



## CULTURAL RECREATION



**ABOVE**  
Joshua Tree National Park ranger explains mining operations

PHOTO BY HOWARD GROSS

Much of the outdoor recreation in the desert involves the pursuit of a specific sport or hobby. But a significant part of experiencing the desert also includes tours to cultural destinations made more accessible by the preservation and interpretive efforts of the National Park Service. No other agency devotes the time and attention to cultural archiving and restoration that the NPS does. NPS operates in conjunction with local tribes and the California Office of Historic Preservation to offer accurate and complete recreations.

For the purposes of this report, we highlight some of the most significant public destinations as they relate to California history. Included are sites that relate to Native American culture, railroads, mining, ranching and ghost towns, aerospace, cultural lore, and monuments to civil engineering. Although our listing is not comprehensive, it is representative; all sites are accessible either by appointment or open schedule.

### CULTURAL RECREATION SITES ACROSS THE DESERT

The **Goldstone Satellites** are unique radio telescopes that capture images from the deepest parts of space. (<http://deepspace.jpl.nasa.gov/dsn/features/goldstonetours.html>)

**Manzanar National Historic Site** documents the tragic period during WWII when U.S. citizens of Japanese descent were interned. (<http://www.nps.gov/manz/>)

**Calico Ghost Town** features cowboys and a functioning train. (<http://www.calicotown.com>)

**The Butterfield Stage Stop** gave rest to travelers crossing the Imperial County desert by stagecoach. (<http://www.imperialcounty.com/phototur/photo20.htm>)

**Agua Caliente Cultural Museum** celebrates the cultural heritage of various Native American tribes that lived in the desert. (<http://www.accmuseum.org>)

**Antelope Valley Indian Museum** features Indian artists, demonstrations, and special activities for children. ([http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=632](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=632))

**Parker Dam** features a functioning power plant on the Colorado River plus historic details. ([http://www.desertusa.com/colorado/parker\\_dam/du\\_parkerdam.html](http://www.desertusa.com/colorado/parker_dam/du_parkerdam.html))

**Trona Pinnacles**, renowned for its otherworldly features, has been a site for many film productions. ([http://www.desertusa.com/Thingstodo/ttdtrails/du\\_ttd\\_trona.html](http://www.desertusa.com/Thingstodo/ttdtrails/du_ttd_trona.html))

**Fort Edwards Shuttle Launch and Museum** is the site of many shuttle landings, an annual air show and the AFFTC Museum. (<http://www.edwards.af.mil/trip>)

**Civilian Aerospace Test Center and Historic Airplane Site** has one of the largest “airplane graveyards” in the world. (<http://www.mojaveairport.com>)

**Oasis of Murals** in Twentynine Palms is part of a desert tradition of outdoor art. (<http://www.oasisofmurals.com>)

The **Desert Studies Center at Zzyzx** hosts a variety of general interest educational programs and events. (<http://biology.fullerton.edu/facilities/dsc/zzyzx.html>)

The **Lost Desert Gold Mine** is one of the many well-preserved mines in the California Desert. (<http://www.ghosttownexplorers.org/california/lpt/lpt.htm> and <http://www.geocities.com/williamacarr/LostMine.html>)

*Books and Online Resources for Cultural Recreation can be found at [http://www.npca.org/desert\\_recreation/cultural.pdf](http://www.npca.org/desert_recreation/cultural.pdf) and on page 48 of this report.*

## PERSONAL PROFILE

### Shirley Harding

RETIRED MUSEUM CURATOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Shirley Harding lived in Death Valley for 22 years, a fact that reflects her love of the area, but even more significantly, her desire to maintain the continuity of its history. From Scotty's Castle, which she's dubbed a "country cousin to Hearst Castle," to the old mining remnants found along the hike to Zabriskie Point and Golden Canyon, Death Valley National Park offers a wealth of meaningful artifacts. Visitors must leave these artifacts where they lie, to preserve the experience of the next person. Shirley gives the example of rocks that have disappeared from the "racetrack" and notes that visitors must resist the urge to collect.

Though she is retired from her career as a museum curator for the National Park Service, Shirley still volunteers six months out of the year. Charles Hillinger, the famous L.A. Times journalist and author, profiled Shirley in 1991 and photographed her holding a Chinese teapot unearthed at Harmony Borax. This cultural juxtaposition is symbolic of what you'll find throughout the California deserts.



[HTTP://WWW.NPSCA.ORG / DESERT\\_RECREATION / CULTURAL.PDF](http://www.npsca.org/desert_recreation/cultural.pdf)



#### ABOVE

Kelso Depot and Visitor's Center  
in Mojave National Preserve

PHOTO BY D.A. DEMEO

#### FAR LEFT

Shirley Harding volunteering at  
Death Valley National Park

PHOTO BY MARY ANN MCNEILL

#### LEFT

Petroglyphs reveal hunting  
tradition of native cultures

PHOTO BY TONY RILEY

# CULTURAL RECREATION BOOKS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

## SUGGESTED BOOKS:

*Mining History and Geology of Joshua Tree National Park*, Edited by Margaret R. Eggers, San Diego Association of Geologists, 2004

*Mines of the High Desert*, Ronald Dean Miller, La Siesta Press, 1972

## WEB SITES:

Harmony Borax Works (<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/geology/usgsnps/deva/ftthar1.html>)

Scotty's Castle (<http://www.nps.gov/deva/scottys1.htm>)

Petroglyphs (<http://www.petroglyphs.us/>)

## CULTURAL RECREATION SITES ACROSS THE DESERT:

Goldstone Satellites (<http://deepspace.jpl.nasa.gov/dsn/features/goldstonetours.html>)

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Calico Ghost Town (<http://www.calicotown.com>)

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## LOST DESERT GOLD MINE

(<http://www.ghosttownexplorers.org/california/lpt/lpt.htm>)

(<http://www.geocities.com/williamacarr/LostMine.html>)

