



Petroglyph element of an unidentified area.

BLM archaeologists also document especially important archaeological sites for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register Office in Washington, D.C., maintains files on all of these sites. Placement on the National Register of Historic Places marks a site as being especially valuable for the information it contains about the past.

## Cultural Resources on the California Desert

All of the past activity, both Native American and historic, has left thousands of archaeological sites on the desert. There are approximately 14,000 officially recorded archaeological sites within the California Desert. Since most of the desert has never been surveyed for archaeological sites, there are still many thousands of sites that have not been located or recorded. These sites consist of campsites, trails, broken pottery, stone tools, basket fragments, rock art, and other remains of the long period of Native American occupation. There are also many locations, like Tecate Peak, that are sacred to Native Americans living today, not because they contain archaeological sites (although they may), but because of events that took place there in the past.

Historic activities have also left their mark on the California Desert. Historic sites include buildings and equipment at early mining locations such as Panamint City or Darwin, or military fortifications such as Fort Piute along the Mojave Road. More recently, portions of the California Desert were used to train soldiers for World War II leaving ruins of military training camps and related activities.

## Help Protect Your Cultural Resources

Cultural Resources and what we can learn from them are so important that they are protected by law. The first law to protect cultural resources was passed as long ago as 1906. Since then, many laws have been passed to protect cultural resources from both deliberate and accidental damage. The most recent law is the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA). This law is the strongest legal protection we have for cultural resources. It defines more clearly than earlier laws exactly what is protected. It also levies heavy fines of up to \$20,000 for the first offense and up to five years for repeated convictions. Under ARPA, no person may "excavate, remove, damage, alter or deface any archaeological resource." Buying, selling, transporting, or dealing in illegal artifacts also is prohibited. The only people other than Bureau employees who may collect or excavate archaeological resources on BLM lands are qualified archaeologists who have obtained appropriate permits.

**YOU CAN HELP.** If you see anyone who appears to be damaging or removing cultural resources on public lands, or if you encounter an archaeological site that appears to have been damaged by such activity, please note the location and report it as soon as possible to the nearest BLM office or any BLM patrolling Ranger. BLM cannot watch every known site all the time. We rely on your help to protect the priceless resources which belong to all of us.

## EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS (REPORT VANDALISM):

BLM Rangers	(714) 351-6374
(24-hour emergency only)	
San Bernardino County Sheriff	(714) 383-2511
San Diego County Sheriff	(619) 236-3161
Riverside County Sheriff — Indio	(619) 347-3571
Imperial County Sheriff	(619) 352-3111
Inyo County Sheriff	(619) 876-5606
Kern County Sheriff	(619) 375-9761
Mono County Sheriff	(619) 932-7451
California Highway Patrol	
Ask Operator for Zenith 1-2000	