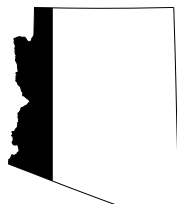


# Western Arizona



Arizona may not be on the ocean but it does have a 'West Coast.' At least that's what wily marketers have dubbed the 1000-mile stretch of Colorado River that forms the state's boundary with California. After emerging from the Grand Canyon, the river gets tamed by a series of megadams, most famously Hoover Dam. In winter, migratory flocks from frigid northern climes descend on this part of the state. The winged variety seeks out riverside wildlife refuges, while human 'snowbirds' fill dozens of RV parks. Over a million visitors each winter descend upon the sprawling gem shows and swap meets held in tiny Quartzsite.

Although summers are hellishly hot, the cool Colorado brings scores of water rats and boaters to Lake Havasu and Lake Mead. Away from the water, bighorn sheep and mountain lions roam over the rugged Kofa Refuge Wilderness, and rustic resurrected mining towns offer an entertaining taste of the Wild West. This part of Arizona also draws sightseers seeking classic road trip kicks on the longest original stretch of America's most iconic highway – Route 66.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### ■ Best Place to Time Travel

Go back in time at the reconstructed mining town of **Castle Dome** (p287), a fascinating bonanza of authenticity and historic detail.

### ■ Best Adventure

Drive the 130-mile-long **Camino del Diablo** (boxed text p288) through startlingly remote Sonoran desert southeast of Yuma, and understand why this is called the Devil's Highway!

### ■ Best People-Watching

Visit **Lake Havasu City** (p290) during spring break – it's like stepping into a surreal hip-hop music video.

### ■ Best Hit of Kitsch

You'll get lucky virtually anywhere along the original Route 66, especially in **Hackberry** (p295).

### ■ Best Unnatural Landscape

Boat on the largest reservoir in the US at **Lake Mead National Recreation Area** (p300), and take in the engineering wonder of the Hoover Dam while you're there.



## YUMA

pop 94,360 / elev 200ft

If the *Guinness World Records* is to be believed, you're more likely to catch a sunny day in Yuma than anywhere else on Earth. Little wonder that in winter some 70,000 snowbirds flock to the scores of RV parks around the city. In summer, Yuma is just about the hottest spot in the USA, with soul-melting temperatures that reach upwards of 120°F (49°C).

Spanish explorers reached this area, home to Quechan, Cocopah and Mohave Indians, around the year 1540, when Hernando de Alarcón sailed up the Colorado River from its mouth. In the following century, soldiers, merchants, missionaries and prospectors came through to cross the Colorado here while heading to or from California. By the 1850s, steamships offloaded supplies in Yuma for American military garrisons across the Southwest. Yuma is best known for its prison, a notorious hellhole that housed the baddest folks around between 1876 and 1909. Proudly embracing that legacy today, Yuma High sports teams are named the Criminals. And, of course, this was the place where the captured outlaw played by Russell Crowe (or Glenn Ford, if you prefer the original movie) was bound in the *3:10 to Yuma*.

At the time of writing, Yuma had one of the highest unemployment rates of any American city – just over 20%. Even so, the community has come together to help save its two major historical attractions – the jail and the old Quartermaster's Depot – from closing due to state budget cuts, while turning its waterfront along the Colorado into a series of hiking/biking trails and parks where kids and dogs splash in the river.

### Information

**Heritage library** (☎ 928-783-5415; www.yumalibrary.org; 350 3rd Ave; ☏ 10am-7pm Tue-Thu, 10am-5pm Fri & Sat; ☕) The closest branch to downtown and Yuma's historic sights has free wi-fi and occasional children's programs.

**Post office** (☎ 928-343-9416; 2222 S 4th Ave; ☏ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**Visitor center** (☎ 928-783-0071; www.visitum.com; 201 N 4th Ave; ☏ 9am-5pm) Conveniently attached to Quartermaster Depot State Park, this is also the place to buy replicas of historic maps.

**Yuma Regional Medical Center** (☎ 928-344-2000; www.yumaregional.org; 2400 South Ave A; ☏ 24hr)

## Sights

Yuma's main claim to fame is engagingly illuminated at the **Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park** (☎ 928-783-4771; www.pr.state.az.us; 1 Prison Hill Rd; adult/under 7yr/child \$5/free/\$3.50; ☏ 8am-5pm). Between 1876 and 1909, 3069 convicts were incarcerated atop a bluff overlooking the Colorado River for crimes ranging from

