

CITY HISTORY AND CITY FACTS

INFORMATIONAL GUIDE



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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HISTORY OF THE CITY

California City is located in a portion of the Mojave Desert that was occupied by Paiute Indians on a nomadic basis. In 1776, the first explorers came to the area under the leadership of Father Francisco Garces and the Conquistadores are believed to have conducted mining operations in the region using Paiute labor.

During a later stage in the exploration of the area, Rogers and Manly are believed to have passed through the area in late 1849 or early 1850 in their attempt to reach help for the stranded Death Valley 49'ers.

In the 1880's, the Twenty Mule Team Trail was created to carry borax ore from Harmony Borax Works in Death Valley to the railhead in Mojave. The road from Randsburg to Mojave became an important local artery for mines opening in the Randsburg/Johannesburg area. The portion of the Twenty Mule Team Trail located in what is now the southern portion of the City is designated as a National Historic Trail.

At the turn of the century, sheep farming began at the Conklin Ranch, located in the present day central portion of the City. Later, generally unsuccessful agricultural operation, which included alfalfa and cotton production, occurred.

In 1958, private land development activities began when a group of developers started buying land in what is now the eastern portion of the City and two farms in the western portion. During the 1960's, promotional efforts resulted in the sale of home sites to individuals throughout the United States.

Community planning commissioned at the time, envisioned a revolutionary new city concept and design that would discourage single family tract development, control architectural quality, and incorporate a vast area of natural desert and farmland open space, into a new type of living environment. The economic base of the City was predicated on continuous land sales and development activities, resulting in the employment of a significant portion of the City's population by the land developer.

On December 8, 1965, the City was incorporated with a population of 617 persons and a City Council-Manager form of government.

CITY FACTS

- The City's current population is 14,365, as of January 1 2008, as reported by the State of California Department of Finance.
- Vicinity location: The City is located in the Mojave Desert in eastern Kern County. The City is located approximately 60 miles to the southeast of the Metropolitan Bakersfield area, approximately 35 miles north of Lancaster, and approximately 65 miles northwest of Victorville. The City is approximately one mile to the north of Edwards Air Force Base and 7 miles to the east of the community of Mojave and the Mojave Airport.
- City boundaries totals 130,200 acres (203.4375 square miles), more than 51,000 privately owned lots. The third largest City in the state **in land mass**. Thirty-fourth largest City in the nation **in land mass**.
- The City's annual rainfall of 7- 10 inches, low humidity and clean air.
- The City's weather provides 360 days of sunshine a year.
- The City's elevation is 2,400 feet.
- City coordinates in decimal, latitude 35.161119, longitude -117.873033

Public Schools

- Robert P. Ulrich (RPU) Elementary K-3rd
- Hacienda Elementary School 4th-6th
- California City Middle School 7th-8th
- California City High School 9th-12th

Major Employers

- Correctional Corporation of America in the northeastern portion of the City.

- Edwards Air Force Base located four miles to the southeast of the City boundaries.
- Rio Tinto Mine (formerly U.S. Borax) is in the nearby community of Boron, fifteen miles to the east of the City.
- Hyundai/Kia Automotive Test Facility.
- Honda Automotive Test Facility located 12 miles north of California City.

Businesses, Services, Facilities, Organizations

- Recreational motocross, motorcycle and off highway vehicles (OHV).
- Tierra del Sol Championship Golf Course
- Par 3 Central Park Golf Course
- Fishing in Central Park
- Complete City Recreation Program for Children
- City Operated Swimming Pool
- Paddle-boating in Central Park
- Central Park, Sports Fields and Picnic Area
- Balsitis Park, Sports Fields and Picnic Area
- Borax Bill Park and Picnic Area
- Silver Saddle Ranch and Club
- Senior Citizen Organizations and Facility
- Desert Jade Senior Housing
- American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
- Little League and AYSO Soccer
- Chamber of Commerce
- Medical Clinics and Dental Offices
- Veterinary Pet Clinic
- City Police Department
- Preschool and Day Care Facilities
- City Fire Department and Paramedics
- 24-hour Ambulance Service
- County Library
- City Airport - Complete Aviation and Recreation
- Dial-A-Ride - On-call Public Transportation
- Regional Transit Service
- Restaurant Facilities
- Beauty and Barber Shops
- Shopping Facilities
- Vehicle and Tire Repair Shops
- Twenty Churches
- The Closest City to Edwards Air Force Base

- Smog-Free Air and Minimal Traffic
- Affordable Housing and Rentals

U.S. BLM Desert Tortoise Preserve

The City is surrounded by undeveloped desert, including a 25,000-acre Desert Tortoise Preserve administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), located along a portion of the City's northeastern border **outside** the City's jurisdiction. The City is bounded by an unincorporated area of Kern County to the north, east, south, and west.

Desert Wildlife

Wildlife species which inhabit the Mojave Desert and the areas around the City are associated with those found in the Lower Sonoran Life Zone, a zone characterized by rolling desert plains, dry sinks, low levels of precipitation and sparse, drought-resistant vegetation.

Species include: the coyote (*Canis latrans*), a black-tailed hare (*Lepus californicus*); roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*); white-tailed antelope ground squirrel, (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*); **Mohave ground squirrel (*Citellus mojavenis*) which is listed as Threatened by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and as a candidate species (Category 2) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) listed as endangered by USFWS and threatened by CDFG; burrowing owl (*Speotyto cunicularia hypugaea*) is protected by international treaty under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 and is a species of concern by both agencies; sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes*); desert whiptail lizard (*Cnemidophorus tessellatus*); mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*); Gambel's quail (*Lophortyx gambeli*); turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*); and numerous birds of prey, songbirds, and varieties of rodents.**

Desert Vegetation

The native flora of the region is dominated by the Mojave Creosote bush scrub plant community which occurs throughout the Mojave Desert at elevations ranging from 2,300 to about 4,500 feet above sea level.

Mojave Creosote bush scrub (*Larrea divaricata*) generally has an understory of hop sage (*Grayia*

spinosa), bladder sage (*Franseria dumosa*), or black brush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*), with an interspersed of various perennial bunch grasses such as desert needle grass (*Aristida californica*) and annual grasses, including cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*).

During the spring months, depending on the amount of precipitation received during the November-March/April period, few to numerous species of annual forbs are present in the understory.

During wet years, a carpet of wildflowers will exist for a period of a few days to several weeks, depending upon the frequency and amounts of rainfall which occur during the spring season, such as, the desert candles (*Caulanthus Inflatus*).

In dry years, there is little or no evidence of these annual plants, because the seeds lack adequate moisture for germination.

Common forbs that are present throughout the region include popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys arizonicus*), Mojave aster (*Aster abatus*), poor shepard's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), and fiddleneck (*Amsinckia Tessellata*).

In addition, although not considered to be a dominant species, the Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) can be found in scattered locations throughout the region.

Desert Cymopterus (*Cymopterus deserticola* Brandegee) is a perennial herb in the carrot family (*Apiaceae*). It is also known as the desert spring parsley.

The desert cymopterus has a very distinctive spherical flower, with the appearance of a dark purple drumstick. The "ball" is composed of hundreds of tiny florets. The plant has a patchy, restricted distribution and most of the known plants occur on Edward's Air Force base, Southeast of California City. This plant is ranked by the California Native Plant Society as extremely rare. USFWS has been petitioned to list the Desert Cymopterus under the Endangered Species Act.