

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Places to Visit or Collect in the SW United States (and beyond)

By Thomas Farley

Revision 11, November 25, 2019. Work in progress.

<https://www.patreon.com/writingrockhound> (more good stuff!)

thomasfarley@fastmail.com (comments, corrections, and additions wanted!)

Current version always here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

These are places I visited or were recommended to me while traveling in the Southwest for my book. I mostly visited rock related places and ground open to collecting.

Weather wise, October may be the best time to travel the Southwest, followed by May.

It is impractical to visit every place you want to go because day after day you will find certain stores, mines, and museums closed.

I book small town hotels by phone rather than any online booking system they might have. This saves them money and eliminates uncertainties when using a third-party for reservations.

Traveling Monday through Thursday is especially tough, my advice is to prospect or collect on those days and then try to visit businesses and museums closer to the weekend.

You will have to return to the Southwest to visit places closed on your first travel. I envy you.

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<https://www.patreon.com/writingrockhound>



By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

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INTERACTIVE T.O.C. TO BE COMPLETED IN THE COMING MONTHS.

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More shops in the text, working on hyperlinking . . .

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Prospecting or local rock and gem club membership often provide access to private fee digs

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Many, many more listed in the text, I am working on hyperlinking

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[Quartzsite Metal Detecting Club, Quartzsite, AZ](#)

[Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club, Mariposa, CA](#)

Many more clubs listed in the text, working on hyperlinking. . . .

Organizations I Financially Support (external links):

MyLandMatters.org: <http://mylandmatters.org/>

Mindat.org: <https://www.mindat.org/>

Fluorescent Mineral Society: <https://www.uvminerals.org/>

Public Lands for the People: <https://www.publiclandsforthepeople.org/>

Clubs I Belong To (external links)

Southern Utah Rock Club: <http://www.southernutahrockclub.org/>

Southern Nevada Gem and Mineral Society: <https://www.snvgms.org/>

Nye Gold Seekers: <http://nyegoldseekers.org/>

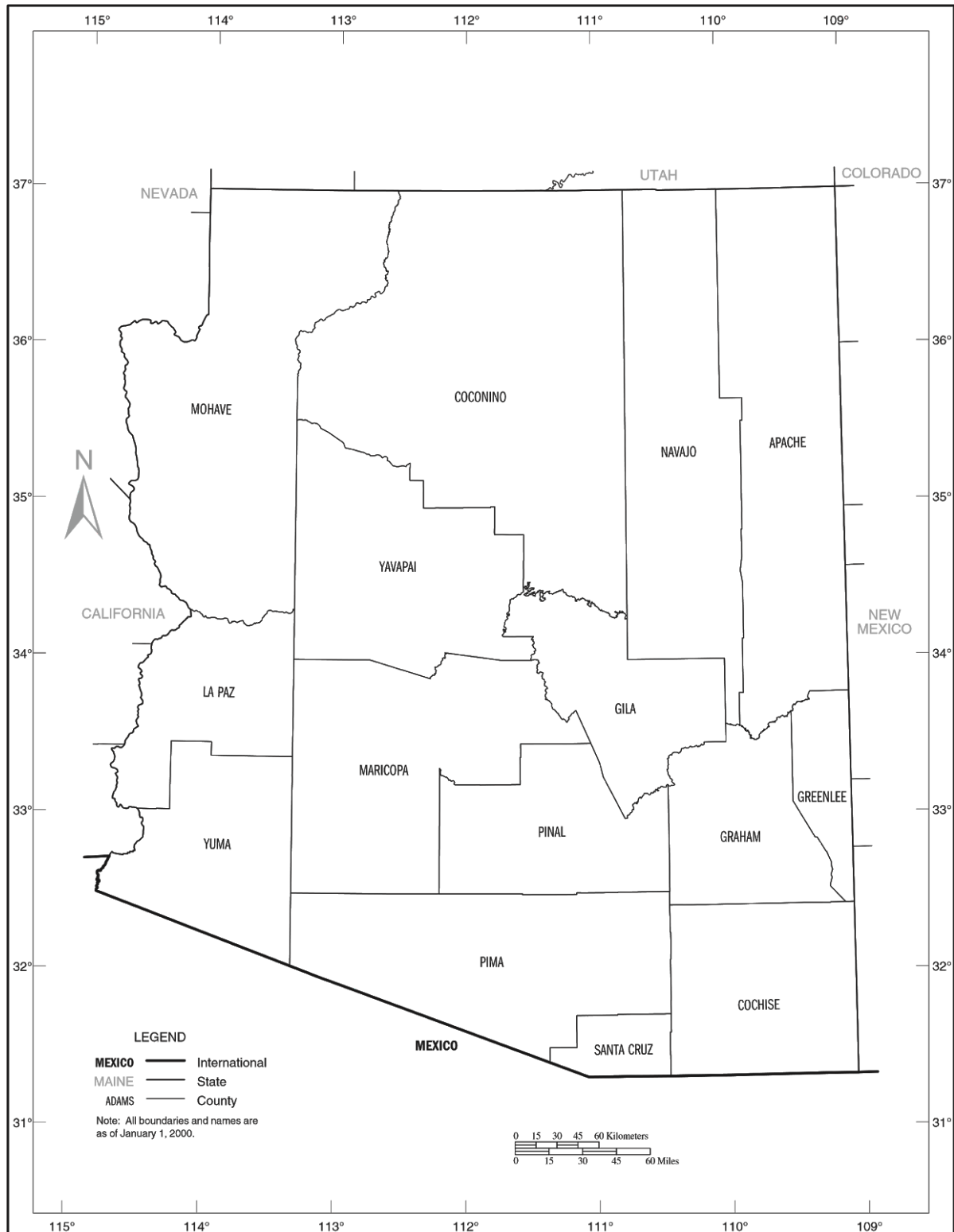
Businesses I Regularly Use and Endorse (external links)

Geological Specimen Supply: https://geologicalspecimensupply.com/?step=contact_information

Minerals Unlimited: <https://mineralsunlimited.com/>

KayGeeDeeMinerals: <http://www.kaygeedeeminerals.com/>

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U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Arizona

Arizona Notes

James Mitchell's Gem Trails of Arizona is dated but essential.

Anyone traveling extensively off-pavement in Arizona should get an Arizona State Trust Land Permit. \$15.00 for individuals. Rockhounding on Arizona State Trust Land is prohibited but stopping at any point on these lands constitutes a "use" and that use demands a permit. Determining where these properties exist while driving is nigh impossible, most are managed grazing land outside of small towns or settlements. Rather than guess, it may be easier just to get a permit.

<https://land.az.gov>

Washington County (Utah)

BLM Arizona Strip Office
345 E Riverside Dr.
St. George, UT 84790
435-688-3200

37°04.986' N 113°34.611' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/arizona-strip-district-office>

This office is physically present in Utah but manages Arizona land. They manage the Grand Canyon's North Rim, a no collecting area, and the Virgin River Recreation Management Area in northwest Arizona, a noted rockhound area. The office has some nice rock and mineral displays.

I was asked to fill out a rockhound permit when I asked about collecting. This form applied to casual use, not commercial operations which demands a permit. No other office has asked me to fill out a permit and other BLM offices look at the document with curiosity. Many BLM and USFS offices act as their own fiefdom, drawing up practices and procedures to fit their particular area.

Apache County (St. Johns)

Petrified Forest National Park (Apache and Navajo Counties)
1 Park Road, AZ
928-524-6228

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

34°48.016' N 109°53.120' W (First Entrance)

34°48.923' N 109°51.941' W (Rainbow Forest Museum)

<https://www.nps.gov/pefo/index.htm>

A must stop with no collecting permitted.

Petrified wood here exhibits brilliant colors of white, red, brown, black, purple, and blue from trace elements. The vast amount of petrified wood here resulted from a logjam of trees which occurred in an ancient river in the Late Triassic Period, some 200 million years ago.

The Painted Desert Inn Visitor Center's lower floor reveals how the building was constructed with petrified tree logs.

The Petrified Forest National Park stretches north and south between Interstate 40 and Highway 180, with an entrance at each end. Near the south entrance is a fee-dig site for petrified wood. This is the DoBell Ranch, listed further on under entries for Navajo County.

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The Navajo Nation Museum and Library

Highway 264 and Loop Road
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1840
Window Rock, Arizona 86515
928-871-7941

35°39.843' N 109°03.308' W

<http://navajopeople.org/nnm/>

The Navajo Nation Museum and Library is located in Window Rock, Arizona. Despite its Navajo namesake, the Museum is located in Apache County. This facility has historic jewelry fashioned by tribal people, some sourced from local and Southwest material.

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Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Supervisor's Office
30 S. Chiricahua Drive
Springerville, AZ 85938

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928-333-6280

34°07.912' N 109°16.507' W

Two woodlands managed as a single forest. This East-Central Arizona territory looks like an upside-down “L”. The forest covers parts of Coconino, Navajo, Apache, and Greenlee counties, some 2.76 million acres. These are two Apache-Sitgreaves Ranger Districts in Apache County:

Springerville Ranger District
165 S. Mountain Ave.
Springerville, AZ 85938
928-333-6200

34°07.868' N 109°17.261' W

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/asnf/home/?cid=stelprdb5211223>

Alpine Ranger District
42634 Hwy. 180/191
Alpine, AZ 85920
928-339-5000

33°50.958' N 109°08.823' W

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/asnf/home/?cid=stelprdb5211181>

Cochise County (Bisbee)

Sunshine Gallery and Gifts
1313 North Highway 80
St. David, Arizona, 85630

520-586-4560

31°55.770' N 110°16.865' W

marieluettcke@hughes.net

Destination rock shop, if not for the rocks and minerals, then for Rolf himself. Rolf is a mineral authority with vast personal and professional experience. His fascination with everything rock related began in Germany when he was nine. He knows all about the Bisbee area and Tombstone. Plan a trip. Tell him Thomas said “Hi” and that I plan on visiting soon.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

No shop website

Full description at my rockhounding website:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/01/a-destination-rock-shop-opens-in-arizona/>

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Designs By Owen – Unusual Gemstone Jewelry in Gold and Silver

45 Main Street

Bisbee, AZ 85603

520-432-4400

31°26.520' N 109°55.001' W

Talented jewelry artist Dave Owen is a former geology professional who offers to point visiting rockhounds to some nearby collecting spots. Bring a map to help him direct you. Dave specializes in local gemstones, particularly Bisbee cambellite, malachite, and turquoise.

<http://www.jewelrydesignsbyowen.com/index.html>

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Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum

No. 5 Copper Queen Plaza

Bisbee, Arizona 85603

520-432-7071

31°26.537' N 109°54.969' W

<https://bisbeemuseum.org/bm-museum.aspx>

Bisbee lies in southeast Arizona, a world class location noted for copper and a variety of other minerals. Wyatt Earp and Apache country, with Tombstone only a half hour's drive away. Bisbee gained fame as the "Queen of the Copper Camps". Occupying a historical mining setting, the Bisbee Mining museum complex features exhibits and an underground mine tour. Read more about Bisbee's copper connection in the August, 2019 edition of Rock&Gem Magazine.

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Courtland Ghost Town, Pearce

N Pearce Rd

Elfrida, AZ 85610

520-585-6555

<https://goo.gl/maps/fS8Eah19A5EMdL2u8>

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Fee tours of area and fee digs. One fee dig is for rocks and minerals and there is a separate one for turquoise which is pricey. General tour includes some underground. Recent startup with good reviews. Elfrida is probably the nearest town. Double and triple check location before going. Controversy over what this operation is doing exists; there are questions on claim ownership and the barring of public access to an existing road which leads into the overall area. While a non-patented claim owner can gate access to their claim at its border, that claimant cannot bar access to other claims.

<https://www.courtlandghosttown.com/index.html#/>

info@courtlandghosttown.com

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/courtlandghosttown/about/>

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BLM Safford Field Office and BLM New Mexico's Las Cruces Field Office

711 S 14th Ave.
Safford, AZ 85546
928-348-4400

32°49.926' N 109°43.446' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/safford-field-office>

BLM's Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee and Pinal, Counties.

Coconino County (Flagstaff)

Grand Canyon National Park

South Rim
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023
928-638-7888

36°03.558' N 112°06.583' W (South Rim Visitor Center)

<https://www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm>

One of the great natural wonders of the world. A UNESCO World Heritage site. "Unique combinations of geologic color and erosional forms decorate a canyon that is 277 river miles long, up to 18 miles wide, and a mile deep. Grand Canyon overwhelms our senses through its immense size." Viewable from sites at both North and South Rims as well as Grand Canyon East and West.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Grand Canyon – Parashant National Monument (North Rim)

Public Lands Information Center

345 East Riverside Drive

St. George, UT 84790

435-688-3200

36°11.958' N 112°03.153' W (North Rim Visitor Center)

The North Rim has many overlooks at the end of challenging, lengthy 4WD roads. Seasonal road closures. No services. Permits required for overnight stays. Inquire at the Public Lands Information Center in St. George, which also doubles as BLM's Arizona Field Strip District Office. No collecting allowed. The North Rim visitor center is open May 15th through October 15th.

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Museum of Northern Arizona

3101 North Fort Valley Road

Flagstaff, AZ 86001

928-774-5213

35°14.094' N 111°39.934' W

<https://musnaz.org/>

“Celebrating the Colorado Plateau.” A must stop for anyone visiting Flagstaff and beyond. The 1935 building is a beautiful work of art and geology. Its walls are principally malpais basalt fieldstone and its interior courtyard and many paths are lined with native sandstone pavers. A geology collection of note, with many mineral, rock and meteorite samples.

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Downtown Flagstaff

Flagstaff Visitor Center

1 East Route 66

Flagstaff, AZ 86001

928-213-2951

35°11.860' N 111°39.098' W

Walking Tour of Flagstaff's Downtown Stone Buildings

Self-guided tour. Recommended book: Stone Landmarks: Flagstaff's Geology and Historic Building Stones by Marie D. Jackson. Piedra Azul Press. 1999. Available used through

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ABE.com and other online used book dealers. May be available in town at Starrlight (sic) Books. Call ahead. 928-774-6813.

Flagstaff's stone buildings are to that city what Victorians are to San Francisco. Here, a rockhound can look and touch a variety of materials while visiting a colorful and historic downtown. Building stones are all local. They include moenkopi sandstone, malpais basalt, kaibab limestone, and olivine laced basaltic lava. The Babbitt building, a highlight of the walking tour, was built of what Jackson calls pumiceous dacite, "a frothy, silica rich volcanic rock" produced by an explosive eruption from nearby Mount Eden a half a million years ago.

This downtown tour enlarges on the experience one will have at the Museum of Northern Arizona and at the Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument. Parking is limited in the downtown district and card-based meters are in effect. The visitor center does provide 30 minutes of free parking, allowing enough time to at least see nearby Leroux Street, which has three buildings featured in the book.

<https://www.flagstaffarizona.org/>?

Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument

6082 Sunset Crater Road (Visitor Center)
Flagstaff, AZ 86004

Mailing Address:
Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument
6400 U.S. 89
Flagstaff, AZ 86004
928-526-0502

35°22.149' N 111°32.610 W (Visitor Center)

<https://www.nps.gov/sucr/index.htm>

"Sunset Crater Volcano was born in a series of eruptions sometime between 1040 and 1100. Powerful explosions profoundly affected the lives of local people and forever changed the landscape and ecology of the area. Lava flows and cinders still look as fresh and rugged as the day they formed. But among dramatic geologic features, you'll find trees, wildflowers, and signs of wildlife – life returns."

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Meteor Crater, also known as Barringer Crater

Interstate 40
Winslow, AZ 86047
800-289-5898

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

35°01.633' N 111°01.350' W (Visitor Center)

Five miles off I-40 on Meteor Crater Road, past the RV Park.

Driving Directions

From Flagstaff, AZ: Head east on I-40 about 35 miles. Take the Meteor Crater Road exit (exit 233) and turn right. Drive about five miles to the Visitor Center parking lot.

From Winslow, AZ: Head west on I-40 about 18 miles. Take the Meteor Crater Road exit (exit 233) and turn left. Again, drive about five miles and you will come to the parking lot.

Admission required. Pay whatever they want, it is worth it.

The Meteor Crater may be America's greatest natural wonder in private hands. Highly recommended. It is awesome to behold such a sight. While inside viewing is provided behind a panoramic sheet of glass, the best experience is outdoors in the sun and wind. Walking tours of the crater's rim are also available, enquire before visiting. Photographers should bring a tripod in case they want to take panoramic shots of the crater. Which they will want to do.

The crater's interior is only viewable from platforms accessed by paying an admission fee at the Visitor Center. That fee includes entrance to their well-done museum featuring displays about meteorites and asteroids. There are also exhibits on space, the solar system and comets. A gift shop also exists, however, be careful about buying any rock labeled as a meteorite or meteorite related. Demand authenticating paperwork.

The Meteoritical Society, a group of academics, earth science professionals, and enthusiastic amateurs, prefers to call The Meteor Crater by another name. They use the title Barringer Crater, in honor of Daniel Barringer. He labored for decades to prove that the crater was the result of a meteor and not a volcano.

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Gila County (Globe)

Diamond Rim Quartz Collecting Site (USFS) Near Payson

Diamond Rim is near Payson in the Tonto National Forest. It is located on the Tonto National Forest Map, but the best way to get there is to collect directions from multiple sources.

Get to Tonto Village before going further. Diamond Rim is on USFS Road 65, but the access road to 65 goes by many names: Forest Road 64, Fire Control Road, Control Road, and Tonto Village Road. When they are open, the Payson USFS Ranger District Office in Payson may help

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with directions. The Tonto National Forest produced by the USFS is comically big, nearly four feet wide, but invaluable.

Collecting rules are posted at the site. Surface collecting only for most of the year. Digging is allowed from October 1st until February 28th, when the ground is often snow-covered.

Mindat.org supplied coordinate:

34°17.250' N 111°11.533' W

Comprehensive Arizona State report on Diamond Rim, then Diamond Point. Maps, discussion leading to its establishment, area geology and so on. Link provided courtesy of Robert Ouellette:

[http://docs.azgs.az.gov/OnlineAccessMineFiles/CF/DiamondPointQuartzGilaT11NR11ESec11.pdf?](http://docs.azgs.az.gov/OnlineAccessMineFiles/CF/DiamondPointQuartzGilaT11NR11ESec11.pdf)

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USFS

Payson Ranger District
1009 E. Hwy 260
Payson, Arizona 85541
928-474-7900

34°14.538' N 111°18.361' W

Gila County Historical Museum

1330 North Broad Street
Globe, AZ 85501
928-425-7385

33°24.592' N 110°47.720' W

<http://gilahistoricalmuseum.org>

“The Gila County Museum is in the old Mine Rescue Station, which was opened in 1920. As you walk through the Museum you will experience the workings of the Mine Rescue Station. From photographs to equipment, it is on display.”

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Crick's Gems and Minerals

549 W Ash Street
Globe, AZ 85501
928-425-8217

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

33°23.406' N 110°47.270' W

Closed when I last went by. This is their website in progress. Or lack thereof.

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<https://www.cricksgems.com/cart>

Peridot Dreams

Stevie Joey
P.O. Box 539
Peridot, AZ 85542

33°21.064' N 110°27.591' W

<http://www.peridotdreams.com>

peridotdreams.sj@gmail.com

Authoritative YouTube video on the Mesa's geology:
<https://youtu.be/6Pp2rydb8cI>

Apache tribal member Stevie Joey's has peridot claims on the San Carlos Reservation. Peridot is also known as gem grade olivine, a green stone thrown out of the earth by ancient tectonic activity. The coordinates listed mark San Carlos, not the claims themselves. Contact Stevie through his website to arrange a visit. He also sells beautiful jewelry as well as rough stones and cabs. Be patient when corresponding, he may be traveling to shows or working hard at his claim.

The town of Peridot is in southeastern Gila County and northwestern Graham County.

“Take stones and ashes and thorns, with some scorpions and rattlesnakes thrown it, dump the outfit on stones, heat the stones red hot, set the United States Army after the Apache, and you have San Carlos.” An unknown Apache of the time.¹

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Graham County (Safford)

Peridot Dream Claims. See Gila County

Eastern Arizona Museum & Historical Society of Graham County, Inc.
2 North Main

¹ By the Editors of Time Life Books. People of the Desert. 1993. Alexandria, Virginia p. 159

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Pima, AZ 85543

928-485-9400

928-485-3032 (Alternative number)

A small but notable display of rocks, minerals, and ore. Open limited days.

<http://easternarizonamuseum.com>

Black Hills Rock Hound Area — BLM managed

Black Hills Rock Hound Area lies 17 miles north of Safford in the northern part of the Peloncillo Mountains. These mountains span Cochise, Graham and Greenlee Counties.

32°52.438' N 109°23.697' W

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/274360/1>

BLM

BLM's Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal Counties. See their contact information under the Cochise County entry.

Greenlee County (Clifton)

Greenlee Historical Museum

299 Chase Creek

Clifton, AZ 85533

928-865-3115

33°03.368' N 109°18.257' W

<http://visitcliftonaz.com/what-to-see/greenlee-historical-museum/#>

Early mining. Museum located in the Chase Creek Historical District.

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Rock-A-Buy: Rocks and Gifts

809 SE Old West Highway

Duncan, AZ 85534

928-215-1641

32°42.791' N 109°05.921' W

<http://www.rockabuyrocksandgifts.com/>

Doug Barlow is the affable owner of this east-central Arizona rock shop. Fire agate is the big draw in this area and Doug will show you samples of what to look for. He will even provide a map of promising locations for anyone who comes into his shop and signs his guest book. The nearby Round Mountain Rockhound Area, listed below, is close and Doug has advice for anyone heading out. Ask, too, about Black Hills, another BLM rockhounding area. Call to make certain Barlow's shop will be open when you visit. He's a great guy. He gave me a piece of calcite he had named the "The Volcano." Gifted it, mind you. It glows beautifully under short wave. I treasure that piece.

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Round Mountain Rockhound Area — BLM managed

BLM: 32°32.632' N 109°05.389' W

Google Maps: 32°28.593' N 109°04.528' W

BLM directions: "From Highway 70 east of Safford approximately 50 miles, travel into New Mexico to just beyond milepost 5. Take the dirt access road on your right for 12 miles, following the signs to the Rockhound Area."

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/round-mountain-rockhound-area>

BLM

BLM's Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal Counties. See their contact information under the Cochise County entry.

La Paz County (Parker)

Bouse Assay Office and Museum

44362 East Main Street

Bouse, AZ 85325

928-851-2509

33°56.001' N 114°00.188' W

<http://www.bouseazchamber.com>

"There is a very small historical museum in Bouse that used to be the Assay Office and has rocks as well as mining items." Diane Hilliard.

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Quartzsite, Arizona – City and Major Rock Event

Quartzsite comes alive in winter. January sees a gathering of rock, gem, and mineral collectors and sellers from all over the world. I've written about this extensively at my blog, <https://southwestrockhounding.com>. See you there in January.

Quartzsite Museum aka the Tyson's Well Stage Station

161 West Main St
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
928-927-5229

33°39.971' N 114°13.182' W

<https://www.visitarizona.com/business/quartzsite-museum>

Mining artifacts and assay office. Seasonal hours. The Tyson's Well Museum is a must-stop. It is free and enthusiastic volunteers explain the history of Quartzsite as a stage station and a supply depot for nearby mines.

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Hardies Beads & Jewelry

1250 W. Main St
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
928-927-6381

33°39.754' N 114°14.256' W

<http://hardiesonline.com>

Outstanding rock, gem, and mineral collection on display. Most material collected locally. Not many rocks for sale, mostly things bead related. A Quartzsite institution. Seasonal hours.

Quartzsite Roadrunner Gem and Mineral Club

Headquarter Address:
65 Ironwood, Quartzsite, AZ (Quartzsite Improvement Association building)

33°39.925' N 114°12.843' W

Mailing Address:
PO Box 338, Quartzsite, AZ 85346
928-927-5531

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

<http://qrgmc.org>

The Quartzsite Roadrunner Gem and Mineral Club is one of the largest and most organized rock clubs in the country. Extremely active, especially October through March. Field trips go every Tuesday through that time and twice a day during the QIA's PowWow. Non-members pay \$2 a trip. Roadrunners may go to find, among other things, bacon rock, desert roses, geodes, apache tears, and green banded rhyolite. Major shop facilities and classes.

[\[back to club list\]](#)

Miners Depot

566 North Central Blvd
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
Messaging through their website

33°40.538' N 114°13.033' W

Miners Depot is desert prospecting store and a clearing house for gold information in the Quartzsite area. Detectors, tools, screens, lots of screens, the place to stop before heading out. Generally open six days a week during the main prospecting season, from about November through mid-March.

<https://minersdepot.com/>

[\[back to rock shop list\]](#)

Quartzsite Metal Detecting Club

Mailing Address
PO Box 3102
Quartzsite, AZ 85359-3102
928-927-7150

Meeting address (Miners Depot)
566 North Central Blvd
Quartzsite, AZ 85346

33°40.538' N 114°13.033' W

A club of coin shooters and gold prospectors. Membership is a terrific bargain at \$20 a person. This lets you in on the club's 14 claims encompassing 280 acres of gold bearing ground. The club is most active November through the middle of March, however, you are free to work in summer if you can stand the 118 degree heat. If you are a coin shooter, you can participate in their many winter season hunts. \$20 for each hunt.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Of special note, they do not mail memberships. Sign up and pay dues at their club meetings, coin hunts, their table at the PowWow in January, and at Miners Depot.

[\[back to club list\]](#)

Maricopa County (Phoenix)

Phoenix metro area traffic congestion rivals that of Atlanta or Los Angeles. Weekend traffic is lightest, although driving between 10 AM and 2 PM on weekdays might be workable. The last time I drove through Phoenix it took me three hours to go from Wickenburg to Gilbert, a distance of 80 miles.

Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve Center for Archaeology and Society

3711 W. Deer Valley Road
Phoenix, AZ 85308
623-582-8007

33°40.648 N 112°09.156' W

<https://shesc.asu.edu/dvpp>

Rock art! “The Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve is an archaeology museum and 47-acre Sonoran Desert preserve, and home to the largest concentration of Native American petroglyphs in the Phoenix area.” Fee charged.

Huhugam Heritage Center

21359 South Maricopa Road
Chandler, AZ 85226
520-796-3500

33°15.250' N 111°58.426' W

<http://www.grichhc.org/index.php/visit>

Natural history museum with AZ collections. “In the Ancestral Lands exhibit see the master work of our Huhugam ancestors: pottery, jewelry, carved stone bowls and tools.”

Four Peaks Mining Company

9500 E Via De Ventura, Suite D-110
Scottsdale, AZ 85256
480-434-6074

Retail, high end store. Amethyst mine owners.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

33°33.355' N 111°52.621' W

<http://fourpeaksminingco.com/the-mine/>

Arizona Museum of Natural History

53 North Macdonald
Mesa, AZ 85201
480-644-2230

33°25.476' N 111°50.034' W

<http://arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org/home>

Special geology collections viewable by appointment, among them an Arizona Mine Collection, featuring mines primarily within a fifty-mile radius of Mesa. Museum as a whole excellent for children. Fee charged.

Arizona State University

Interdisciplinary Science & Technology Building IV
781 S Terrace Rd
Tempe, AZ 85287
480-965-5081

33°25.095' N 111°55.703' W

Arizona State University R. S. Dietz Museum of Geology — no longer operating

An internet search for Arizona geology museums returns dozens of references to the R. S. Dietz Museum of Geology at ASU which no longer exists. Its collection is mostly in storage. Karin Valentine, Media Relations and Marketing Manager for Arizona State University, explains that while they are considering what to do with the collection, “Some pieces are on display in ISTB4 and in some of our other facilities, and we are working on displaying some of the rest in the newly renovated Bateman Physical Science Building F-wing. We hope to have much of the collection together again on display. We do have geology and planetary science exhibits available in ISTB4.”

Saddle Mountain — Dispersed BLM camping area and Collecting Site

Unless otherwise prohibited, BLM permits camping on much of their managed land in the Southwest. Saddle Mountain is a dispersed camping area, allowing stays of up to 14 days for no fee. It is popular with Snowbirds who camp their RVs on the flat desert in spring to enjoy the mountain backed setting.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Saddle Mountain's popularity rests with rockhounds who for decades have found fire agate "rough" to a greater or lesser degree. Its accessibility to nearly any kind of vehicle adds to its reputation, as comfortable camping near any productive ground is rare. An extended stay lets a rockhound put in the hours necessary to find something.

Numerous web pages and YouTube videos exist about Saddle Mountain. This is one:

<http://www.fireagate.us/fire-agate/saddlemountain.shtml>

YouTube has videos from both the RV and rockhound point of view. Look for key words like these on YouTube: Saddle Mountain / BLM Dispersed Camping / Tonopah AZ. /fire agate Saddle Mountain.

Mitchell's Gem Trails of Arizona contains specific road directions to Saddle Mountain.

Phoenix Area Map Stores

Wide World Maps & MORE!

Central Phoenix Store:
2133 East Indian School Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-279-2323 x 1
33°29.681' N 112°02.125' W

Google Map link:
<https://goo.gl/maps/h1ofqJJo9vgSkkej8>

North Phoenix Store:
17232 North Cave Creek Road
Phoenix, AZ 85032
602 279-2323 x 3
33°38.613' W 112°01.876' N

Google Map link:
<https://goo.gl/maps/CqbbgmTJqgb4f6jMA>

I have bought many maps from this company online but have not yet visited in person. My life lies incomplete.

<https://www.maps4u.com>

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BLM Phoenix District Office

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

21605 North 7th Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85027
623-580-5500

33°29.471' N 112°05.002' W

The Phoenix District Office is composed of two Field Offices. One is the Lower Sonoran Field Office, covering a significant part of Maricopa County, including Saddle Mountain. The other is the Hassayampa Field Office, which manages almost one million acres north of Interstate 10.

Tonto National Forest

Supervisor's Office – No public services
2324 E. McDowell Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85006
602-225-5200

Cave Creek Ranger District
40202 N. Cave Creek Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85262
480-595-3300

33°50.940' N 111°50.118' W

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/tonto/recarea/?recid=35201>

Mesa Ranger District
5140 E. Ingram St.
Mesa, AZ 85205
480-610-3300

33°26.965' N 111°43.268' W

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/tonto/recarea/?recid=35393>

38 mineral districts were established over the years in the Tonto Basin. Mines recovered everything from lead to gold. Many other commodities were pulled from the Tonto's heavily mineralized ground. The Tonto NF includes the Diamond Rim Quartz Collecting Site near Payson in Globe County.

Mohave County (Kingman)

Jim Fritz Museum and Cyanide Springs in Chloride
Elkhart Avenue

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Chloride, Arizona 86431

Contact the museum through:

Chloride Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 268
Chloride, Arizona 86431
928-565-9777

35°24.835' N 114°11.968' W (Near center of town)

<http://www.chloridechamber.com>

A onetime silver mining camp in Mohave County, Arizona, Chloride is considered the oldest continuously inhabited mining town in the state. It's somewhat confusing to drive the backstreets of the city as land ownership is uncertain to visitors. Nearby ground is well claimed, research before going.

Merle Anderson, Chamber of Commerce Secretary, says that, "We do have some rocks and minerals on display in our museum, but we are a very small museum, so only have a few. Many specimens are available in our area by ATV though, and lots of rock and mineral buffs come here and go exploring in the desert to find them, especially since we are surrounded by BLM land. There are many old mines in the area accessible by ATV, and the Kingman Turquoise Mine (not accessible to the public) is right up the road with a very nice shop where they sell the turquoise. Chloride is a fantastic place to mention for rocks and minerals. Our town is a veritable museum of old mining equipment, and history in itself. Chloride was specifically formed because of the 'rocks' in the immediate area. So, you can see, that one can get much more here in Chloride than just a look at rocks and minerals."

Seasonal hours.

Mohave Museum

400 West Beale Street (Extremely close to Historic Route 66)
Kingman, AZ 86401
928-753-3195

35°11.423' N 114°03.694' W

<https://www.mohavemuseum.org/mohave-museum.html>

This museum is all about Mohave County. In Arizona, Mohave is spelled here with an "H," whereas in neighboring California, it is most often spelled with a "J." The museum has a number of rock and gem displays featuring local materials. An especially nice case features turquoise carvings commissioned by S.A. Colbaugh and his wife. Colbaugh founded Colbaugh Processing,

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

still in business, their material Kingman turquoise. The museum has a terrific railroad caboose in back without "Keep Off" signs.

BLM Kingman Field Office

2755 Mission Boulevard
Kingman, AZ 86401
928-718-3700

35°11.394' N 114°00.864' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/kingman-field-office>

The BLM Kingman Field Office is part of the BLM Colorado River District. it manages the Burro Creek Campground and surrounding BLM land, including the Burro Creek Wilderness Area.

The Gold Lady

52 Hope Road, Suite 2
Golden Valley, AZ 86413 (Northwest of Kingman)
928-692-5035

35°13.168' N 114°10.443' W

Located now in Golden Valley, The Gold Lady is a great prospecting and metal detecting store. The Gold Lady knows her stuff and she is an unstoppable when it comes to her own detecting; she is constantly in the field and mightily protests when health prevents her from going out.

She has a new store in Golden Valley which I haven't yet visited. The old store was fine but this new location promises good things. The Gold Lady has been advocating the Minelab Gold Monster 1000 for some time. Although I only saw it work at her old shop, its operation looks simple with a fairly flat learning curve. It looks like a great choice for the beginning prospector. Prospecting supplies and perhaps local maps.

Google Map link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/zEhWvpgeJ9Bhq68NA>

<http://thegoldladystore.com>

[\[back to rock shop list\]](#)

Questa Fire Agate Mine

Don Nelson
9049 (Old Route 66) West Oatman Highway

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Golden Valley, AZ 86413

565-928-4145 - Don Nelson, Mine Owner
250-715-7559 –Allan Pryor, for those in Canada

35°02.241' N 114°20.539' W

Google Map link to Nelson's driveway:

<https://goo.gl/maps/N53KR6BrmQoEGniDA>

The GPS coordinates above locate the rugged dirt driveway to Don Nelson's private property. I personally took those and they are good. I can't guarantee the Google Map link but it seems solid.

He directs rockhounds and sometimes escorts them to his nearby claims from his property. Take the driveway for a few hundred yards until it forks. Bear right. No trailers or RVs should go down that road. Little turn around room exists at his house where people receive an orientation and pay their fee. Open year round but it is vital to call first to make arrangements. Nelson's driveway is easy to find if coming from Kingman. It's just a few miles from the store at Cool Springs, a Route 66 landmark.

If coming from Laughlin, on the other side of the hill, head south to Boundary Cone Road. Take that road which eventually hooks up with the Oatman Highway. Using only the physical street address for Nelson's driveway may lead to complete confusion for any navigation device when coming from the west. The area approaching Oatman lacks cell coverage and most smartphone navigating apps will stop working. Use GPS coordinates instead with a dedicated nav unit. A hardcopy atlas or road map is also helpful, unfortunately, most are too big in scale to show smaller roads like Boundary Cone. Do *not* take any off-pavement roads to Nelson's driveway, no matter what your nav unit says.

Back to the fire agates. They are a type of chalcedony, broadly speaking, quartz. At this location they are found within rhyolite, the matrix or host rock. And there is hard clay all around. A rockhound generally searches for large pieces of rock which might contain a fire agate. At the bench, a collector must cut away the matrix toward a promising bit of chalcedony. The hope is that their stone will eventually reveal a display of colors or fire. This gemstone, therefore, does not come out of the ground fully presented. Instead, it takes a talented lapidarist to bring out the stone's beauty. Rough pieces, however, have a charm and beauty by themselves and many are left uncarved because of that. Their bubbly shape is called botryoidal.

Don Nelson is an engaging personality, delighted to explain all about fire agates and the long history of the claims. He and a helping miner named Al, usually work side by side with rockhounds to coach them on the best way to recover the agate. At the time this author visited, work centered around a specific hole that had been dug by hand over the last two years. There

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

was no need to wander the claims, looking for a promising spot. Nelson also sells rough and finished material. Bring cash in small bills for any purchase or the dig fee.

<http://cuestafireagatemine.ilandwyte.com>

[\[back to fee dig list\]](#)

Burro Creek Recreation Site (BLM managed)

Burro Creek Campground
Burro Creek Campground Road

34°32.163' N 113°27.112' W Coordinates for BLM campground

These are the coordinates for the preferred intersection of Burro Creek Campground Road and Highway 93:

34°32.02667' N 113°25.935 W

BLM's Burro Creek Recreation Site, known to rockhounds as Burro Creek, is frequented mostly for agates. It is approximately 60 miles northwest of Wickenburg. Wikeiup is Burro Creek's nearest town, with gasoline and limited supplies available. Rock and Gem Clubs from as far as Utah make field trips to Burro Creek, sometimes each year. It is a beautiful area.

For your first visit, go with a group to find the best spots. People camp at BLM's Burro Creek Campground since there are no local hotels. Fee charged. Most collecting is done on the other side of Highway 93. Consult Gem Trails of Arizona if nothing else.

The Kingman Field Office manages the area as well as the nearby Upper Burro Creek Wilderness Area. Inquire about the group campground of somewhat small size. A nasty barbed wire fence encloses the campground, a few fence breaks allow creek access.

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/591/2>

Navajo County

Jim Gray's Petrified Wood Company

147 Highway 180
Holbrook, AZ 86025
928-524-1842

34°53.433' N 110°09.581' W

<https://shop.jimgrayspetrifiedwoodco.com>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Self-billed as the largest rock shop in the world, this store may qualify as such. Located on the way to the Petrified Forest National Park, the outside rock yard contains tons of petrified wood, a veritable forest of its own. Inside, polished pieces present themselves in all forms, from table tops to book ends.

DoBell's Curios/Rhonda's Petrified Wood Dig at Dobell Ranch

P.O. Box 691
9274 Highway 180
Holbrook, AZ 86025

34°47.521' N 109°53.611' W

Facebook: Search for "Rhonda's Petrified Wood-dig at Dobell-Ranch"

Rhonda DoBell operates this petrified wood fee-dig operation. The driveway is right before the road to the south entrance of the Petrified Forest National Park, 19 miles from Holbrook. The rockhound is close if the Petrified Forest Gift Shop is in view.

The dig site is three miles from the house with the highway signboard. Call Rhonda when you get to the signboard or before. The operators may be at the dig.

928-245-9010
928-524-2628
928-241-0260

Crystal Forest Museum and Gifts

Highway 180
Holbrook, AZ 86025
928-524-3500

34°47.530' N 109°53.476' W

You can't miss this shop. Its sign must be a hundred feet across. It's at the corner of Highway 180 and Petrified Forest Road.

Petrified Forest Gift Shop

6492 Petrified Forest Road
Holbrook, AZ 86025
928-524-3470

34°47.586' N 109°53.545' W

Another gift shop on the way to the National Park.

Pima County (Tucson)

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
2021 North Kinney Road
Tucson AZ 85743
520-883-2702

32°14.692' N 111°09.986' W

<https://www.desertmuseum.org/>

Major natural history museum and accompanying grounds. Holds kid's programs. "We have an extensive Sonoran Desert region gem, mineral, and fossil collection totaling 14,095 catalogued specimens, some of which are on display at the Earth Sciences Center. Our relatively new vertebrate paleontology collection contains the first and only significant dinosaur skeleton from Southern Arizona."

The University of Arizona Gem and Mineral Museum

1601 East University Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85719
520-621-4427

32°13.923' N 110°57.000' W

Google their website – the URL is too long to fit here

World-wide collection but emphasizes Arizona and Mexico minerals. Meteorites.

"The University of Arizona Gem & Mineral Museum is dedicated to providing public education and the preservation of minerals and meteorites while also serving the research needs of professionals, students and collectors. The collection is world-wide in scope, but with specific emphasis on minerals from Arizona and Mexico."

University of Arizona Mineral Museum (New location coming soon)

Old Pima County Courthouse
115 North Church Ave
Tucson, AZ 85701

32°13.407' N 110°58.522' W

The Coronado National Forest

Supervisor's Office
300 W. Congress St.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Tucson, AZ 85701
520-388-8300

32°13.333' N 110°58.546' W

Google their website.

Vast national forest in many parts. 1.78 million acres across the mountains of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico.

The ASARCO Mineral Discovery Center and Tour

1421 West Pima Mine Road
Sahuarita, AZ 85629
520-625-8233

31°59.883' N 110°59.737 W

<http://www.asarco.com/about-us/our-locations/asarco-mineral-discovery-center/mine-tours/>

Large open-pit copper mine tour. Small fee charged. Visitor center is free, includes excellent exhibits on copper recovery and copper mineral examples. Great place to visit in February if in Tucson for the shows. Call ahead for reservations. 15 miles south of Tucson. The nearby Desert Diamond Casino has bathrooms and food.

Arrive an hour before a tour begins to allow time to visit the gift shop, exhibits, and outdoor garden which is arrayed with mining equipment. The Visitor Center has impressive copper mineral displays and short movies explaining the mining and milling process. The gift shop may have copper ore rough from the mine for sale.

Take a telephoto lens for shooting the maneuverings of distant haul trucks. Overlook positions have fence openings that allow photography. With the quick pace of the tour, a monopod is the fastest way to set up.

Arizona's official motto is "The Copper State" and mines like this power that statement. The mine processes tons of so-called overburden to recover minute amounts of copper and other minerals. But that amount adds up quickly with fleets of haul trucks carrying 240 tons or 340 tons of material at a time. One ton of ore eventually produces 13 pounds of copper. 189 tons of ore concentrate leaves the Mission Mine every day for ASARCO's smelter in Hayden, Arizona. It then goes to their Amarillo, Texas refinery. The pit area from which all of this comes represents what's known as the Mission ore body.

The Mission ore body originated from volcanic and tectonic activity 60 to 100 million years ago. Metal-bearing fluid expelled from cooling magma pushed up from the earth's interior, leaving the present ground rich in sulfide minerals. Sometimes called a skarn deposit, the dominant mineral is chalcopyrite, the chief ore of copper. It is finely disseminated through the rocks of the

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

complex, which include argillite, arkosite, quartzite, and limestone. To the author's eye, it looked like a bottomless pit of caliche and alluvium. Other minerals found here include galena, pyrite, silver, molybdenite, and sphalerite. Precious metals tend to follow copper through flotation recovery and eventual smelting. This can contribute significantly to a mine's revenue. Indeed, in 2016, the Mission Mine produced 1.3 million ounces of silver.

Upon leaving, make sure to pick up the pamphlet at the visitor center entitled "Your Visit to ASARCO GRUPO MEXICO Mineral Discovery Center." \$4.00.

[\[back to fee dig/tour list\]](#)

Pinal County (Florence)

BLM

BLM's Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal Counties. See their contact information under the Cochise County entry.

Santa Cruz County (Nogales)

Pimeria Alta Historical Society and Museum

136 North Grand Avenue
Nogales, Arizona 85621
520-287-4621

Duquesne Ghost Town Area

Duquesne, Arizona serves as the central point for any fee/dig activities that might occur in this long-closed area. Green garnets, milky quartz crystals, secondary copper minerals and outcroppings of Japan Law twins are noted here.

Schwartz Fine Minerals has been trying to arrange fee digs in Duquesne. Contact them through their website or through their Facebook page. They respond by FB Messenger. Or call Rick and Jill Pitrone at 520-860-0219. Even if digs have been cancelled, we should thank these people for trying to arrange them.

<https://www.facebook.com/schwartzfineminerals/>

<https://schwartzfineminerals.com/about/>

Yavapai County (Prescott)

Jim and Ellen's Rock Shop

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

1019 N Main St
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
928-583-4412

34°44.910' N 112°01.620' W

I haven't visited in person but their website shows some nice things. When are we going?

<https://www.jerockshop.com/>

[\[back to rock shop list\]](#)

Jerome Historical Society Mine Museum

200 Main Street
Jerome, AZ 86331
928-634-5381

34°45.057' N 112°07.093' W

<https://azstateparks.com/jerome/>

The Douglas Mansion has been a landmark in Jerome since 1916 when James S. Douglas built it on the hill above the Little Daisy Mine. This converted home presents Jerome area history along with photographs, artifacts, and minerals.

[\[back to tours and fee dig list\]](#)

The Copper Art Museum

849 Main Street
P.O. Box 474

Clarkdale, AZ 86324
928-649-1858

34°46.265' N 112°03.406' W

Showcasing all things copper with an emphasis on its use in art and its role in Arizona. Mineral cabinet with copper specimens. Museum quality displays and exhibits. Fee charged. Well reviewed at Rock&Gem:

<https://www.rockngem.com/taking-a-closer-look-at-copper/>

<https://www.copperartmuseum.com>

Verde Canyon Railroad

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

300 North Broadway
Clarkdale, AZ 86324
800-582-7245

34°46.575' N 112°03.378' W

The Rock&Gem article above discusses the importance this railroad was to the mining town of Clarkdale. As writer Helen Serras-Herman notes, “The Verde Canyon Railroad is also a popular attraction in this area. It runs on the same tracks ordered to be built by William Clark for his mining operations, connecting the copper smelter in Clarkdale and the copper mines in Jerome.” The author mentions the train passing 40 acres of slag, a byproduct of copper production. Slag was often used as railroad ballast, but I don’t know what ballast was used for the tracks here.

<https://verdecanyonrr.com>

More on slag, railroad ballast and their meteorite connection here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/10/18/beginning-at-the-ending-railroad-ballast-and-slag/>

Copper Mountain Antiques (Shop for the Copper Art Museum)
880 D Hampshire Avenue
Jerome, AZ 86331
928-634-3273

34°45.085' N 112°06.375' W

Call to see if they sell any rocks.

<https://www.copperartmuseum.com/gallery-and-shop>

Yuma County (Yuma)

Castle Dome Museum / Mine Tours
Castle Dome Road
Yuma, AZ
928-920-3062

33°02.807' N 114°10.679' W

<http://castledomemuseum.org/index.html>

Museum with a ghost town setting that preserves Castle Dome City’s history. Associated with the Hull Mine. The Hull Mine has an outstanding fluorescent wall, a natural occurrence of fluorescent minerals. Book ahead for mine tours.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

<http://castledomemuseum.org/hull-mine.html>

Fee charged. Seasonal hours. Call first.

[\[back to tours and fee dig list\]](#)

BLM Yuma Field Office

7341 E 30th St.
Yuma, AZ 85365
928-317-3200

32°40.408' N 114°30.426' W

Manages campsites near Quartzsite, variously called Dome Rock Road and Dome Rock Mountain. The Dome Rock Mountain Camping Area allows 14-day stays.

California (Northern) [\[back to top\]](#)



Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

El Dorado County (Placerville)

Note: Placerville is in El Dorado County, not Placer County.

Gold Bug Park

2635 Goldbug Lane
Placerville CA 95667
530-642-5207

38°44.595' N 120°47.970' W

This may be the only city owned gold mine in the United States. No fee for the grounds, fee charged for the underground mine tour. That's a pretty straightforward experience but the real treats of the park are the black shop operation, when someone is there, and the Hendy Stamp Mill.

The Hendy houses a working scale model of a stamp mill. Really fascinating when they start it going. The clattering and clanking from this small model is incredible. It demonstrates clearly what many people said in the gold rush era, that you could find your way from one town to another by simply listening for the next mill.

I haven't visited the second mine which permit groups to go in. It's called the Priest Mine, call ahead to see if you can get with a group to go.

<https://www.goldbugpark.org>

[\[back to tours list\]](#)

Stifle Claim/Traverse Creek Area

El Dorado National Forest
El Dorado County
Meadow Brook Road and Bear Creek Road (approximately)

38°51.916' N 120°48.716' W

Mindat map of area: <https://www.mindat.org/loc-69060.html>

I hesitate to say any ground is played out but I might make an exception with the Stifle Claim. That is if you are looking for vesuvianite, a green, gemmy mineral. Although the ground is extremely hard, when I went it appeared that every boulder and large rock had the ground beneath it dug up and explored. I'm not sure how it has been hunted for "UV", there might be an opportunity there.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Get close to the intersection of Meadow Brook Road and Bear Creek Road and proceed from that point. At these coordinates you'll notice somewhat barren landscape. Should be serpentinite soil present at the collecting site. There is a USFS signboard. Further information below from the local experts.

<http://eldoradomineralandgem.org/edc-field.html>

El Dorado Mineral and Gem Society

Meetings:

American Legion Hall, El Dorado Post 119
4561 Greenstone Road
Placerville, CA
38°40.685' N 120°53.151' W

Mailing address:
P. O. Box 950
Placerville, CA 95667

530- 676 - 2472

<http://eldoradomineralandgem.org/>

[\[back to club list\]](#)

BLM Mother Lode Field Office

5152 Hillsdale Circle
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
916-941-3101

38°37.263' N 121°03.558' W

The website for this field office is a portal into the Sierra Nevada foothills of central California. "The BLM Mother Lode Field Office manages over 230,000 acres of public land in Central California. These lands are scattered within Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Mariposa, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Yuba counties."

I've listed below the areas I have hunted, just some of the land they manage. Check this field office for current regulations. Or not. In California it is sometimes better to slip into an area, rockhound, and then quietly leave.

North Fork American River
-North Fork American

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

-Stevens Trail

South Yuba River

-South Yuba Recreation Area

South Fork American River

-Cronan Ranch

-Magnolia Ranch

-Greenwood Creek River Access

-Dave Moore Nature Area

-South Fork American

<https://www.blm.gov/office/mother-lode-field-office>

Placer County (Auburn)

Pioneer Mining Supplies

878 High Street

Auburn, CA 95603

530-823-9000

38°54.085' 121°04.15500' W

The Willis couple now runs the shop, old-timers like me remember Frank and the old stores. Great advice on the local area. I do not know how Pioneer stays in business with dredging outlawed in California and the nearby Auburn State Recreation Area closed to everything but hands and pans. No metal detecting. It's a testament to the operator's grit and determination that they keep going in this hostile environment. Online, too, so visit if you can through the web. There are scattered parcels of BLM land open along some forks of the American River; inquire.

<https://www.pioneermining.com>

When in Auburn, make sure to stop by the old Courthouse to see a wonderful gold specimen exhibit, nicely shown in a period era safe. Listed below.

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The Placer County Museum

101 Maple Street

Auburn, CA 95603

530-889-6500

38°53.800' N 121°04.615' W

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Great little museum in a wonderful old courthouse building. No fee. The parking lot on weekends is a meetup place for many hiking groups. Great gold display. Call ahead or check on hours. Traffic is often busy and you can easily get mixed up trying to find the right streets in Auburn. Plan extra time for getting confused.

<https://www.placer.ca.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Placer-County-Museum-84>

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The Auburn State Recreation Area / The Folsom State Recreation Area

Hands and pans. Lovely country to walk or bike through, now off-limits for collecting. A poison oak fest if you are not careful. High quality slate in much of the area, commercially mined at one time. I did fifteen years of prospecting here when it was allowed and parking free. A day use fee is now charged and expensive, vehicle security terrible at many trailheads, and an anger against mining by every government official connected to the SRA. This is actually Bureau of Reclamation land but the Bureau has turned over management duties to the California State Department of Parks and Limited Recreation. I never saw a ranger in the areas where I collected as they stay close to their vehicles. Citizen patrols are on horses but rarely seen and always on trails.

These were my favorite spots:

38°55.285' N 120°59.698' W – Good crevice spot on the Middle Fork of the American River. Bedrock outcropping on river, rock easily broken apart. Accessible by a one-hour hike in on the Quarry Trail, best method is by mountain bike. That should take only twenty-five minutes if you are in decent shape. Work the river early since the water level will come up in the afternoon from a dam producing power upstream. Park any vehicle on Highway 49 itself, not in the Quarry Trail Parking lot where it may be hidden from view. Many organized thieves at work near Auburn who look for people leaving their vehicles and then move in. Look for “glass puddles” wherever you park, these are everywhere and mark recent break-ins.

38°52.480' N 121°03.390' W – Decent colors and small flakes in river shoulder or bank. Look for my old pick marks in the clay. Extremely difficult walk in along the river. No shade. Gold tied up in rock hard clay. Requires pounding the clay into powder to pan. Do not attempt to take a shortcut by going down the cliff to the collecting area, you will die.

38°52.343' N 121°03.9716' W (general area) – Gold in quartz possible in drift mine tailings on steep hillsides. The ancient river channel of the American north fork crops out here for a few hundred yards. Numerous drift mines with many tailings on the downhill slope. Look for The Little Banner Mine on Mindat.org to get a sense of the area. Poison oak everywhere. And, again, no collecting allowed, especially metal detectors. But I am not your Mom.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Don Robinson has written many, many detailed articles on prospecting in the Auburn SRA for the International California Mining Journal or ICMJ. Most know it just as the journal. A subscription to the Journal gets you access to these articles on hunting the Auburn SRA.

<https://www.icmj.com>

Let me know if you have a recent, positive experience in either of these SRAs and I will report it.

Sierra County (Downieville)

The Original Sixteen to One Mine

Mailing address:

PO Box 909

Alleghany, CA 95910

Office address:

527 Miners Street

Alleghany, CA 95910

530-287-3223

530-287-3455

Legendary mine. Bucket list tour. The 16 to One produces extraordinarily beautiful gold specimens. The gold usually resides in an almost perfectly white quartz matrix. I've always wanted to take a tour of the mine and never got a chance. Tours by appointment only, arrangements may need weeks or months to arrange, depending on the mine's schedule. A group might make more sense to the mine when booking than a lone individual. They are attempting their best to accommodate wheelchairs for part of the mine.

Michael Miller is the long-suffering Director, President & CEO of the Sixteen to One. For a small, independent company, abiding the inspections, permits, and regulations for operating a hard rock mine in California are absolutely staggering, pernicious, and financially killing. The compliance side is probably harder to complete than the mining. Whatever money you spend on a tour or at their website for a specimen (when available), know that it is going toward hard-working miners dedicated to keeping heritage gold mining alive.

Follow the directions to Alleghany as described on the map at their website. Bring along hardcopy maps of the area as well. Sierra County is thinly populated, you can drive dozens of miles without seeing anyone to help with directions. Land is a crazy quilt patchwork of private property and USFS managed ground. Do not attempt any prospecting in the area without thorough research. Valley Prospectors of San Bernardino, Inc. has a claim near Downieville.

<http://www.origsix.com/tmarticle.asp?id=330>

[\[back to fee dig/ tour list\]](#)

Our House Dam

39°25'02.5"N 121°00'45.3"W – intersection of Ridge Road and Our House Dam Road

Possible collecting site, especially for metal detecting and sluicing in mid to late summer. Yuba County Water District managed, although technically Bureau of Reclamation land. Dam site areas often prohibit claims, leaving rockhounding allowed if permitted by the agency managing the ground. BLM Surface Management Maps for this area (listed below) show these so called “power withdrawals.” Check with the Yuba County Water District before going if rockhounding is still permitted, they have had terrible problems with trash being left behind by campers. Unattended vehicle security poor. Our House Dam Road is paved to the parking lot near the river but amazingly steep. It will burn out weak brakes. Locals will know you are down there.

The access road is Our House Dam Road. When I last visited it was unsigned and below the grade of Ridge Road. If proceeding east on Ridge Road, turn back if you have gone more than two miles from the fire station. Turn back, look again. Some online map services don’t show the road at all. Websites reporting this location are inaccurate. There may be a locked gate at the start of the road depending on activity at the dam. My mining partner Dan got decent gold while dredging when it was allowed in California. But he had a five-inch dredge and moved a lot of gravel. Ground is immediately claimed downstream from the dam which is odd since no replenishment from the surrounding hills can make it past the dam.

Note on the Nevada/Yuba/Sierra County Area

I’ve helped with dredging on private land on Oregon Creek near Camptonville and on the middle fork of the Yuba near the Our House Dam. It’s pretty country and attractions abound. The Oregon Creek Covered Bridge is just off Highway 49 past North San Juan. Yes, a covered bridge. Little history museums exist throughout the region.

BLM’s South Yuba Recreation Area

This area encompasses a number of possible collecting sites:

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/south-yuba-river>

I don’t like the element at the Yuba along Highway 49. As the kids say, there is a bad vibe. I haven’t prospected the numerous other areas shown at the link above.

Cell phone service is spotty throughout this rugged territory and signs few and far between. I once got so thoroughly lost in this region that I beat a retreat back to my Nevada City motel to regroup. More maps help but be prepared for everything not on a map.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

These BLM Surface Management Maps show land status well but not small roads. Each name is the title on an individual map:

Lake Almanor, Susanville, Yuba City, Truckee, Portola, Chico

<https://www.blm.gov/media-center/public-room/california/public-room-maps-sale>

United States Forestry Service Maps display smaller roads better than BLM maps but these USFS maps cover bigger areas, making it difficult to show small details:

Plumas National Forest, Tahoe National Forest

<https://www.nationalforestmapstore.com/>

Unfortunately, I don't know of any good road atlas for the Northern Mother Lode. Preplan with what you have and use Google Earth as well.

Solano County (Fairfield)

Consolidated Rock and Mineral

5115 Quinn Rd

Vacaville, California 95688

707- 448-5525

38°23.675' N 121°55.615' W

I've been going here since the late 1960s when I was a kid. I'm not a kid any longer and I am still going. Ask if you don't find what you need or if they have a less expensive specimen if something on a shelf is too dear. They have many things underneath the counter or in back. They keep their radioactive minerals off the main floor, for example, so be sure to ask to see them.

A little difficult to find because it is on a frontage road. A metal sided building tucked into oleanders. The parking lot won't be possible for RVs or trailers but you'll find a spot nearby. No public bathrooms, you may want to use the fast food places nearby at the freeway which is I-80.

This URL might work, otherwise, Google:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Consolidated-Rock-Mineral-Shop-LI-C/136668809715266>

Google map link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/a5XdX6PM5KC5KRrQ6>

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Humboldt County (Eureka)

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Chapman's Gem & Mineral Shop

66 Metropolitan Road
Fortuna, CA 95540
707-725-2714

40°31.475' N 124°09.041' W

Great rock shop. Helpful people who might let you scan their materials for UV and U. Bring your own detector and lamps. Outside of Fortuna proper, this shop is best accessed by Highway 101. Here's a Google Maps link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/R1g8fLhxcBm5ieuf7>

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Mariposa County (Mariposa)

Stone Monument with Mariposite Rock

This is located at Cathey's Valley Park at the intersection of Highway 145 and Schoolhouse Road. About 11 miles west of Mariposa. One of the most elegant stone monuments you'll ever see.

Monument is here: N 37° 26.292 W 120°05.177

Dials Rock Shop

Michael Falloure
4008 Highway-140
Catheys Valley, CA 95306
209-966-2127

37°28.801' N 120°01.571' W

On Highway 140 going to Mariposa. This shop is below the grade of the highway, consequently, don't miss it if you are driving quickly. Mike is good peoples. And a miner. Good place for mariposite. Internet directions are confusing. This shop is not in the city of Mariposa.

<https://www.facebook.com/Dials-Rock-Fossil-Shop-1455179088037125/>

Not sure if the Facebook page reflects current activities.

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Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

4994 7th Street
Mariposa, CA 95338
209-966-4367

The local rock and gem club and a good one. Has a small, smart, well done retail store in downtown Mariposa. Operates their shop in a motel. Meets at the California State Mining and Mineral Museum described below. Helped me with my Rock&Gem article on mariposite.

<http://mariposagemclub.org/contact/>

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Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club – Retail Store

4994 7th Street
Mariposa, CA 95338.
209-966-4367

37°29.17167' N 119°57.941' W (Approximate)

Nice store with many member's lapidary work and finds available. Best yet, local area guidance from anyone working the floor. Provided that you are, of course, not an idiot and only ask, "Where's the gold?" The store may take several trips around the block to find. Parking tough for anything big. Walking several blocks is definitely worth the time.

All Mother Lode communities are tight on parking and traffic is heavy on Highway 49, especially in the summer. Call to confirm days and hours.

<http://mariposagemclub.org/home/the-store/>

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California State Mining and Mineral Museum

Street address:
5007 Fairgrounds Road
Mariposa, CA 95338
Located inside the Mariposa County Fairgrounds

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 1192
Mariposa, CA 95338

209-742-7625

37°27.893' N 119°56.891' W

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Good museum with a major caveat – no photography of any permanent display. Develop a good memory before this visit. A serious break-in and robbery a few years ago forced them to look hard at their security and the wisdom of publicizing their inventory. The staff, though, is extremely helpful. Knowing I needed some pictures for my mariposite article, they took a big rock out of storage and rolled it into their office for me to photograph there. Limited days and hours. Call ahead.

Located inside the Mariposa County Fairgrounds which has plenty of parking for anything big.

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=588

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Merced River Recreation Management Area (BLM)

Briceberg Visitor Center
209-379-9414

The visitor center is located at the intersection of Highway 140 and the Merced River. Highway 140 leads to Yosemite from Mariposa. “Twelve (12) miles east on Highway 140 from the Mariposa Visitor Bureau stop sign.”

37°36.273' N 119°57.976' W

“The Merced River is a very popular swimming destination during the hot California foothill summers with some of the clearest swimming hole around. Gold panning and prospecting have never fallen out of favor since the 1850’s when this canyon had a large mining population.”

This management area includes chain of BLM managed campgrounds along the Merced offering opportunities for panning and sluicing and perhaps metal detecting. There is open ground here along with claims. Do your research and inquire at the visitor center. The map linked below contains section numbers and with any good GPS handheld you will be able to orient yourself. As river ground is always valuable, claim markers may be well built and prominent.

The Wild and Scenic River designation would limit mining activities to non-mechanized ones. Again, check with the Visitor Center or BLM to see how much of this Management Area comes under this designation. New claims can’t be filed in a Wild and Scenic Area, the current ones may have been grandfathered in since they existed before the 1987 establishment date.

Commercial rafting companies do not play nice with gold miners. Expect your sniping or sluicing to be reported to BLM, no matter how well you are in compliance. Commercial operators pay large license fees which make them think they own a river. Rafters and kayakers were always bothered by tie ropes to dredges. Although dredging in California hasn’t been legal for over a decade, bad blood remains.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Map of area with campgrounds and unimproved road leading to them:

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/merced-river>

Visitor Center open according to season:

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/briceburg-visitor-center>

Lake McClure / Bagby Recreation Area

37°36.585' N 120°08.068' W

Operated by the Merced Irrigation District. Their official website does not mention Bagby. Their FB page seems equally silent save for two pictures of the area:

<https://www.facebook.com/MercedIrrigationDistrict>

Online camping websites enable reserving a spot at Bagby but there is nothing official I can point to. I assume it is open to day use. Bagby is near the Highway 49 bridge over the Merced River. Doesn't seem to have any claims over its area at the time of this writing. This ground may be closed to mineral entry, that is, you can't claim here. This may be due to what is called a FERQ withdrawal which is common on lakes and rivers that have or may have a connection to power generation. Long subject. A few area rockhounds say there is an area known as Jade Cove. I'd look into that.

Mariposite Outcropping

Outstanding road cut near Highway 49 and Coulterville showing mariposite rock, one of the best road cuts in California.

The mariposite outcrop is here on road 132:

37°42.470' N 120°11.874' W

Traffic is heavy, be careful. The Northern Mariposa County History Center is only a quarter of a mile away. Interesting stop. Across the street from the History center is a year-round creek that might be worth checking for mariposite if it is not in private hands.

Orange County (Santa Anna)

Kristalle

875 N. Pacific Coast Highway
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

949-494-7695

33°32.830' N 117°47.791' W

“While in Southern California, stop by our Gallery in Laguna Beach, California and browse fine specimens in person, we have minerals to interest the beginner collector to the advanced as well as shells, fossils and other interesting items. We are often traveling to mineral shows around the world – please call ahead to confirm hours.”

Run by Dona and Wayne Leicht since 1971. I have not visited in person but Kristalle is frequently mentioned as very well respected by the rock and gem community.

<https://kristalle.com>

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Trinity County (Weaverville)

Douglas City Campground (BLM)

40°38.963' N 122°57.023' W

Another place I enjoyed panning and sluicing. Some rustic hotel accommodations nearby.

“Follow State Highway 299 to Douglas City, turn onto Steiner Flat Road and go about one-half mile west of Douglas City to the campground turnoff.”

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/15075/1>

Junction City Campground (BLM)

40°44.774' N 123°03.833' W

This is west of Weaverville, the main source of supplies along Highway 299 on the way to Eureka and everything else on the Pacific Coast. More specifically, 1.5 miles west of Junction City. I enjoyed this area in years past for panning and sluicing, in fact, BLM still mentions panning. “If you would like to stay at the river's edge, you can always swim, fish or do a little gold panning. The river can be accessed from many locations along this stretch of the Trinity River.”

I see that fly fishermen have discovered this place. I like fly fishermen because they are extremely neat, carrying out all of their trash. That's a big difference with the bait fishing community. But fly fishermen always look annoyed at anything mining related in a river, as if they are the Guardians of The River. Little do they understand that we are often removing algae and scum from gravel in a river or a stream, allowing a clean bed for fish like salmon to spawn.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/15074/1>

Denny Campground (USFS)

40°55.983' N 123°23.710' W Denny Campground

40°52.196' N 123°31.338' W Intersection of Denny Road and HWY 299

Denny is twenty or so miles north of Highway 299 where Hawkins Bar lies along the Trinity River. That mere twenty miles may easily take you an hour to drive. There are more twists and blind turns on the Denny road than you can count. One way much of the way.

This campground is a good place to put in a sluice on the New River which feeds into the Trinity. There is claimed ground above and below the campground. Dredging parties were working along the river on my last visit many years ago with my brothers. No potable water so be prepared to purify. Old dredge tailings exist in the campground area but covered in poison oak and blackberry vines. This is the heart of the Emerald Triangle. Vehicle security at the campground is probably still good, especially since there is a USFS post nearby which is manned during the season. Do not leave a vehicle unattended along any stretch of any road in this area. Every miner we met on my last visit wore a sidearm. Including us, the first and last time I ever carried a gun while prospecting.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/stnf/recarea/?recid=6529>

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Yolo County (Woodland)

The California Rock Garden

University of California at Davis
Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences
Academic Surge
1124 Crocker Lane
Davis, CA 95616

Corner of La Rue Road (!?) and Crocker Lane.

38°32.151' N 121°45.101' W

“The California Rock Garden is open to the public every day. Located primarily along the eastern and southern sides of the Earth and Physical Sciences building, the garden features boulders and core samples representing various geologic features of California.”

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Well worth visiting, even during the week when nine dollars is charged for visitor parking. Since you paid that money, spend time visiting the rest of the campus. Your parking fee should get you into any public parking lot on this beautiful campus. The UC. Davis Arboretum extends along Putah Creek and is well done.

I've visited the rock garden many times. The map to the rocks may be out of date.

Official UC Davis information here:

<https://geology.ucdavis.edu/about/garden>

My writing here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2018/11/23/at-the-rock-garden-at-uc-davis-california/>

<https://thomasfarleyblog.com/2017/02/05/future-proofing-coincidences-and-mariposite/>

[The Consolidated Rock Shop](#) is only 20 minutes from Davis and well worth the drive. I describe the shop in the Solano County entry.

Camp Haswell

1999 Hwy 16
Rumsey, CA 95679 (stated address)

38°54.510' N 122°15.926'

Yolo County park used by kayakers and rafters as a take-out point when Cache Creek is running well. The two most beautiful stream agates I have ever found were here, lying in and out of the riverbed. Beautifully rolled and rounded. One a mix of green, the other a blend of brown and gold. The latter showed mild UV response. I wish this place were closer to Las Vegas. ☺

<https://www.yolocounty.org/general-government/general-government-departments/parks/parks-information/camp-haswell>

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Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

California (Southern) [\[back to top\]](#)

This section lists important fee digs, open collecting ground, and various rock related sites and attractions in California. Otie Braden's Gem Trails of Southern California is an essential accompaniment, along with Rockhound Barstow by Justin Zzyzx. (Both first and second editions) As with all collecting spots, even those mentioned below, proceed with care. Leave gates as found, respect claim markers, keep off tribal land, and diligently work to avoid private property.

Inyo County

Nopah Range Wilderness Area and South Nopah Range Wilderness Area

Trilobite collecting site and general exploration area

Tecopa Road /Old Spanish Trail

35°53.070' N 116°03.881' W —Roadcuts for trilobite

Roadcuts here on the Old Spanish Trail Highway yield partial trilobite specimens. The coordinates above fix on the parking area for the site, essentially a wide road pullout. The Highway is also known as the Tecopa Road and the area itself is southwest of Pahrump, Nevada.

Digging locations in the shale are obvious as the area has been worked for decades. Brick hammer recommended as always for splitting shale. Handsome country, the area returns beauty and tranquility if not a complete bug. Blue colored lichen on some rocks.

This highway marks the dividing line between these two similarly named Wilderness Areas. As these areas allow casual collecting, day hiking and wandering from the highway may reward rockhounding. The Nopah are marine mountains, mostly limestone, shale, a little slate, much quartzite. BLM's Barstow Field Office manages these WAs.

Kern County (Bakersfield)

Fee/Dig: Bakersfield area fossils

The Ernst Quarries / Shark Tooth Hill
Round Mountain Road
Bakersfield, CA 93308
661-319-7800

Directions at their website, no street address for the gathering point

35°26.779' N 118°53.924' W

The coordinates above are for the staging area but do not rely upon them. They were not provided by the operator of the quarries. I took them at the meeting point. Follow the complete driving directions at their website.

<http://sharktoothhillproperty.com>

“The Ernst Quarries, located near Sharktooth Hill, California, are home of the largest deposit of Miocene marine fossils in the world. The property sprawls over 260 acres and comprises three distinct quarries. Each quarry yields fossil specimens of various colors and varieties. Together, they offer a unique natural history experience not found anywhere else.”²

This 150-million-year old collecting site is a fascinating visit. Shark teeth are the big draw and in small sizes are plentiful to collect off the ground with patient looking. Larger sizes require digging and screening. The dig site is in isolated hills, so bring everything needed for the day: food, water, sunscreen, gloves, and so on. Not open after big rains or in the summer. Late April or early May maybe the driest months but there is no guaranteeing the weather.

Rob Ernst is the gracious guide and thoughtful owner of the quarries. He provides frequent updates on his website about hill conditions and if a dig will proceed on schedule. Visitor signups are through his website. Bring cash or a check to the staging area. Download the information package beforehand and fill out the release form before arrival. This is very important for visitors coming from long distances who may not have a printer at their hotel.

There are alabaster or gypsum rocks on the hill and selenite crystals, also in rock form. Ask Jeff if you can go poking around. Look, too, for marine vertebrae when you dig, not just shark teeth. On my visit I picked two off the ground without digging. Rob said they could belong to anything from a junior whale to a sea lion, the identity now lost to time. Interestingly, he said that close examination of anything like this material eventually reveals tooth marks. It was not an easy life in the ancient seas.

In case of a rainout, a rockhound can see pieces from the quarries by visiting the Buena Vista Museum of Natural History and Science in Bakersfield. Visiting before a dig is an excellent way to get oriented. The museum is at 2018 Chester Ave. Bakersfield, CA 93301.

<http://sharktoothhillproperty.com/index.htm>

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Desert Discoveries Rock Shop

12131 Boron Ave
Boron, CA 93516

² “The Ernst Quarries” <http://www.sharktoothhillproperty.com/about.htm> Accessed 06/19/2019

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

760-762-6861

35°00.076' N 117°39.003' W

A must-stop rock shop, especially before or after visiting the nearby Rio Tinto Borax Mine. Located off State Route 58 between Barstow and Bakersfield, this shop in Boron always has a good selection of desert minerals and local advice. The 20 Mule Museum is nearby in case the rock shop is closed. Call ahead as the proprietor is often off rockhounding. You can't expect small businesses like this to stay open every when only two or three people might stop in.

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<http://www.desertdiscoveries.com/>

The Rio Tinto Borax Mine

14486 Borax Rd (Headquarters' Office, not open to the public)
Boron, CA 93516

Visitor Center
760-762-7588

35°01.805' N 117°41.245' W

Borax and related mineral mining goes on near Boron at the largest open pit mine in California. Great views from the free Visitor Center. The parking lot has room for RVs, trailers, and buses. No plant or mine tours but good photography possible from the overlooks. Bring a tripod for panorama shots.

The visitor center has wonderful displays of desert minerals commonly extracted from the mine. These include colemanite, ulexite, kernite, and borax. Free postcards with samples of these minerals attached are available. These materials may be available in bigger sizes from piles at the far end of the visitor center parking lot. Selection varies throughout the year. No food available at the center but water and bathrooms are provided.

A Center highlight is a life-size fiberglass twenty-mule team in harness. A perfect background for pictures with mules that will never bite or kick.

Leave State Route 58 at exit 196 west of Boron. From the freeway, head north on Borax Road for three miles. The visitor center is high on a hill. Drive past the unattended guard shack at the facility's main entrance and continue on an unpaved road up the hill.

<https://www.borax.com/borax-operations/borax-visitor-center>

Randsburg

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Rand Desert Museum

161 Butte Ave
Randsburg, CA 93554
760-371-0965

35°22.080' N 117°39.323' W

<http://www.randdesertmuseum.com>

Editor, Historian, Lay Curator: J. Bart Parker hafdog@aol.com

Only 22 miles from Ridgecrest, this living ghost town makes an interesting stop when their stores and attractions are open. Do not arrive too early in the morning. The Rand Desert Museum is manned by volunteers and only open on weekend unless other arrangements are made. Mining history is a main focus.

“A visit to Randsburg, California is a visit to the past, when the mining camps of the Mojave were boomtowns and gold was being dug out of the hills. The community has survived the many perils the desert mining camps faced, and some of its residents still work the land for its hidden riches. It is a living ghost town, a working mining town that likes having some — but not too much — company. There are no stoplights, gas stations or malls here; just an unpretentious, quiet little town that enjoys its place in desert history.” Len Wilcox, DesertUSA

<https://www.desertusa.com/desert-california/randsburg-past.html>

Open weekends. Call ahead.

Minerals Unlimited

127 N Downs Street
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
760-375-5279

35°37.425' N 117°41.271' W

Shop website:

<https://mineralsunlimited.com/>

Next to a Salvation Army thrift shop sits one of the finest rock and mineral stores in the Southwest. It's operated for seventy years and has a great selection of minerals inside and plenty of rough outside. Most of my rare earth mineral collection comes from this store.

Minerals Unlimited makes a great stop when visiting either the Kern River Canyon Area or when going toward Death Valley. It is a treat meeting Wendi, the woman owner and operator. Call her Ace. But telephone first to confirm hours.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

This store's website shows only a TINY fraction of its inventory. Photographing the store's entire contents and posting same would be completely impractical. If you need sanidine or thorium or cerussite or whatever, e-mail her your specific requests. Include preferred localities and the size of the specimen you want. You'll probably get a reply around the weekend when the shop is open.

My Patreon photo gallery page of Minerals Unlimited is here:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30494846>

My fuller description with photos and an interactive Google map is here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/07/minerals-unlimited-in-ridgecrest-california/>

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Bureau of Land Management

Ridgecrest Field Office
300 S Richmond Road
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
760-384-5400

35°37.103' N 117°38.858' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/ridgecrest-field-office>

Manages a wide swath of land in Kern and Inyo County, including much in the Highway 178 corridor.

Highway 178 Kern County/Inyo County

This highway corridor is a treat in spring and fall, although summer weather is good at its higher elevations. The highway runs through a mix of the Sequoia National Forest, BLM managed lands, and private holdings. Quite a bit through the Kern River Canyon. Good rockhounding opportunities on both USFS and BLM lands. Respect claims if noted.

Roadcuts are amazing throughout the area. You might think you are looking at granite with black looking splotches. You're most probably looking at granodiorite with inclusions called xenoliths. After randomly pulling over by the side of the road, I came up with a rock that when broken revealed black tourmaline, known as schroll. Not gem quality, but it was tourmaline and it was now mine. Toward Bakersfield is the Kern River Uranium Area, whose boundaries can be looked up online. Having a roadside geology book for this area is an excellent thought, although

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

just looking around and exploring is extremely worthwhile. No heavy commercial truck traffic, although two or three of these vehicles might be encountered in an hour.

The Kern river is popular for swimming and rafting and it kills people. Lots and lots. Just ask Merle Haggard.

Maturango Museum

100 East Las Flores Ave
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
760-375-6900

<https://maturango.org/petroglyph-tours/>

35°37.848' N 117°40.158' W

Guided tours go in spring and fall from Ridgecrest to visit Little Petroglyph Canyon. The Museum is the only group that can arrange access. At Little Petroglyph, rock art images by the thousands were etched into canyon walls and boulders by native people long ago. The canyon is on the property of the China Lake Naval Air Station. (NAS). Call or look online at the museum's site for current information on this bucket list tour.

I highly recommend the Hampton Inn in Ridgecrest. Breakfast included in the room rates. Saves looking for a restaurant. This hotel is close to the NAS greater boundary, at dusk you might hear a lilting bugle tune played by the station over loudspeakers as the flag is lowered for the night. It is a compelling experience.

Riverside County (Riverside)

Map Store

Desert Map and Aerial Photo
Highway 111 73-612
Palm Desert, CA 92260
760-346-1101

33°43.301' N 116°22.831' W

<https://desert-map-and-aerial-photo.myshopify.com>

I have ordered many maps from these people and regret I have not visited in person. Check before visiting to make sure their brick and mortar store is open. They also sell a variety of books. Order several maps at a time to save on shipping. Lori Gagnon is the listed contact person.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Their address can be confusing. Here's a Google Map link to their store's location:

<https://goo.gl/maps/74NLokqdNqnjLQ256>

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Wiley's Well Campground

33°29.610' N 114°53.286' W

Newly renovated by BLM, Wiley's Well Campground sits in the lower Colorado Desert in eastern Riverside County. The Hauser Geode Beds and the now closed Opal Hill Fire Agate Mine are in the vicinity by way of 4WD roads. Many trails and areas to collect are here along with the Bradshaw Trail National Scenic Byway. The [El Cajon Valley Gem and Mineral Society](#), (internal link) by the way, has made several trips to the Hauser Beds in the last few years.

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/15181/1>

Nearest intersection is Wiley's Well Road and the Bradshaw Trail. Administered by the Palm Springs South Coast Field Office. Proceed with caution using the Owlshead website described below under San Bernardino County.

Bureau of Land Management

Palm Springs South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262
760-833-7100

33°50.414' N 116°30.318' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/palm-springs-south-coast-field-office>

San Bernardino County (San Bernardino)

San Bernardino County is the largest county in the United States. It incorporates the western end of the Mojave Desert whose total area covers 47,000 square miles. Two major highways run east and west across it.

I-15 connects Los Angeles to Las Vegas and beyond. I-40 starts in Barstow, then goes 155 miles through California's Mojave Desert to Needles, California. It then crosses into Arizona and eventually winds up in North Carolina. I-40 parallels much of old Route 66. It is from these two highways that most rockhounding trips begin.

Desert driving in California and elsewhere is always full of surprises, especially in navigating. California's BLM offers assistance by contributing to this website:

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

<http://www.owlsheadgps.com/owlshead/>

The site above tries showing every California BLM road and trail but their suggested routes are deceptively simple. The many twists, turns, and hazards of desert roads are not well represented. Take multiple copies of maps or electronic navigation aids when going off-pavement. Be ready for washouts, hardpacked dirt roads turning into sand bogs, non-existent signposts, illegal gates, closed roads without any indication of same, and on and on. This website will surely improve but for right now, check multiple maps.

Valley Prospectors of San Bernardino, Inc.

1729 East Base Line Rd.
San Bernardino, CA 92410

34°07.280' N 117°14.978'

Known as Valley Prospectors, this well-respected non-profit has been in operation for decades. They have multiple claims in different areas, including ground in northern California near Downieville in Sierra County. The address above is for club meetings. Join.

<https://www.valleyprospectors.org/>

Afton Canyon – Collecting area 27 miles west of Baker

BLM's Afton Canyon Campground

35°02.346' N 116°22.971' W

The Afton Canyon area is open to rockhounding. Jaspers, agates and such. BLM's campground is a few miles off I-15 from the Afton Road exit. The Mojave River there is usually dry enough to walk across. The road descending to the main campground can get badly damaged by rain. A reminder here. Just because you can pick your way slowly down a blown-out road doesn't mean your vehicle can get back up.

The group campground on top of the hill is always accessible but then you will have a long walk down to the river. Check with BLM's Barstow office for road conditions. Rockhound Barstow contains more information on Afton Canyon and surrounding areas.

Bureau of Land Management

Barstow Field Office
2601 Barstow Road
Barstow, CA 92311
760-252-6000

34°52.363' N 117°01.240' W

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

<https://www.blm.gov/office/barstow-field-office>

The Desert Discovery Center

831 Barstow Rd
Barstow, CA 92311
760-252-6060

34°53.468' N 117°01.330' W

Cooperative venture by several agencies to present information about California desert life. Free admission. Hands on viewing of the Old Woman Meteorite, second largest meteorite in the United States. It weighed 6,070 pounds when discovered in 1975 in San Bernardino County. A block away is the Mojave River Valley Museum, featuring mineral and rock displays.

<http://desertdc.com>

Mojave River Valley Museum

270 E. Virginia Way
Barstow, CA 92311
760-256-5452

34°53.284' N 117°01.561' W

Free admission to a great museum. A long block from the Desert Discovery Center. San Bernardino County history, including mining and local geology.

<https://mojaverivervalleymuseum.org/>

Diamond Pacific Tool Corporation

2620 W. Main Street
Barstow, CA 92311
1-800-253-2954

34°53.131' N 117°04.761' W

Lapidary equipment manufacturer and rock shop. Anyone who has made a cab knows the name Diamond Pacific. Their machines are now sold in over fifty countries and they still come from this one factory. Their rock shop features a good selection of local rough, slabs, and some finished stones. Topo maps. Source for buying Rockhound Barstow, the only book for collecting the Mohave anywhere near Barstow or farther out into the Mojave. That book is described below. But, first, more about Diamond Pacific.

“We welcome you to visit our retail store. Retail shop hours vary, please call for current information. Closed on holidays and Saturday preceding Monday holiday. Please call to verify

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Saturday hours.” Plant tours may be available. Call first. Go early in the day, they shut down close to three or four unless they know someone is coming.

With luck you may meet Bill Depue, Founder and President of Diamond Pacific. He founded the company in 1973 and they have been in continuous operation ever since. In good times and bad, under Bill's management, they have never missed a payroll.

Bill began rockhounding before he was ten and can talk authoritatively on all aspects of Mojave rocks and stones in general. He works up cabs to this day. But never using a template. When I last visited, I was running late but they held the store open for me. Though I had been in before, I hadn't met Mr. Depue, who was waiting for me behind the counter and gave me a great price on an agate slab. As well as a tour of the facility.

<http://www.diamondpacific.com/index.html>

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Book Related to Rockhounding in San Bernardino County:

Rockhound Barstow 2nd Edition

Justin Zzyzx, illustrated by Brandy Zzyzx

Published and produced by Forty Seven Press, Newberry Springs, Ca

FortySevenPress@gmail.com

The best collecting guide to California's Mojave Desert. Available at certain rock shops or at Amazon, which offers a Kindle book option. Get it before traveling anywhere in the Mojave from Hesperia to Baker and beyond. Nothing in this book can possibly better describe the Mojave than Rockhound Barstow. If you can, hunt out the first edition as well.

Gems of the West Rock Shop

40847 Big Bear Boulevard

Big Bear Lake, CA 92315

908-878-0415

34°14.618' N 116°54.640' W

Not visited but intriguing and certainly worth a stop. Just a few miles from San Bernardino itself.

<https://www.gemsofthewest.co/shop/>

Mojave Trails National Monument

Near Amboy, California. Google their website.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Located between Barstow and Needles along Route 66, this 1.6-million-acre National Monument features everything from rough-hewn mountains to sand dunes and even lava flows. Includes a 350,000-acre Wilderness Area within its borders. BLM managed. Rockhounding allowed. No visitor center.

Amboy Crater is the Monument's most prominent feature, with no collecting permitted at the actual site. Parking lot and trailhead are at the end of Crater Road, accessed by Highway 95.

A caution in this area. At least one rest area has water but it is not potable. Make sure to always have enough water whenever going into the desert, even if you are simply touring by day in a car.

Parking lot coordinates are approximate:

34°33.441' N 115°46.866' W

BLM Marble Mountain Fossil Bed Collecting Site

34°31.572' N 115°28.401' W — Center of area

34°31.511' N 115°29.453' W — Marble Mountain campground

The Marble Mountain Fossil Beds lie in a 60-feet thick shale formation which dates back over 550 million years. Trilobites are said to be numerous but whether a full bug can be had is questionable.

Jim Boone's site, BirdandHike.com, has the best map to this area. He calls the site the Cadiz Trilobite Quarry. A link to his map:

https://www.birdandhike.com/Rocks/Fossils/Sites/Cadiz/maps-cdz/Cadiz_Map-o.htm

Chambless Rock Collecting Area

Chambless lies at the southern boundary of the Trilobite Wilderness. Hematite and magnetite may be found there, in the reddish dirt or tailings near abandoned mine entrances. Green epidote might be located in washes. Small garnets and some epidote reported in nearby canyons. Fossils possible in a gray ridge of limestone in the area.

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/chambless-rock-collecting-area>

Once again, BirdandHike.com has the best map to Chambless, with GPS coordinates for every turn in the road. Location photos, too. Ask BLM in Needles for current directions, and Owlsheadgps.com for further information. The Needles' BLM office is very helpful and responds to e-mails.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

https://www.birdandhike.com/Rocks/Fossils/Sites/Chambless/maps-ch/Chambless_Map-o.htm

Surveying Equipment and Supply Store

Colton Surveying Instruments
671 E Cooley Dr #101
Colton, CA 92324
909-825-8824

34°03.605' N 117°18.280' W

Safety vests, hand tools, other cool stuff.

Online store:

<http://coltonsurveying.com/aboutus>

Mining Supplies and Rock Shop

16808 F Main St.
Hesperia, CA 92345
Located in the Stater Brothers Shopping Center
760-244-9642

34°25.301' N 117°17.778' W

A woman-owned rock shop featured in two articles of Rock&Gem Magazine, Mining Supplies supports rock and gem and prospecting clubs in Hesperia and Victorville. Field trips have been conducted and they offer lapidary classes for a small fee. I made my first and only rock carving there, a jade key fob. It was a great experience. A nice selection of rocks, minerals and slabs. The shop is not closing but it is for sale. Contact Cyndy or Lois.

<http://www.miningsuppliesandrockshop.com/>

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Bureau of Land Management

Needles Field Office
1303 South U.S. Hwy 95
Needles, CA 92363
760-326-7000

Manages the Marble Mountain Rock Collecting Area and several other recreation areas including the Mojave Trails National Monument.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

<https://www.blm.gov/office/needles-field-office>

San Diego County (San Diego)

The Collector Fine Jewelry/Pala International, Inc.
912 South Live Oak Park Road
Fallbrook, CA 92028
760-728-9121

33°22.471' N 117°12.556' W

A one-of-a-kind jewelry and rare mineral store specializing in tourmaline. The Collector is only a few miles from the Pala Mining District. The owner is Bill Larson, known world-wide as a geologist and authority on gems and rare minerals. He has made more than 150 overseas trips in his pursuit of minerals and colored stones. With any luck, Bill may be around and you will discover how little you know. I don't mean that despairingly, only with humor. Larson is someone you learn from, someone who honors you with his time.

The store's central show room emphasizes jewelry, however, there is a marvelous gem pegmatite pocket exhibit off the main floor. It took four months to recover the pocket intact. If personnel and time permit, a rockhound may be shown other areas featuring displays of extremely rare minerals and high-end gems. These equal or surpass any museum or Tucson exhibit.

<http://www.palagems.com/meet-our-staff>

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Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Museum

123 W Alvarado St B
Fallbrook, CA 92028
760-728-1130

33°22.946' N 117°15.125' W

http://www.fgms.org/FGMS/Museum_1.html

Few gem and mineral clubs have a museum or gift shop, let alone one of this quality. It's an outstanding effort of the Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society, containing examples of San Diego County minerals and gems and a fluorescent mineral room. Many local specimens for sale, including three-dollar grab bags of local materials, each small mineral duly described.

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The Ocean View Mine and the Pala Chief Mine

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

37304 Magee Rd, Pala, CA 92059
Jeff Swanger, Owner and Chief Operator

760-415-9143

<http://www.oceanviewmine.com>

\$75 a person

Special instructions to reach the mine at their website and also discussed below.

Oceanview Mines, LLC offers two fee/dig experiences in the Pala Mining District. Commonly found are tourmalines, kunzites, and morganites, along with other sparkly things like pink lepidolite. The Pala area, a pegmatite mining district, has been actively worked for gemstones since the turn of the 19th century.

A screen and wash activity is held three times a week in season throughout much of the year. Online videos produced by Jeff Swanger and crew show the entire process. This easy-to-do activity will return attractive stones.

The second experience is held twice a month for part of the year. Bring your own tools. The Pala Chief fee/dig allows rockhounds to search through old tailings and mine dumps, along with hacking at the side of Chief Mountain itself. At some point the mine operator might work an excavator, digging a six-foot deep trench to bring up fresh dirt and rock for searching. Anything found can be kept.

Follow website directions to the mine with care. Their directions start in Pala and go east. First, get to Magee Road using Highway 76; the mine's entrance road is a few miles from there. Only Magee's south entrance from Highway 76 should be attempted. Do not take Magee Road if you are driving south from Temecula. In Pala there is a Magee Place that is not Magee Road. If Magee Road is not in one's navigation device, try looking for the Pala Raceway. Magee Road is further east on 76.

If you have the time, locate Magee Road the day before so you won't worry about finding it on the day of your dig. The countryside is beautiful and the Mission San Antonio de Pala in Pala itself is a Kodak moment. The California Mission chain is well known but their extension churches like this one are not. On this day before you can also try visiting The Collector or the Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Museum.

The mine property road is rough but this author did see a Mini Cooper negotiate its entire length. Staff will happily load people and gear into a buggy if a driver does not wish to drive the road. Bring sunscreen even if it is overcast, snacks, and tools if you are doing the Pala Chief. Full details at their website. Driest weather month may be May if you are planning a trip from across the country.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Resist taking too many photographs, instead, dive into digging or screening as long as you can and as hard as you can. You are going to find something wonderful. Oh, and if you can't go, you can order a bag of pay dirt if they are still offering it. I found enough nice things in what they sent to convince me to go in person.

Magee Road and Highway 76 coordinates:

33°21.830' N 117°03.440' W

Google map link to Magee Road and Highway 76:

<https://goo.gl/maps/hxKNCWGxSzdK1Kxv9>

<http://www.oceanviewmine.com>

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Himalaya Mine

c/o/ Lake Henshaw Resort
26439 Hwy 76
Santa Ysabel, CA 92070
775-225-4245
775-772-7724.

33°14.166' N 116°45.823' W

This is another screen/wash activity located at the Lake Henshaw Resort. It's on the road to Julian, with other rock related attractions along the way. Rockhounds go through tailings from the famous Himalaya Mine. Open year-round, generally Thursday through Sunday from 10 AM to 3 PM. Call ahead to confirm details.

The screen and wash is out of view in back. To get there, go into the market on the property and get a gate pass code. Drive through the gate to the fee/dig. \$75 for an adult. Minerals found may be pink and green tourmaline, black tourmaline, quartz crystals, spessertine garnet, lepidolite, and clevelandite. Keep anything found.

https://highdesertgemsandminerals.com/html/himalaya_mine_dig.html

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Crossroads Treasures

30219 CA-78, Santa Ysabel, CA 92070
760-765-2530

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

33°06.521' N 116°40.501' W

Rock shop and birding. Thursdays through Sundays. Seasonal hours. Near the intersection of Highways 76 and 79, making it a convenient stop on the way to Wynola and Julian. Minerals and gems from the Himalaya, Cryogenie, and Pala Chief Mines. The tri-colored blackbird, the western tanager and the black-headed grosbeak frequent the grounds.

<https://crossroadstreasures.biz>

Julian Mountain Gems & Minerals

2015 Main Street, Suite B

33°04.653' N 116°36.068' W

Seasonal days and hours. They are generally open Thursday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. "While we do specialize in mostly quartz, fluorite, and tourmaline, we also carry other crystals and minerals." Check them out while heading to the Eagle and High Peak Mines just a mile or two away.

<https://julian-gems.com/sample-page/>

Eagle and High Peak Mines

2320 C St
Julian, CA 92036
760-765-0036

33°04.926' N 116°35.710' W

<http://www.theeaglemining.com>

1000' feet of hard rock tunnel on old gold mine property. Guided tour. Low headroom and a steep stairway at the two-thirds mark. Call to see if a mobility-challenged person can be accommodated for the first stretch. There's much to see before that stairway. Great introduction to a hard rock mine. After the tour, visitors can chat with their guide about local rockhounding.

\$10 charge. Gold panning taught. Visitors can't keep the gold but learning to pan is worth more than any colors found. Impressive non-working stamp mill on the property along with other gold mining related equipment. Gift shop with rocks from different countries. Tip your tour guide if you can afford to. These are nice people.

The Julian area has been called the Southern Mother Lode of California.

Goffs Schoolhouse

37198 Lanfair Road (Near Goffs Road and Lanfair Road)
Goffs, CA 92332

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

34°55.281' N 115°04.026' W

Restored ore crushers including a working 10-Stamp Mill. To see it in operation, one must attend a scheduled event when the mill is in operation. E-mail or check their website to see if any such events are scheduled.

<https://www.mdhca.org/cultural-center/projects/ten-stamp-mill>

Southwestern Prospectors & Miners Association

Mailing address:

SPMA

P.O. Box 904

La Mesa, CA 91944

Meeting address:

Cathy Hopper Clairemont Friendship Center

4425 Bannock Avenue

San Diego, CA 92117

32°49.953' N 117°11.846' W

Active San Diego based club with field trips to their claims. “Welcome. The SPMA is a prospecting association for people of all ages who would like to try their luck at prospecting in the mountains and deserts of San Diego, Riverside and Imperial Counties.” How could you resist an invitation like that? I recommend joining local groups first. National groups are fine but get started with a local.

<http://www.spma-gold.org/index.html>

Their October, 2019 newsletter is here, caution, 10 megs in .pdf:

http://www.spma-gold.org/pdf/assay_Oct2019.pdf

El Cajon Valley Gem and Mineral Society

Meeting location unless otherwise noted:

Heritage of the Americas Museum

Cuyamaca College Campus

12110 Cuyamaca College Dr. West,

El Cajon, CA 92022

Membership mailing address:

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

ECVGMS
PO Box 451
El Cajon, CA 92022

<https://www.ecvgms.org/home.html>

Long standing club based in El Cajon. Field trips, shop. Annual “Rock and Gem Roundup” with a large number of vendors. Has held several field trips in recent years to the Hauser Geode Beds outside of Blythe, CA. Local rock and gem clubs like these can guide you on trips to areas difficult to find on your own. At times, clubs may have access to ground otherwise closed to the public.

Southern Colorado [\[back to top\]](#)



By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Southern Colorado Notes

Southern Colorado rests at the extreme north-east of the Southwest. This book defines the Southwest as below the 38th parallel. That line runs through or near towns like Ouray, Moffat, San Gabriel, and Rocky Ford. Most important collecting localities exist above the 38th. Geology Professor Richard Pearl described Colorado as having more mineralized ground than any other state, save California.

Kevin Singel's 2018 Finding Gold in Colorado is the best and most current writing on finding gold in this state. I highly recommend his site:

<https://findinggoldincolorado.com>

La Plata County (Durango)

Four Corners Gem & Mineral Club

2351 N Main (In Brookside Park)

P.O. Box 955

Durango, CO 81302

Field trips, classes, lapidary shop. Since 1947. Join if thinking about Colorado rockhounding. Their newsletters keep one informed about collecting localities, local geology, and more. Their simple mission: "Collect and identify rocks, gems and minerals."

37°17.360' N 107°52.570' W

<http://www.durangorocks.org>

The San Juan Mountains

Professor Pearl maintained that not a single acre of tillable land existed in all of the San Juan Mountains. Instead, the mines of the mountains and their dumps yield "All of the important ore minerals of gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc, tungsten, manganese, and others." The San Juan National Forest is all around Silverton, Telluride and Ouray and should be investigated.

San Juan National Forest

15 Burnett Court

Durango, CO 81301

970-247-4874

37°16.405' N 107°53.591' W

1.8-million-acre forest in Southwest Colorado spread over 10 counties.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan/>

Mineral County (Creede)

Last Chance Mine

504 Last Chance Mine Road
Creede, CO 81130

37° 53.035' N 106° 56.197' W

The Last Chance Mine is only open in summer when the snow retreats at 10,000 feet and rockhounds can advance. Underground tours conducted and a gift store. Rustic, picturesque property. Surface collecting on dumps allowed in the past but now dependent on the current owner. Sowbelly agate with amethyst the mine's notable material. Look at Mindat.org for the mine's geology. It is several miles north of Creede past the Bachelor Town site. Check road directions at their website.

<http://www.lastchancemine.com/index.php>

[\[back to fee/dig/tour list\]](#)

Wolf Creek Pass, San Juan Mountains

Noted collecting locality of agate nodules and unusual minerals on US 160. This pass is at 10,857 feet, crossing the Continental Divide. Summer travel only.

37°26.976' N 106°52.865' W

Treasure Falls Locality of Wolf Creek Pass is nearby.

37°26.933' N 106°52.766' W

Consult MyLandMatters.org for present land status. Check Mindat.org for known minerals.

Montezuma County (Cortez)

San Juan Gems (Rock shop and more)

11523 Highway 145
Cortez, CO 81321
970-565-9854

37°22.771' N 108°33.293' W

Larry Sanchez, G.G., is the principal here, a lifetime with rocks and gems and lapidary. Larry is a master silversmith as well as an accomplished cutter and polisher. Dino bone authority. San

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Juan Gems is the most important rock shop in the Four Corners area and in Southern Colorado overall. Over 40 years in business.

<https://sanjuangems.com/>

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Gem Village – Only a memory, on the road to Durango

America's first organized rock colony. Today, only Tucson in winter can compare to the spirit and camaraderie that existed at Gem Village sixty years ago. Gem Village sat on US 160, 18 miles east of Durango. Beth Simmons wrote a nostalgic piece on it in "America's Only Rockhound Colony," which appeared in the August, 2016 issue of Rock&Gem Magazine. Still listed on many maps.

Saguache County (Saguache)

Beidell

The ghost settlement of Beidell, as Richard Pearl described it, is for the adventuresome only. I have not been there. Pearl described its location by starting from La Garita and then proceeding some nine miles from there. He thinks the location is also called the Carnero Locality. It may now be accessible only by trail.

Amethyst was noted in the area well as fluorescent aragonite and other interesting minerals. Get his *Colorado Gem Trails and Mineral Guide* which was published in 1972 by Sage Books. The 1967 Lime Creek 7.5-minute topo is the appropriate map, available at the USGS store. The locality should be in Township 43 N., R. 6 E., near the head of Beidell Creek. Pearl describes it as a routine stop for rock clubs. Some information at Mindat.org.

San Juan County (Silverton)

This author's personal reference collection of rare earth and radioactive minerals includes two specimens from San Juan County. The first is torbernite on sandstone from the Happy Jack Mine. The second is Schröckingerite from the old Mi Vida Mine Complex in the Lisbon Valley.

Old Hundred Gold Mine
721 County Road A
Silverton, CO 81433
970-387-5444

37°49.446' N 107°35.106' W

Underground mine tours into Galena Mountain. Operating equipment on view.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

<http://minetour.com/index.html>

San Juan County Historical Society Mining Heritage Center

1557 Greene Street, Courthouse Square

Silverton, CO 81433

970-387-5609

37°48.920' N 107°39.713' W

Seasonal hours.

<https://www.sanjuancountyhistoricalsociety.org>

Huerfano County (Walsenburg)

The Walsenburg Mining Museum

112 West Fifth Street

Walsenburg, Colorado 81089

719-738-1992 (Seasonal)

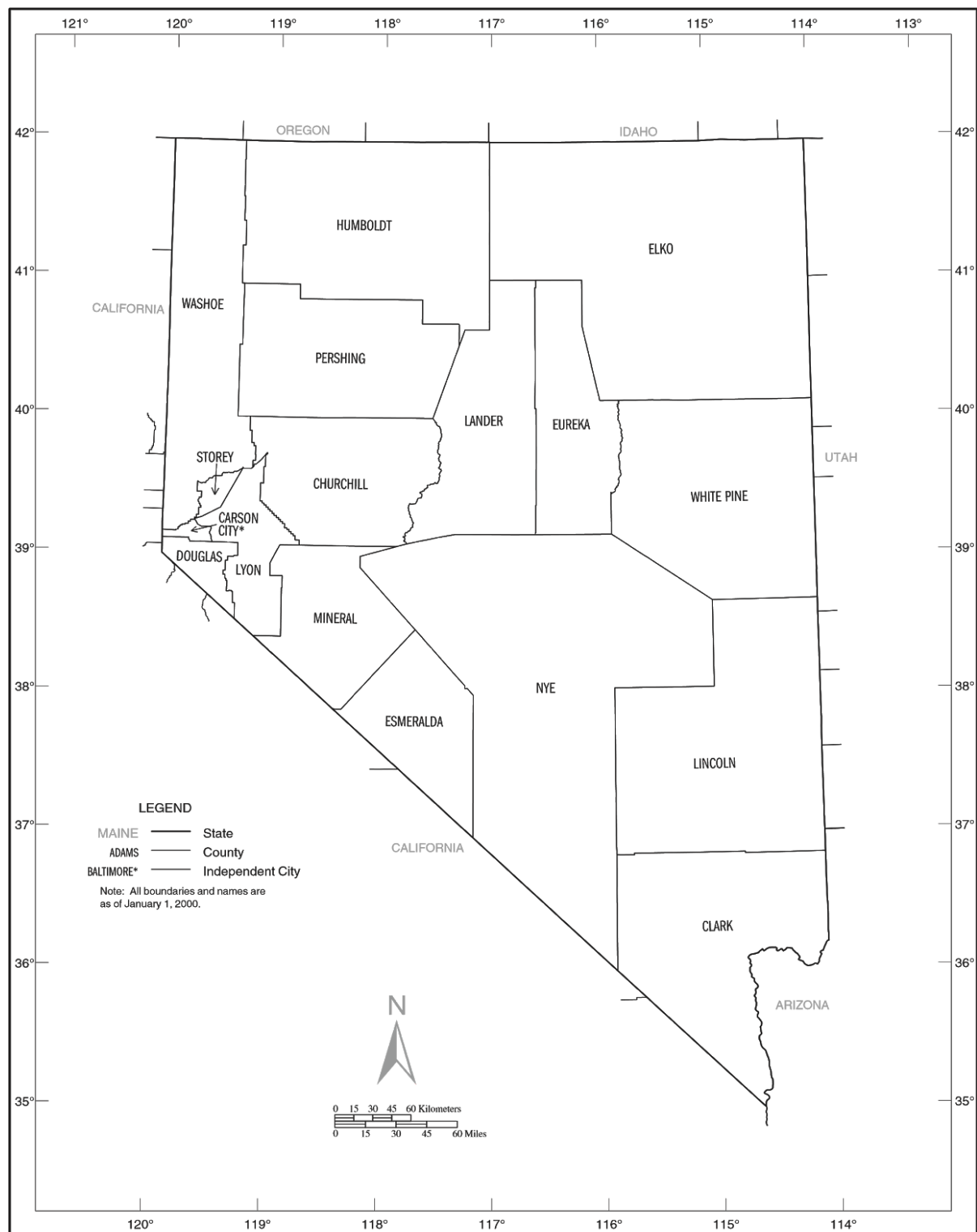
37°37.505' N 104°46.923' W

Located in an 1896 jail. Huerfano County's mining camp history and memorabilia.

<http://huerfanohistory.org/mining-museum.html>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

[Nevada \(Northern\)](#) [\[back to top\]](#)



U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Nevada Notes

Many Nevada cities have a flashing yellow turn signal at stoplights. Proceed halfway into the intersection and let oncoming traffic have the right of way. Turn left when clear.

Washoe County (Reno)

William M. Keck Earth Science and Mineral Engineering Museum

The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR)

1664 N Virginia Street

Reno, NV 89557

775-784-4528

39°32.376' N 119°48.870' W – Building only, parking is something else

Open weekdays only except for the first Saturday of each month. Free admission. Check on summer hours before visiting.

The museum, known as “The Keck” by staff, is in the Mackay School of Mines Building, a classical looking structure in Flemish-bond brick. Gold and silver specimens are first class and the history of the Comstock strike is well presented. Any rockhound should tour the museum’s displays of minerals, fossils, mining artifacts, and ores.

In the basement is some of the sterling silver dining set that Mackay commissioned Tiffany and Company to design and produce. The complete set served 24 and reportedly took Tiffany’s two years and a million man-hours to complete. Mackay had the dies destroyed later so that no one could reproduce the pieces. As Thor might say, “That’s what silver barons do.”

Of note is a large display cabinet which houses the Luella Margrave turquoise collection. It has specimens from around the world, including over 30 examples from different Nevada mines and localities. Mostly rounded and polished stones, the collection includes a Blue Gem mine specimen that weighs 704 carats! The grouping also shows stones often mistaken for turquoise, such as howlite, chrysocolla, wardite, imperialite, and variscite.

Nearby parking is metered and very scarce when students are in session. A long walk is usually required even from metered parking. Take lots of quarters or be prepared for credit card entry if they have stepped up to that. If you have mobility issues, take a Lyft, Uber or taxi from downtown Reno and get dropped off as close as you can to the Museum. Handicap accessible with restrooms.

<https://www.unr.edu/keck>

Great Basin Science Sample and Records Library

Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Publication Sales and Information Office

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

2175 Raggio Parkway
Reno, NV 89512
775-682-8766

39°34.340' N 119°48.175' W

The Bureau maintains this sales and record keeping outlet at the Great Basin Science Sample and Records Library building on Raggio Parkway in Reno. It's recognizable immediately by its insulating gold clad windows. Maps, books, postcards, and even a small Nevada rock and mineral collection is for sale at this office. Check their website before going to see what is available. An impressive display of rock profiles from around Nevada is exhibited at the office, identifying both rocks and rock formations.

Research is also possible here, although don't expect the helpful staff to be thoroughly knowledgeable on gemstones and collectible minerals. This office supports Nevada's mining industry in the main, the person you are talking with may know more far more about diatomaceous earth than turquoise.

<http://www.nbmng.unr.edu/GBSSRL/index.html>

Nevada [Southern] [\[back to top\]](#)

The northern limit for this file has been the 38th parallel. In Nevada that line runs between Goldfield and Tonopah.

Many Nevada cities have a flashing yellow turn signal at stoplights. Proceed halfway into the intersection and let oncoming traffic have the right of way. Turn left when clear.

BirdandHike.com

Any southern Nevada traveler should consult BirdandHike.com. Although not a rockhounding site, BirdandHike.com provides tremendous coverage of many areas a rockhound may venture to, with GPS coordinates and location photos. Produced by Jim Boone, professional ecologist. An essential resource. A note [here](#).

Nevada has outlawed uncapped PVC pipes used as claim markers. These trap birds, condemning them to death when they drop into the pipes looking for nesting cavities. Other small animals can get trapped, too. It is legal to remove these markers when found and Jim and his people have done a great job of removing most of them from Clark and Lincoln Counties. If you find one and are uncomfortable removing it, notify Jim through his website about its location. He will thank you.

https://www.birdandhike.com/Markers/_Markers_Intro.htm

Rockhounding Nevada by William Kappeler is a recommended but dated hardcopy book to collecting sites.

Clark County (Las Vegas)

The United States owns about 85% of Clark County land. Air Force bases, three large National Recreational Areas, a National Wildlife Refuge, and the Nevada National Security Site remove vast land from rockhounding. The vast and remote Gold Butte National Monument offers the greatest rockhounding opportunity for casual, non-commercial collecting.

BLM

BLM's Red Rock/Sloan Field Office at 1000 Scenic Loop Drive in Las Vegas manages the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area which prohibits collecting. They do sell maps.

USFS

Humboldt-Toiyabe is the largest National Forest in the lower 48 states. It occurs as a collection of scattered lands from Reno to Las Vegas. Multiple hardcopy maps needed for travel. Over six million acres. Aside from NRAs, usual National Forest collecting rules apply.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest District Office at 4701 N. Torrey Pines Dr. in Las Vegas manages the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area which prohibits collecting. They do sell maps.

The Springs Preserve

333 S. Valley View Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89107
702-822-7700

36°10.346' N 115°11.411' W

Nevada State Museum

Located on the grounds of The Springs Preserve, this State Museum in Las Vegas has a number of earth science exhibits including displays on geology, fossils, and rocks and minerals. A small but excellent fluorescent room.

<http://nvculture.org/nevadastatemuseumlasvegas/>

The Nature Exchange

The Nature Exchange is off to the side of the Spring Preserve's gift shop, a trading post for children for rocks, shells, insect parts, plant parts and fossils. The Exchange emphasizes the importance of documenting finds, good advice for anyone going into the field.

<https://www.springspreserve.org/explore/nature-exchange.html>

The Springs Preserve price structure is confusing. Ask first as to what is being paid for, the museum, the grounds, or both. The Preserve are near freeways known as the Spaghetti Bowl. If turned around, use surface streets to navigate to the Preserve.

Cactus Joes — (aka Blue Diamond Nursery)

12740 Blue Diamond Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89161
702-875-1968

36°02.370' N 115°22.038' W

Cactus Joes is a wonderful plant nursery. They are Nevada's best and largest authorized dealer of Joshua Trees. They also carry rocks, some rough, some slabs. Much unlabeled, all of it fun. Seek out Cactus Joe himself for a good rock talk. Tell him Tom Farley apologizes for not being around again and that I have some rose quartz for him.

<http://www.cactusjoeslasvegas.com/>

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

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Support Me at Patreon

<https://www.patreon.com/writingrockhound>



Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Jewelry and Mineral of Las Vegas

410 East Sahara Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89104
702-733-7166

36°08.631' N 115°09.130' W

Interesting rock shop located very close to the Vegas Strip.

<https://jewelryandminerals.com>

[\[back to rock shop list\]](#)

Southern Nevada Gem and Mineral Society

3111 S. Valley View #E125
Las Vegas, Nevada 89102

36°09.697' N 115°06.559' W

A club well worth joining if living or visiting in Southern Nevada. I'm a member. Has an agate claim near the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. A fine club workshop. Check their website before going to the shop to avoid certain parking spaces.

<http://www.snvgms.org/page2.html>

Visual Rock ID Sessions in Las Vegas

University of Nevada at Las Vegas
4505 S Maryland Pkwy
Las Vegas NV 89154
702-895-3262

36°06.351' N 115°08.503' W

Lily Fong Geosciences Building
36°06.508' N 115°08.458' W

<https://geoscience.unlv.edu/rock-identification-2/>

Held while classes are going on in the fall, winter, and spring, these visual rock identification sessions are very valuable. I have gone to several sessions, particularly to talk with PhD student Drew Barkoff who is a friend of my book. I'd stress that you should bring in as much information as you can about your specimen's locality. The geology of an area determines what can be found in that area.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

A geologic map or a small printout of same, no matter how simple, will help tremendously. You can find those at either <http://www.MyLandMatters.org> or especially <https://macrostrat.org>. I once brought in a rock from Plymouth, California and did not and could not expect anyone there to know area's geology. Bring a map of the collecting area if possible. Oh, and a small flashlight since the conference room is dim. And a hand lens. They have simple test tools like streak plates. At the above link you will find a link to a .pdf file that explains basic rock ID.

Parking is tough. Many meters accept quarters but in some lots you will get only 10 minutes to a quarter. On many of those meters they have a credit card system in place. You call the number on the meter and voice prompts walk you through a ten-minute process to register your credit card, take down your license plate, and so on. It is frustrating and lengthy to set up the first time, considering you will be in full sun the entire duration. If you return at a later date your account will be established and it will be just a matter of calling the number back. There may be other parking options so, again, check the official UNLV link above.

If you have a large or heavy rock, bring a cart or hand truck. The Geosciences Building can be a long walk from wherever you wind up parking. Everything is on the first floor and handicap accessible. There is an outstanding display of rocks and minerals on the first floor and I noticed that they have replaced all of the overhead lighting this semester. Things look great. The Geosciences Building is worth a visit just to check out this collection. All campus staff is friendly and people will happily point you out to the right building.

Gold Searchers of Southern Nevada

Non-profit organization based in the Henderson. Monthly outings as weather permits. Has a claim adjacent to the Nye Gold Seekers' claim in the Johnnie Mining District outside of Pahrump in Nye County. Many people have memberships in both clubs.

<http://www.goldsearchersnv.com/home.html>

Rupprecht Estate Rock

Jason Fabbi G.G.
East Las Vegas, NV
702-544-1957

Appointment only.

jhfstones@yahoo.com

Small rock yard representing more than sixty year of collecting in the Southwest by Ed Rupprecht and his wife. Mostly rocks that take a cut and polish, little in collectible minerals. Mostly rough, some slabs. Please bring cash in small bills. Rocks in general are two dollars a pound, slabs more, some things different. Ask Jason for particulars.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Bring your UV lamps, there is a barn like structure on this property with good darkness. I got plenty of pretty lime/green pieces in quartz like rocks, no red or unusual colors. It was not a calcite fest, either, which was good. And I only had a SW lamp, so your luck will be better if your portable lamp has all three wavelengths. Pet wood, opalized wood, a septarian nodule or two, rhyolite, and on and on. Well worth looking at if you are in Las Vegas.

Contact Jason Fabbi to see if the yard is open. Jason is an extremely talented jeweler with a long history of collecting and finishing stones. He is very active in the local club, the SNGMS and does much custom work. He made a handsome bolo tie for me out of gold in quartz that I found.

Here are some pictures, a video, and the eulogy for Ed.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/10/20/the-estate-rock-yard-of-ed-rupprecht-in-east-las-vegas/>

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Clark County Museum

1830 South Boulder Highway
Henderson, NV 89002

36°01.27266' N 114°57.679' W

This is a complex rather than a solitary building housing a museum. Thirty acres in all. The Jilly Bean exhibit showcases Nevada hard rock mining in general and southern Nevada in particular. Invertebrate marine fossils are featured in another display. These can still be collected in parts of southern Nevada. Specimens include trilobites, sponges, crinoids, and brachiopods.

El Dorado Canyon Mine Tours

16880 NV-165
Searchlight, NV 89046
702-291-0026

35°42.611' N 114°48.225' W

“Eldorado Canyon Mine Tours is based in Eldorado Canyon at the historic Techatticup Mine. It's the oldest, richest and most famous gold mine in Southern Nevada. Just 45 minutes from the Strip in Las Vegas. We provide historic mine tours, photo shoots, movie backdrops and canoe/kayak rentals.”

Tours go out from the picturesque road stop, Nelson, Nevada. Despite the address, they are *not* in Searchlight. Maps are provided at the website. Nelson is a collection of old buildings, rusting cars, ancient mining equipment, old gasoline station signs, and every kind of now collectible

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

discard from generations ago. A great location for trying out one's camera lenses and shooting techniques. They charge a little to photograph, more if you are using a model. Call to make sure mine tours are on.

<https://eldoradocanyonminetours.com/mine-tours.html>

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The First Lode Mine in Nevada

Mormon pioneers settled present day Las Vegas in 1855. With the help of a Paiute guide, a small scouting party discovered what was eventually called the Potosi Mine in the nearby Spring Mountains. It produced lead, although it smelted poorly. The ore proved unsatisfactory in the main, never-the-less, on the return to Utah two years later, several tons of it were hauled 450 miles across the Great Basin to Salt Lake. The ore was eventually used to make tools, paint, and bullets. Later miners successfully developed a zinc mine at the Potosi. Fluorescent mineral collectors, therefore, may be interested in the area, check land status first. The entire area eventually become the Potosi Mining District. A Nevada Historical Marker stands along Nevada Route 160 commemorating the efforts of these early miners.

The mine itself is on a rugged off-pavement road in an area with no cell phone coverage.

36°00.062' N 115°29.125' W (Marker location)

Gold Butte National Monument

36°43.906' N 114°13.088' W — Crossroads of Gold Butte Road and HWY 170

This 300,000-acre National Monument allows casual collecting of rocks and minerals. It's said that Gold Butte offers a tremendous variety of minerals but none in paying quantities. Materials previously mined include gold, mica, silver, lead, magnetite, copper and zinc. The Gold Butte area has a mining district although claiming is no longer allowed. Jim Boone's site is the best guide to this remote, service-free area. Past president of The Friends of Gold Butte, Boone describes rock art, wildlife, cultural resources, camping opportunities, and much more.

<https://birdandhike.com>

Do not expect to average more than fifteen miles an hour on Gold Butte's roads. This makes it difficult to experience the area as a day trip, since one has to drive hours to get to the Monument's interior. It is really best for camping, preferably several days. Bring everything needed. Avoid summer. Large RVs are not recommended as the roads are too jarring to handle hour after hour. The Friends of Gold Butte produces the best map.

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/nevada/gold-butte>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Friends of Gold Butte

12 West Mesquite Boulevard, Suite 106

Mesquite, NV 89027

702-613-5875 – telephone number for the Friends, not necessarily the center

36°48.218' N 114°04.110' W

This center relates the “The geology, ecology, and human habitation of Gold Butte.” Sells the latest and most detailed Gold Butte map. Absolutely essential for travel in the Monument. But it may not be available online and the center is closed on weekends. E-mail or call first.

<https://www.friendsofgoldbutte.org/>

Esmeralda County (Goldfield)

Located at the northern boundary of the Southwest is Goldfield, Nevada. Goldfield is Esmeralda’s County seat, the county having no more than 4,000 citizens. Goldfield is wonderfully picturesque and quiet. Wild burros, sometimes antelope in the fields. No gas. Fuel up in Beatty or Tonopah before arriving.

Gemfield Nevada Chalcedony Rock Hounding Site

Near Goldfield, Nevada off of U.S. 95

37°44.370' N 117°17.642' W (Claim information board)

The Gemfield Gem claims are a premier source of chalcedony, quartz of banded, spotted, and swirling colors. Some response under LW UV. Makes for fine cabochons and tumbling material. Well graded road leading to the claim area, entry sign prominently marked along U.S. 95. No large RVs but passenger vehicles will have no problems.

These claims have a long and storied history. I wrote about them in the May, 2016 issue of Rock&Gem Magazine. The owners are Sharon Artlip and her sister Nadiah Beekum, with rock shop owner Bryan Smalley assisting.

Sharon is open to custom tumbling. She has processed hundreds of pounds of material from the claim. The Gemfield claims are littered with small pieces that make for fine tumbles. Spend several hours at the claim to make sure you find each of the occurrences of green, red, light blue, and cream-colored stones.

This is a self-directed fee-dig operating under the honor system. Rocks are \$1.00 a pound. Register before proceeding to the claim at Wild Inspirations or at Hidden Treasures Trading Company at 489 Bellevue Avenue.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

If you spend two or three hours at the claims the chances are excellent that you will see wild burros or antelope. The claims are a wonderful place to just sit on a rock and take in the view.

All details and directions are at the claim's website:

<http://www.gemfieldnv.com>

One of my many illustrated posts on Gemfield:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/18/another-update-on-the-gemfield-gem-claims-in-goldfield-nevada/>

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Wild Inspirations

306 Crook Avenue
P.O. Box 121
Goldfield, NV 89013
775-485-3789

37°42.560' N 117°14.284' W

Wildinspirations@outlook.com

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/goldfieldwildinspirations/about/>

Has some rocks, many collected by them. Old maps and documents. You can register at this shop for digging at the Gemfield Claims. This building was formerly Sharon's and still has "Gemfield Headquarters" at the top of the building. As with everything in Goldfield, call to make sure they are still open. Contact Goldfield's Chamber of Commerce if necessary.

Goldfield Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.goldfieldnevada.org>

Hidden Treasures Trading Company

489 Bellevue Avenue
P.O. Box 512
Goldfield, NV 89013
775-485-3761 – Voice mail box is usually full
775-485-3485

37°42.220' N 117°14.066' W

<https://www.facebook.com/HiddenTreasuresTradingCo/>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

bsmalleyhiddentreasure@gmail.com

One of my many posts on Hidden Treasures

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/25/bryan-smalley-and-hidden-treasures-trading-company-in-goldfield-nevada/>

Bryan Smalley runs one of the Southwest's most eclectic rock and gift shops. He is expert on local rockhounding and accomplished at cutting and lapidary. He does knapping and can talk authoritatively on making flintlock strikers from locally collected chalcedony. It is sometimes difficult to find him at his shops, three buildings in total.

Ask locals where Bryan is if you can't find him. Try the Dinky Diner. Goldfield citizens won't mind your asking; they are quite friendly. Bryan has a minimal web presence since he focuses on finding rocks and cutting same. And making doors and entire buildings. Make sure to stop when investigating the Gemfield Gem claims. Tell him Tom said "Hi" and if you have a rock that needs cutting, ask him if he has the time. Oh, and buy something!

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Florence and Rustler #2 Mine Tours

Goldfield, NV

Call or text for information and reservations:

James Aurich: 702-622-0500

Jon Aurich: 702-622-1344

Guided surface and underground tours by appointment. The surface tour views head frames, hoist houses, the black shop and more. Great views of the surrounding country which are pockmarked with the craters of old mines. One mile from Goldfield on an easy dirt road. Private residence on site. Those with mobility issues should bring up their condition with the owners before visiting.

This page linked below contains photos and mine history. Information on the Florence exists in different places on the web, including Mindat.org.

<https://www.yelp.com/biz/florence-mining-company-goldfield-4>

[\[back to fee dig list\]](#)

Vanderford's Gold Strike

William D. Vanderford, Consulting Geologist

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

775-485-3252

billvanderford@yahoo.com

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 27

Goldfield, NV

Shop location:

Highway 95 on the west side of town.

Eclectic materials, well worth a stop. Don't pay too much.

Old YouTube video but a good look at the store:

<https://youtu.be/I0nFH0Lfh8Q>

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Lincoln County (Pioche)

Clover Mountains Wilderness Area

Twelve miles south of Caliente off of State Route 317 lies the Clover Mountains Wilderness Area. Rhyolite in shades of, pink, yellow, red, orange and brown. Look for petroglyphs and pictographs.

37°24.338' N 114°19.618' W (Center of WA)

BLM Oak Springs Trilobite Site

Highway 93 (The Great Basin Highway)

Caliente, NV 89008

775-726-8100

37°36.821' N 114°42.681' W

BLM managed collecting site open to the public free of charge. Mostly partial trilobites here but finding a full bug will take luck, patience, and time. No services but well-marked trail. The site is not in Caliente but 11 miles west near the Oak Springs Summit. A brick hammer works better than a geologist's pick for splitting shale.

Mineral County (Hawthorne)

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Rock Chuck Gem and Mineral Gallery

4045 S. Highway 95
Schurz, Nevada 89427
760-978-4567

<https://rockchucknevada.com>

My fuller description with an interactive Google Map:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/30/rockchuck-gem-mineral-gallery-in-schurz-nevada/>

This is the store of John and Chelsea Keady. Rock Chuck isn't in the Southwest but it is a mandatory stop leaving or approaching the Southwest. It is outside of Schurz, Nevada, a tiny town 34 miles north of Hawthorne, Nevada, 90 miles south of Reno. Their store is at the intersection of South Highway 95 (Alternative) and US-95 itself.

Chelsea and John are miners, lapidary artists, rockhounds, and all-around good people. Bryan Smalley affectionately refers to them as "The Kids." These young people signal a bright future for the rock and gem trade.

They built their store themselves and everything that goes in it. They sell material they have either personally sourced or dug themselves. That includes Green Mist variscite and Hellfire agate. They carry many local rocks and gem material and fashion much of that into jewelry. John and Kelsea sell ready-made jewelry at the shop and they are always ready to do commission work.

The Keady's are now keeping the store open more often. Call first, though, to make sure they are there, and not off on one of their claims. If you can't visit them at the shop, you might catch them at Quartzsite in January. They try to get there each year.

This store is a memorable stop on any drive from Las Vegas to Reno, or on any travel through central Nevada. Rock Chuck is big on Facebook so check them out there if you want to keep up with their latest happenings. They have a nice dog.

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Mineral County Museum

400 10th St.
Hawthorne, NV 89415

38°31.933' N 118°37.515' W

<http://web0.greatbasin.net/~mcmuseum/index.html>

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Well done museum with mining history and some display of rocks. Free admission. Well worth a stop, especially if staying overnight in Hawthorne. (I recommend the Travelodge). Across the street from a public rest area. Walking distance of the Hawthorne Ordnance Museum.

“The Mineral County Museum is located at the corner of Tenth and D Streets in Hawthorne, Nevada. Directly across the street from the rest area on U.S. Highway 95 at the north end of Hawthorne.”

Hawthorne Ordnance Museum

925 E Street

Hawthorne, NV 89415

(775) 945-5400

<http://hawthorneordnancemuseum.com>

Hawthorne is home to the largest ammunition depot in the western hemisphere, possibly the world. The base does mostly decommissioning now, so they say, and as such they furnish a steady stream of castoff shells and flares and what not to the museum. The museum highlights the contributions that bombs, missiles, and shells played in keeping us free. You will see things here that are nowhere else. Get to know your ASROCs (anti-Submarine ROCKets).

The giftshop is amazing and a source of souvenirs your friends will try to steal from you. Strictly cash, bring plenty. I think there is a commercial ATM nearby. They have t-shirts and hard goods that are hard to describe. The trick is to get in there by 4:00 PM when they close. Normally I would recommend a museum, this one I am ordering you to visit. Don't let me hear you passed by without stopping.

38°31.870' N 118°37.491' W

Nye County (Pahrump)

BLM Pahrump Field Office

4701 North Torrey Pines Drive

Las Vegas, NV 89130

702-515-5000

36°14.718' N 115°14.038' W

Nye Gold Seekers

Meeting address:

Pahrump Valley Museum

401 E. Basin Ave.

Pahrump, NV 89060

775 751-8613

36°13.172' N 116°00.335' W

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Great gold prospecting club with a Johnnie Mining District claim. Their general meetings are held at 2:00 PM on the third Saturday of the month except for June, July and August. The address listed above is for their meeting place. Local club membership is great, especially for newcomers. Learn on productive ground from the old-timers. Drywashing, metal detecting, panning, are all things you can learn at a club.

<https://nyegoldseekers.webs.com>

The Beatty Museum

417 Main Street
Beatty, NV 89003
775-553-2303

36°54.368' N 116°45.693' W

Unassuming building and grounds overflowing with objects and curiosities. Mining history and artifacts; Nevada's mining past often matches the colorful stories and characters of California's Mother Lode. Staff let me pull out many maps on my last visit. Although volunteer driven, this museum always has a professional curator.

Beatty is a gateway to Death Valley. Fuel up here, gas is much, much cheaper than in Death Valley. The old mining town of Rhyolite is a few minutes away, famous for its modern, ghostly sculpture, one figure holding a bicycle. The city name, by the way, is pronounced like Warren Beatty. Not Beety. Despite what you've heard.

<https://www.beattymuseum.org>

Otteson Brothers Turquoise Tours / Dig

Tonopah, NV

Starting back up in the spring of 2020 for the general public. Fee digs in the last few years have been limited to the membership in certain rock clubs and to others on an individual basis. Don't think they are getting rich on your dig fee, I expect half of that money probably goes to insurance, the reason more fee digs don't exist.

<https://ottesonbrothersturquoise.com/mine-tours>

For a look at the great time I had on the last public fee dig Dean Otteson gave, read my first article for Rock&Gem magazine at this link:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/10/21/a-nevada-turquoise-adventure-from-2015/>

The Tonopah Historic Mining Park

Tonopah Historic Mining Park
110 Burro Avenue
P.O. Box 965
Tonopah, NV 89049
775- 482-9274

38°04.136' N 117°13.801' W

<http://www.tonpahhistoricminingpark.com/index.html>

Tonopah was America's last great gold and silver strike. You've heard about the Gold Rush of 1849, the Comstock, and the Klondike. But there was also Tonopah in 1900 and for years thereafter. The visitor center and the park grounds highlight this stupendous and spectacular hunt for those precious metals at the turn of the century. Five-dollar admission.

The park is right behind the extremely comfortable and period correct Mizpah Hotel. The entrance road is best approached in larger vehicles by Burro Street. The visitor center parking lot has room for two or three RVs and the exit road is a pull-through, so there is no worry about having to back up.

The grounds offer a self-guided tour. Pick up a map at the visitor center which also houses a terrific rock, gem, and mineral museum. As for the grounds, hiking the park at 6,000 feet can be tough at times but take it slow and bring some water. Great opportunities for photographs. For those out of shape or mobility challenged, tours on a Polaris with a guide can be arranged. Call for current availability and charges. Jeff Martin is a Park Host and Guide that I have dealt with many times.

After a visit, top your tank since the nearest gas stations are 100 miles north and south of town. Also consider visiting the Central Nevada Museum before you leave, the city's best kept secret. They have rocks on display.

Central Nevada Museum
1900 Logan Field Road
Tonopah, NV 89049

38°03.610' N 117°13.246' W

cnmuseum@citlink.net

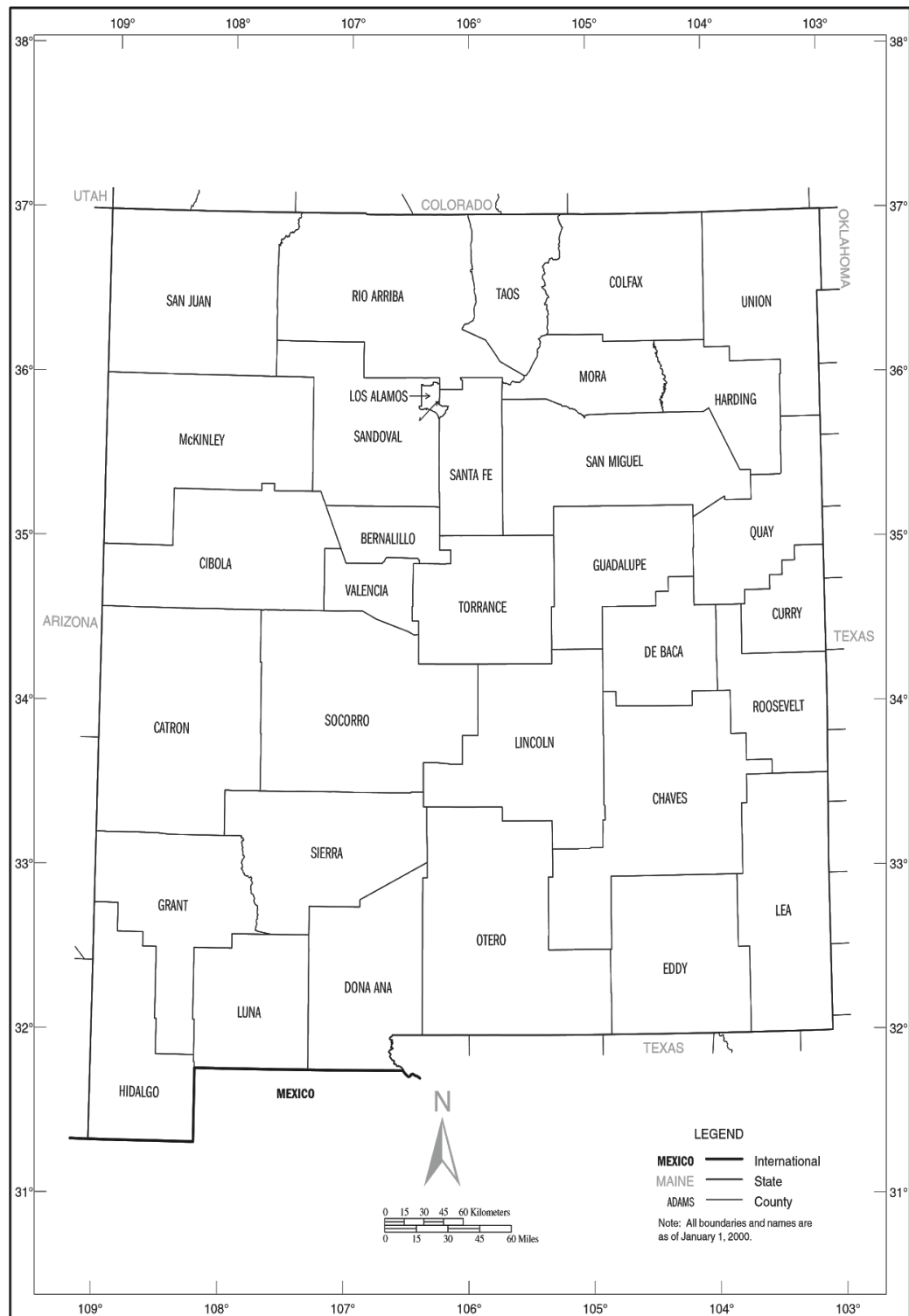
<http://www.tonpahnevada.com/central-nevada-museum/>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Great museum and grounds. Free admission, donations accepted. Some rocks on display. Great place if you are researching anything or anyone in the area. Call ahead or e-mail if you are looking for something particular.

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New Mexico [\[back to top\]](#)



U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

New Mexico Notes

Rockhounding New Mexico by Ruta Vaskys and Martin Freed is an essential guide to collecting sites. A Falcon book. Watch for tribal land when traveling in any state in the Four Corners Area. These sovereign nations must be respected: no rockhounding, no traveling off main roads, no hiking or exploring without express permission and perhaps a guide. An excellent road map of the Navajo and Hopi Nations is produced by North Star Mapping of Scottsdale, Arizona. Some nav devices like my Garmin Montana 650 tell me when I am on tribal land, but only the bigger reservations and pueblos.

Bernalillo County (Albuquerque)

Mama's Minerals

800 20th St NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
505-266-8443

35°06.011' N 106°40.028' W

Mama's is a leading New Mexico rock shop, two stores, actually, the other in Santa Fe.

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University of New Mexico

Earth & Planetary Sciences
The Silver Family Geology Museum (Northrop Hall, Room #124)
Albuquerque, NM 87106
505-277-4204

35°04.996' N 106°37.370' W

Geology museum. One exhibit features rocks and minerals from the Harding Pegmatite Mine, worth seeing before visiting that site. Wide range of materials displayed including a fluorescent room. A hallway on the first floor also has some nice displays but at last visit were poorly lit. Bring a flashlight.

New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science

1801 Mountain Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
505-841-2800

35°05.901' N 106°39.953' W

<http://www.nmnaturalhistory.org>

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Natural history museum. Life on earth and possibly beyond. Exhibits on dinosaurs, fossils, space sciences and more. Perfect for kids.

Albuquerque Gem & Mineral Club

Meetings:

Museum of Natural History and Science
1801 Mountain Road NW
Old Town, Albuquerque, NM 87104

35°05.898' N 106°39.951' W

<http://www.agmc.info>

Mailing Address:

Albuquerque Gem and Mineral Club
P.O. Box 13718
Albuquerque, NM 87192

Cibola County (Grants)

New Mexico Mining Museum
100 Iron Avenue
Grants, NM 87020
505-287-4802

35°09.223' N 107°51.278' W

<https://www.facebook.com/newmexicominingmuseum/>

This is New Mexico's official mining museum, the counterpart to the state's Mineral Museum two hours south in Socorro. The focus here is on the working end of mining. Emphasizes life in Grants and Cibola Counties when the uranium boom hit in the 1950s.

Chaves County (Roswell)

Ancients of Days

127 N Main Street
Roswell, New Mexico 88203
575-623-2222

33°23.656' N 104°31.341' W

<https://ancientsofdays.net/>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Eclectic rock shop and source for information on finding “Pecos Diamonds” on nearby BLM land. Close to the International UFO Museum and Research Center.

Doña Ana County (Las Cruces)

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

Non-commercial collecting allowed as of this writing.³ This according to Colin R. Dunn, Paleontologist/Geologist for Prehistoric Pathways and Organ MT-Desert Peaks National Monuments.

32°19.555' N 106°33.390' W — Center of Monument area

Rockhounding in the northern Organ Mountains was featured in the August, 2019 issue of Rock&Gem Magazine. Robert Beard wrote the article entitled “Northern Organ Mountains.” It describes looking for garnets, calcite, and malachite.

BLM

Las Cruces District Office
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005
575-525-4454

32°17.265' N 106°46.621' W

Manages the above listed National Monuments.

<https://www.blm.gov/office/las-cruces-district-office>

Eddy County (Carlsbad)

Carlsbad Caverns National Park

32°10.839' N 104°26.674' W

Internationally known cave complex.

Cerrillos Turquoise Mining Museum

17 Waldo Street
Cerrillos, NM 87010
505-438-3008

³ Personal correspondence with BLM Paleontologist/Geologist Colin R. Dun on September 17, 2018

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

35°26.230' N 106°07.656' W

www.casagrandetradingpost.com

Mine tour is \$60.00. No collecting.

<http://www.cerrillosturquoise.com/cerrillos-turquoise-mine-tour>

Luna County (Deming)

Deming Gem and Mineral Society

575-546-2554

4200 Raymond Reed Blvd.

Deming, NM 88030

<http://www.thedgmsclub.com>

Well worth joining if visiting this great collecting area.

Rockhound State Park

9880 Stirrup Road SE

Deming, NM 88030

575-546-6182

32°12.458' N 107°37.531' W

“This is the only place in New Mexico and one of only two places in the U.S. where you can take something from a state park,” says Manager Robert Apodaca to the Albuquerque Journal. “The most prevalent thing that’s readily available for surface collecting is jasper.” Visitors to the park also find geodes and thunder eggs, perlite and quartz, Apodaca says.

Ask on arrival whether anything beyond surface collecting is permitted. Has steep, cactus-studded hills. May need to watch where the kids play. A great place to camp for a few days of hiking and rockhounding. Bring boots! The visitor center has a good rock collection showing what might be found for those putting in the time.

Stop at the rock shop described below for possible park collecting advice. Please buy something from the owner if he helps you with directions.

A park map is here:

<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/spd/documents/RHPARKMAPS.pdf>

<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/spd/rockhoundstatepark.html>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

The Basin Range Volcanics Geolapidary Museum

6235 Stirrup Road SE
Deming, NM 88030
575-546-4021

32°11.678' N 107°38.768' W

Just before the entrance to Rockhound State Park is this gem of a rock shop. Christopher is the proprietor here and an expert all things thundereggs and geodes. Although he doesn't sell geodes from Rockhound State Park, he did contribute samples for the Visitor Center's rock display. And he may have hints as to where to look in the Park. Take in a park map to make any directions easier to follow.

<http://www.zianet.com/geodekid/index.html>

Black Hat Trading

2785 US-180
Deming, NM 88030
575-494-4693

32°17.705' N 107°46.008'

Recommended by Christopher of the Basin Range Volcanics Geolapidary Museum.

<https://www.facebook.com/BlackHatTrading/>

Trina's Rock Shop

1812 Columbus Rd.
Deming, NM 88030
575-546-0348

32°15.048' N 107°45.112' W

Recommended by Christopher of the Basin Range Volcanics Geolapidary Museum.

<https://www.trinasrockshop.com/shop/>

Otero County (Alamogordo)

Orogrande District

32°27.616' N 106°06.483' W

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Over 300 mines existed in the District at one time and it is said that gold can still be found. Tiffany & Company owned a turquoise mine in the area which has been completely reclaimed. Commercial operators now pursue copper and garnet. Many mining claims exist but some ground is open. Check the Locating Open Ground Chapter for how to search.

Quay County (Tucumcari)

Dinosaur Museum and Natural Science Laboratory

Mesa Lands Community College
222 East Laughlin Street, Building F
Tucumcari, NM 88401
575-461-3466

35°10.423' N 103°43.431' W

www.mesalands.edu/community/dinosaur-museum/

Rio Arriba (Santa Fe)

Chimayo Rocks

416-A North, Riverview Lane
Española, NM 87532
505-614-4615

35°59.713' N 106°04.088' W

A relatively new shop offering rockhounds guidance to collecting spots. This is a logical stop while traveling north from Santa Fe or Albuquerque to visit the Harding Pegmatite Mine.

<https://www.facebook.com/Chimayo-Rocks-1993258240942785/>

Mama's Minerals Santa Fe / Laura Randolph Gallery

100 E San Francisco St
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505-988-1651

35°41.203' N 105°56.268' W

Mineral and fossil gallery. Rocks, beads and more. Located at the La Fonda Hotel on the Santa Fe Plaza. The sister store to their Albuquerque location. May be changing.

[\[back to rock shop list\]](#)

Roosevelt County (Portales)

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Miles Mineral Museum

Dr. Jim Constantopoulos
Director and Curator
Eastern New Mexico University
1500 S Avenue K
Portales, NM 88130
575-562-2651

34°10.501' N 103°20.815' W

Museum located in Roosevelt Hall, Room 103. Fred Miles and his wife publicized and collected local quartz crystals called Pecos Valley Diamonds. The Miles Collection is a product of 40 years of collecting.

Google for the Museum's website.

Socorro County (Socorro)

Otero's Gem & Mineral Rock Shop

105 1st Street
Magdalena, NM 87825
Magdalena, NM

575-740-4996
575-854-2324

34°07.150' 107°14.163' W

Rough, cabs, jewelry. Many findings made by a native woman silversmith. High quality smithsonite.

Kelly Mine Fee/Dig, coordinated by:

Tony's Rock Shop

911 Kelly Road
Magdalena, NM 87825

.

(575) 854-2401

\$10 fee charged when this was written. Once well noted for smithsonite, a zinc mineral. Tailings and property grounds have been heavily scoured over the years. But any ground that you haven't worked hasn't really been scoured, has it? Bring UV lamps as zinc is an activator for fluorescence. Some success reported off the dumps.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Picturesque mine grounds, well worth a visit. Short drive from Tony's up the hill to the mine. Note the street signs, keep left. The road deteriorates quickly after the Catholic Church, consider parking when available and walking in. Bennie presently owns Tony's. Ask other shop owners about his location if he can't be found at his store. Which basically looks like a house.

Mark Leatherman writes about his visit in "Socorro's Mineral Cornucopia" which appeared in the March, 2019 issue of Rock&Gem Magazine. Have you subscribed yet?

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Mineral Museum

New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources
New Mexico Tech
801 Leroy Place
Socorro, NM 87801
575-835-5140

34°04.106' N 106°54.253' W

<http://geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/>

My Mineral Museum Photo gallery at Patreon here:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30411170>

This is the state mineral museum for New Mexico. It focuses on rocks, gems, and minerals. It is a counterpart to New Mexico's mining museum in Grants. Excellent displays, a small ultraviolet room and a wonderful gift shop focusing on New Mexico gems and minerals. That shop is in the main room. Only a few feet away from the entrance to the museum is another shop that sells books. Make sure to look for it. Between these two stores, you will wind up buying many things.

"The main exhibit hall, constructed in 2015, highlights top-quality minerals from New Mexico, the United States, and around the world. Over 5,000 mineral specimens are displayed in the main gallery. Spectacular mineral specimens from mining districts like Magdalena, Organ, and Santa Rita (to name a few), are presented in thematic displays illustrating the mineral wealth of each locality. Other thematic displays include Systematic Mineralogy, Uranium Mining of New Mexico, Lapidary, Gold & Silver, Agates & Geodes, Meteorites, and Petrified Wood. The New Acquisitions case highlights recent additions to the collection from generous donors."

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Blanchard Rock Shop/Desert Rose Mine

2972 Hwy 380
Bingham, NM 87832
575-423-3235

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

33°53.334' N 106°22.452' W

Website

www.blanchardrockshop.com

Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/theblanchardrockshop/>

Great YouTube video

<https://youtu.be/pfPf-Af7-Jo>

My Blanchard photo gallery at Patreon:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30398908>

There's a joke that Bingham isn't the end of the world but that it can be seen from there. The Blanchard Rock Shop is Bingham; there are no other stores or services. Bingham is an abandoned town site, not a town. Fuel up in Socorro or at tiny San Antonio, New Mexico before visiting Blanchard's. Take a look at the Rio Grande River if you stop at San Antonio.

Blanchard is on Highway 380, seventeen miles east of the turnoff to the White Sands Missile Range. This makes it convenient to visit Blanchard's on the same day the Trinity Site is open, an event that happens only twice a year. Speaking of which, Allison sells authentic trinitite. Genuine trinitite is expensive but don't miss a chance to pick up a piece of history. Bring small bills. Lots of them.

Go anytime to Bingham to enjoy beautiful scenery and to visit the shop. The Desert Rose Mine is nearby. Fluorite is big here, with galena, barite, quartz, and calcite also present. A day-use pass is \$20 a person and directions are given at the store. That \$20 does not include rocks. Allison will look through any findings and determine a price for individual pieces. She also sells rocks from the mine.

Allison is a modern-day, pioneering woman. With her grit, spunk, determination, and personality, she has succeeded in successfully running a business in a remote location where others would surely fail. Call before going. And ask her if she needs anything from town. Seriously, they are that far out.

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White Sands National Monument, Trinity Site

My Trinity photo gallery at Patreon:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30392061>

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Reliable information:

https://www.army.mil/article/226795/trinity_site_open_house_set_for_oct_5

<https://www.wsmr.army.mil/Trinity/Pages/Home.aspx>

<https://www.nps.gov/whsa/learn/historyculture/trinity-site.htm>

Open twice a year, once in Spring, once in Fall.

White Sands was the location of the first atomic bomb explosion and it is only open twice a year to visitors. Next day is October 5th. Fascinating place, complete details on the web. Have a full tank of gas as you will be idling in a long line of cars and you'll have quite a distance back to Socorro. If possible, top off your tank at the little town of San Antonio, New Mexico on I-380 before heading the final miles to White Sands. By-the-way, it's a short walk to a bridge over the Rio Grande at San Antonio, fine views of the river.

Take proof of registration, insurance, and don't get going too early. Cars are permitted entrance until 2:00 PM and the longest line of cars will be when the gates first open. Wait a few hours, say, 11:00 AM. Do not take pictures while driving the ten or fifteen miles across the missile range to the Site, only photograph at Trinity. The guards will probably remind you.

Upon arrival at the parking area, you can walk about a quarter mile to the obelisk or you can take a shuttle bus that runs to the Schmidt/McDonald Ranch House. "The ranch house is where the scientists assembled the plutonium core of the bomb. Visitors will also be able to experience what life was like for a ranch family in the early 1940s." I did not take that bus last October, the logistics seemed complicated because I was trying to get to Blanchard's after Trinity.

The blast produced trinitite, a green material the result of tremendous heat melting the desert sand. Little pieces get exposed after every rain but you are not allowed to keep it. There are people watching, and if you stop too many times to tie your shoes, you may get a tap on the shoulder. You may, however, hunt for it and then turn it in. Good activity for the kids. There will be a table with many pieces on display and a knowledgeable person who can explain the stuff and its history. After your visit you can go to Blanchard's down the road. Allison sells authentic, documented trinitite.

Taos County (Taos)

Harding Pegmatite Mine

The Harding Pegmatite Mine is a former rare minerals quarry located in Taos County. Now maintained by the University of New Mexico, the Pegmatite Mine is open to rockhounds for no fee. Five pounds of material may be taken provided guidelines are followed. Large groups must pay a fee and they need to call ahead.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Visitors must fill out a release form available at the mine's website. Follow the University's instructions exactly as it will be necessary to fetch the caretaker before entering the mine. The road to the first mine gate is short and passable by passenger vehicles. Parking is extremely limited at this first gate. No trailers or RVs. If the gate is open, a larger parking lot is farther along the road.

Pegmatites are unusual and interesting rocks igneous rocks, originating from volcanic activity. At the Harding Mine, white sparkling rock is all around, some with pink tints, often with gray or darker inclusions. The pegmatite is the white rock, the various colors and inclusions the minerals. These can be quite unusual, needing an expert to identify them. Bityite, eucryptite, and fluorapatite are some. More common is the pink tinged lepidolite.

A lepidolite tinged rock showing nice pink coloring is a challenging but satisfying project on a warm day in the beautiful hill country of Taos. If possible, bring a short wave and longwave lamp, along with a barbecue lid cover. Hunting fluorescent rocks enlarges searching beyond what appears in daylight.

Print the "Walking Tour for the Harding Pegmatite Mine" file before visiting. It references the numbered markers that are spotted about the quarry.

If possible, a tour of the old quarry should start at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Northrop Hall, home to UNM's Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences. A museum in Room 124 displays specimens from the mine. A dimly lit case on the first floor also exhibits specimens, including a large chunk of beryl. In that case, notice how one rock seems to intergrade with others. The rose muscovite, the lepidolite, and the spodumene all seem variations on a theme. What's not obvious is the sparkling nature of some of the rocks, which comes into play in bright light.

The mine's entrance off Highway 75 is on a strong uphill grade and is difficult to find. There is no sign indicating the mine road, save for a small wood plaque on a juniper asking people to pack out their trash. On a fair day, you will be caught up in looking at the surrounding countryside. This is the land D.H. Lawrence fell in love with and you will, too.

36°11.890' N 105°47.346' W

This link is for the mine tour.pdf and the release form:

<http://epswww.unm.edu/harding-mine/>

The Taos hill country surrounding the mine is populated with artist studios, wineries, and scattered Indian Pueblos. In the fall, cottonwoods blaze yellow along streams and other watercourses. It is a delight in fair weather. Iceland spar may still exist in the area, check Mindat.org for possible locations and MyLandMatters.org for land status.

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

LaTierra Mineral Gallery

124K Bent Street
Taos, NM 87571
575-758-0101

36°24.530' N 105°34.446' W

<http://latierragallery.com>

Roosevelt County (Portales)

Miles Mineral Museum

Eastern New Mexico University
Roosevelt Hall, Room 103
1500 S. Avenue K
Portales, NM 88130
575-562-2651

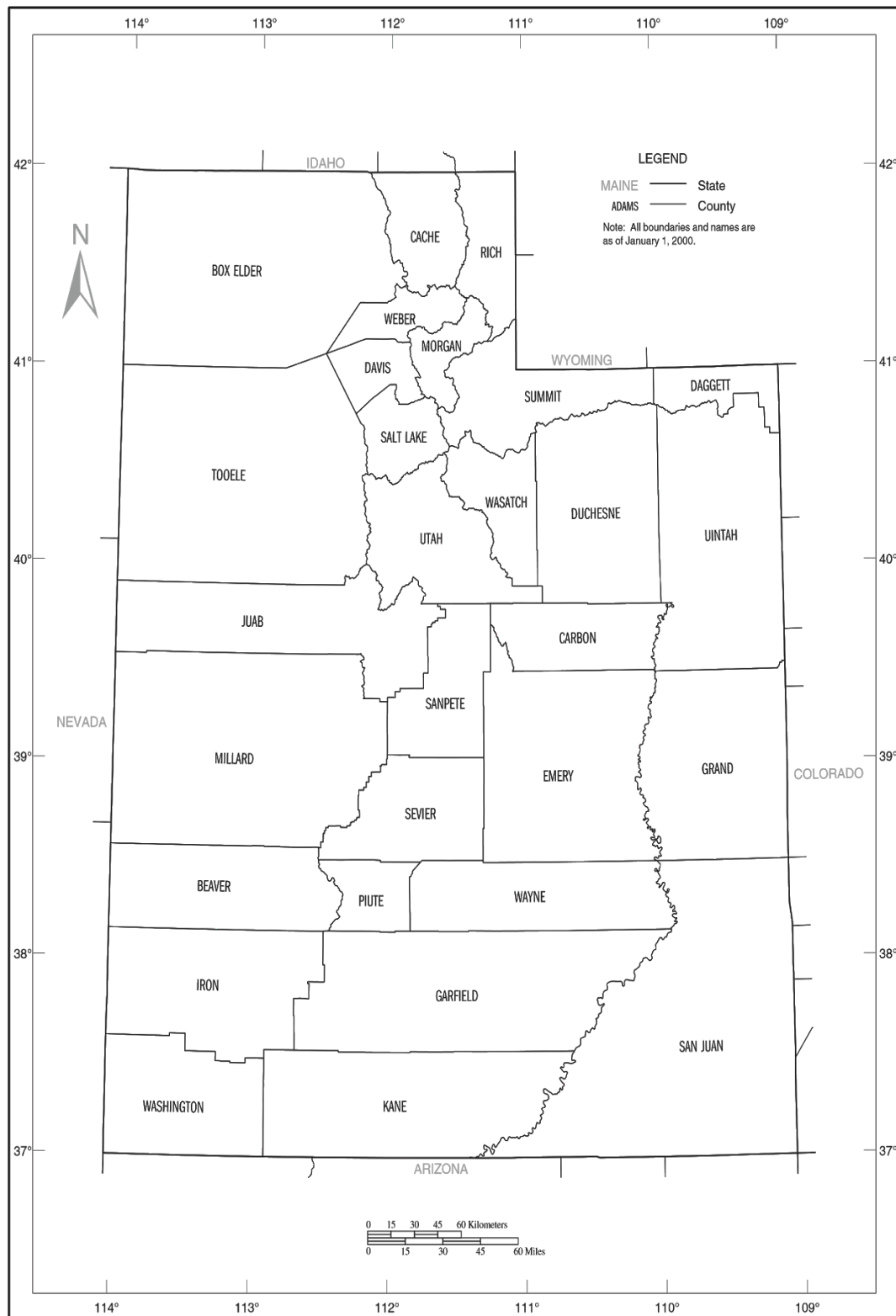
34°10.766' N 103°20.880' W

Google the Museum's website.

Some meteorite specimens on display. Those thinking they have discovered a meteorite are invited to bring it in for verification. Meteorites are rare and most findings do not prove out.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Southern Utah [\[back to top\]](#)



U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Southern Utah Notes

No other state show rock formations better than Utah, save Northern Arizona. Southern Utah's National Parks and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument reveal countless bold and colorful sandstone layered cliffs. These are all off limits to collecting but they provide a great geology education when using the ROCKD app of Macrostrat.org.

Utah charges a \$10 fee for rockhounding on Utah's trust lands. These are, to make it simple, state land where collecting is not otherwise prohibited. These lands are scattered throughout Utah in a random checkerboard fashion. Check MyLandMatters.org to view at home. In the field, boundaries are impossible to determine. Send Utah their \$10.00.

<https://trustlands.utah.gov/business-groups/mining/rockhounding-information/>

Garfield County (Panguitch)

Geologist James Wilson says this south-central county hosts volcanic rocks in the Markagunt Plateau, the Sevier Plateau, the Aquarius Plateau, at Boulder Mountain and in the Henry Mountains. Widespread sedimentary rocks result in agate, gypsum, petrified wood, and fossils.⁴

Dixie National Forest

Supervisor's Office and Cedar City Ranger District
1789 N Wedgewood Lane
Cedar City, UT 84721

435-865-3700 (SO)

435-865-3200 (CCRD)

37°42.630' N 113°03.478' W

Free Dixie National Forest Maps at the Ranger District Door. The Dixie sits in parts of six counties, including Garfield, Washington, and Iron. Kane, Wayne, and Piute counties have less forested land than the others.

State Hwy 14 runs generally east/west through the Dixie. No guide lists collection sites along that stretch. This author, however, found a nice agate scrap and an unidentified rock with crystals in five minutes by simply stopping at this random pullout:

37°29.496' N 112°36.966' W

The Panguitch Lake area further north is more solidly recommended for agates.

⁴ Wilson, James. A Collector's Guide to Rock, Mineral & Fossil Localities of Utah (Salt Lake City: Utah Geological Survey, 1995) 78

Iron County (Cedar City)

Iron County is named for the magnetite hosted in the rocks of the Iron Springs Mining District west of Cedar City. That area has quite a bit of unclaimed BLM managed land. The Cedar City area, though, is best known for agates including fingerprint agate near Enoch.

The Southern Utah Rock Club

497 N. 100 W
Cedar City, UT 84721

37°41.213' N 113°03.876' W

<http://www.southernutahrockclub.org/>

The gracious and generous Lynn Dalton well represents this club's membership. SURC's lapidary shop is in Cedar City, club meetings alternate between St. George and Cedar City. Join if at all contemplating Utah rockhounding. Fellow club members may welcome a traveling rockhound, possibly showing places to collect.

Cedar Rock & Bead Shop

718 W 400 N #4
Cedar City, UT 84721
435-275-4445

37°41.090' N 113°04.381' W

Rocks, minerals, and beads.

<http://cedarrockshop.com>

Kane County (Kanab)

“Kane County lies along the Utah-Arizona border. The rocks that occur here are almost all Mesozoic sedimentary rocks and are likely to yield fossils, agate, and petrified wood. Kane County is best known for the occurrence of septarian nodules which are hollow and lined with calcite crystals.”⁵

Joe's Rock Shop

425 E 100th N or HWY 89@100 N
P.O. Box 116
Orderville, UT 84758

⁵ Ibid. 94

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

435-648-2737

37°16.671' N 112°37.818' W

<https://www.facebook.com/joesrockshoputah/>

<http://stores.ebay.com/rocksrusUTAH>

Family run since at least 1952, specializing in digging, cutting, and polishing septarian nodules, petrified wood and more. Rough and finished stones of all types. Custom rock cutting done. Septarian nodules are limestone rocks filled with calcite and aragonite. Decorative patterns are revealed when cut open. Some show crystals from the outside. Orderville is the most famous locality for these uncommon stones. The owners provide local rockhounding directions when asked. They also ship by mail and are closed in the winter.

The Orderville Mine Rock Shop

US-89

Orderville, UT 84758

37°16.316' N 112°38.970' W

Open when visited but the owner may be contemplating a sale.

<http://ordervillemine.tripod.com>

Fisher's Rock Shop and Jewelry

400 W State St

Orderville, UT, 84758

435-648-2255

37°16.583' N 112°38.435' W

May be closing.

The Rock Stop

385 West State Street

Orderville, UT 84758

435-0648-2747

37°16.330' N 112°38.883' W

Rock shop in the form of a rock. Really. It cannot be missed when going through Orderville. This author guarantees that. Wide variety of material. They ship.

<http://therockstoputah.com/index.html>

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

A “glamping” campground with Yurts was operating across US-89 from Joe’s Rock Shop when I visited. This area is picturesque and somewhat close to Zion. Maynard Dixon’s home and a museum to him is further down the road in Mt. Carmel. If you don’t know who Maynard Dixon is, I weep for you.

<https://www.thunderbirdfoundation.com/information/visit/tours/>

Western Hills

288 West Center
Kanab, UT 8741
435-644-2390

37°02.916' N 112°32.085' W

Large size picture sandstone is a specialty, these wall art sizes amazing in beauty. Small fossil specimens. Nice figurines made from septarian nodules. Unusual sandstone coasters that absorb the water of a sweaty glass. The shop is right on 89 as one drives through Kanab.

<http://www.westernhills.com>

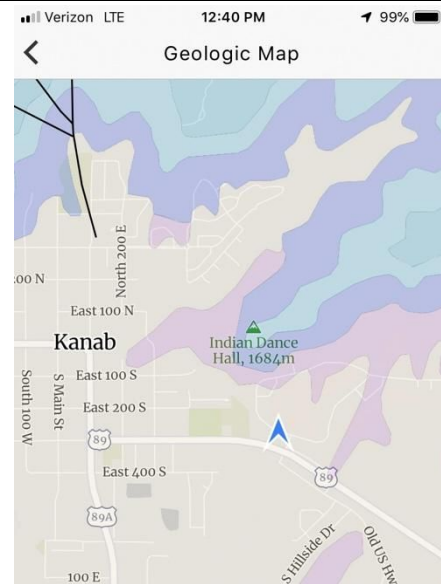
“ROCKD” App Demonstration in Kanab

BLM’s Visitor Center for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, sometimes called the Kanab Visitor Center, is located at 745 East Highway 89 south of Kanab.

Looking north from the BLM parking lot, a prominent peak of many layers rises up. Using the Macrostrat.org app called ROCKD, this point is identified as Indian Dance Hall at 1,684 meters. (Not all features are named.)

Clicking on the gray layer reveals alluvium as the ground floor. On the rock itself, the pink marked Chinle Formation is at the lowest level. Next higher comes the Moenave Formation. Highest of them all, and possibly out of view, the Kayenta Formation. Each formation’s identification comes with detailed explanations as to what rocks make them up, their age, and the potential for fossils.

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States



x, y, z -112.5150, 37.0463 | 1541m / 5056ft

Chinle Formation, upper part (Owl Rock, Petrified Rock, Monitor Butte Mbrs)

Age: Late Triassic (237 - 201.3 Ma)

Stratigraphic name: Chinle Formation

Description: Picturesque, varicolored and banded mudstone, claystone, sandstone, siltstone, limestone, and conglomerate; generally forms a steep slope; prone to landsliding that commonly involves the overlying Dinosaur Canyon Member of the Moenave Formation; locally contains petrified wood and siliceous nodules; 130 to 240 m (425-800 ft) thick.

Reference: Doelling, H.H. (compiler), 2008, *Geologic map of the Kanab 30'x60' quadrangle*: Utah Geological Survey Miscellaneous.

Chinle Formation

Reference: Macrostrat.org

x, y, z -112.3080, 37.0607 | 1674m / 5492ft

Moenave Formation

Age: Late Triassic - Early Jurassic (237 - 174.1 Ma)

Stratigraphic name: Moenave Formation

Description: Generally red-orange to brown sandstone, siltstone, and shale; sandstone is mostly fine grained and commonly forms ledges and cliffs; generally divisible into two or three members (not mapped separately): in descending order – Springdale Sandstone Member, Whitmore Point Member, and Dinosaur Canyon Member. At the time source mapping was done, the Springdale was a member of the Moenave Formation; it was recently reassigned to the Kayenta Formation (see discussion and references in Biek and Hylland, 2007); the Springdale Sandstone generally forms cliffs and with the main body of the Kayenta Formation forms the Vermilion Cliffs of the Grand Staircase. In the west part of the quadrangle, the Whitmore Point Member forms a slope or a recess beneath the Springdale Sandstone and commonly

San Juan (Monticello)

San Juan County in Utah's southeastern corner has a variety of materials. Wilson says the Abajo Mountains and part of the La Sal Mountains have igneous rocks but sedimentary rocks predominate in the county. Uranium mineralization occurs as well as copper deposits.

Wilson recommended these areas many years ago: Northeast of La Sal Junction (agate), Chicken Corner Trail Area (marine fossils), Red House Cliffs (agate and algal balls), and the Joe Wilson Wash (agate).⁶

Manti-La Sal National Forest

USFS Monticello Ranger District

496 East Central
PO Box 820
Monticello, UT 84535
435-587-2041

37°52.353' N 109°21.111' W

National Forest spanning 1.2 million acres. Lightly claimed at last look of MyLandMatters.org. Might be worthwhile exploring.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mantilasal/home>

Washington County (St. George)

BLM Arizona Strip Office
345 E Riverside Dr.
St. George, UT 84790
435-688-3200

37°04.986' N 113°34.611' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/arizona-strip-district-office>

Listed under Arizona. They may have Utah maps.

⁶ Ibid. 114-115

Places to Visit or Collect in the Southwestern United States

Saint George Dinosaur Discovery Site at Johnson Farm

2180 E Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790
435-574-3466

37°06.091' N 113°32.090' W

The Saint George Dinosaur Discovery site (SGDS) is must stop for rockhounds, amateur geologists, dinosaur enthusiasts, and kids of all ages. It is a place to look, study, and in some cases touch dinosaur tracks and fossils. At SGDS you can see in an hour what might take a paleontologist a lifetime to discover. Good ripple mark displays, movement of ancient water left in stone. Many Southwest desert washes have ripple marks and one should be able to recognize them. Excellent geology room with many representative rocks of the area.

<https://utahdinosaurs.com>

I have a somewhat dated but extensive article at my personal site on the Discovery Site. Map and photos:

<https://thomasfarleyblog.com/sample-article-track-stars/>

Silver Reef Museum

Silver Reef, UT (townsite)
1903 Wells Fargo Road
Leeds, UT 84746

37°15.196' N 113°22.006' W

<http://www.silverreefutah.org/>

Detailed driving directions at their website. 18 miles north of St. George near Leeds, UT.

This somewhat preserved townsite was only one of two locations in the world where silver was found in sandstone. Early miners had trouble getting investors because no one believed the occurrence could exist. Steve Voynick described the area and its mining in his June, 2015 Rock&Gem Magazine article “Silver Reef, Utah.” The area is also noted for carnotite, a radioactive mineral, as well as copper. Private land all around. No collecting but great picture taking possibilities, especially when the townsite is open.

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Reading and Resources

By Thomas Farley: <https://southwestrockhounding.com/sw-travel-list/>

Wilson, James. *A Collector's Guide to Rock, Mineral & Fossil Localities of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Utah Geological Survey, 1995) Free online but best in hardcopy.

Johnson, Robert. *Nevada-Utah Gem Atlas* (Susanville, California: Cy Johnson & Sons, 1978) 42-43

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