

# Living on the Edge

## Arizona's West Coast

Yuma, Parker and Lake Havasu City

On this trip, dispel the myth that the desert lacks water. The Colorado River is Arizona's border on the west. The river has made agriculture and water recreation major attractions for the cities on the edge of the river, and this itinerary will stimulate your mind, your palate, and your adventurous side. Great for families, wildlife watchers, "geotravellers", and history buffs.

**DAY ONE** Three hours southwest of Phoenix, your trip begins in Yuma, where travelers have been crossing the Colorado River for hundreds of years. In fact the first European explorers visited this area 80 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock! Along the revitalized Yuma riverfront, you can visit the notorious Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park or tour the Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park to learn how supplies delivered by ship from the Sea of Cortez were distributed to Army forts throughout the Southwest. At Pivot Point see a 1907 Baldwin steam locomotive, hear a "ghost train" travel along the original railroad alignment and learn about the historic importance of the Yuma crossing. In Yuma's historic North End, visit the Sanguinetti House Museum, which showcases Yuma's pioneer days in one of downtown's oldest buildings, surrounded by rose gardens and an aviary. At Yuma Art Center you can browse world-class galleries or catch a show at the Historic Yuma Theatre. Or just wander through unique shops and stop for a drink or snack in a local restaurant. For a unique treat, don't miss the hot-dog-topped hamburger "Especial" at Lutes Casino. For dinner, enjoy a riverfront barbecue in Gateway Park. For some fun after hours, there's plenty of action at the Cocopah or Paradise Casinos. Overnight in Yuma.

**DAY TWO** The diverse challenges posed by Yuma's 234 holes of golf have earned high marks from *Golf Digest Magazine*, so take a morning to enjoy an unhurried round under the sunniest skies in the United States. Not a golfer? Take a side trip to the Imperial Sand Dunes, a famed film location since the days of Rudolph Valentino, or tour a desert date garden – don't miss the date shakes! Mexico is only minutes away if you want to venture south of the border to shop or sample local cuisine. At the Center of the World, you can get a unique view of the past by strolling through the Museum of History in Granite where more than 3,000 lineal feet of monuments are etched with the story of humanity. Or talk to the animals at Camel Farm, a working breeding farm with a number of exotic species, and go nuts over the yummy homemade treats at the Peanut Patch. Wondering why all those fields around Yuma are so lush and green? Get a close-up look at what makes Yuma the Nation's winter lettuce capital with a local agricultural expert. Or check out Yuma's other "green scene" with a trip to the Yuma East Wetlands, an innovative habitat restoration project that's one of the largest on the Colorado River. Among the nearly 400 species of birds that live in or migrate through the Yuma area, you can see egrets, great blue herons, black-necked stilts and Yuma clapper rails among nearly 500 acres of restored freshwater marsh and native cottonwood and willow trees.

For an even better look at “the Nile of America,” you can canoe down the Colorado by day or in the moonlight. Overnight in Yuma.

**DAY THREE** Drive north on US 95 (:30) to the Heritage Center at the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground. This unique museum preserves and shares the history of this U.S. Army testing facility – including General George S. Patton’s use of lands in the area for his Desert Training Center during World War II. Then it’s on to Fisher’s Landing at Martinez Lake (:30) for a jet boat ride with Yuma River Tours. Enjoy a narrated trip upriver through Imperial National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), stopping to see an old miner’s cabin, Native American petroglyphs and wildlife that may include big-horned sheep, wild horse, and burros. Afterward, continue north toward Parker (1:45). Tour the Colorado River Indian Tribal Museum for a look at the Native American history of the river. For military history buffs, stop at the Poston Memorial Monument, a 30 foot tall column, erected by the tribe in memory of the Colorado River War Relocation Center where 17,000 Japanese descendants were interned during WWII. If it’s the weekend, head into the Buckskin Mountains to find the Nellie E Saloon, a solar powered “watering hole” in an old mining camp. Wet your whistle before sunset, though, as it closes early. Do you feel lucky this evening? Try your luck at Blue Water Resort and Casino. Overnight in Parker.

**DAY FOUR** Drive north to Lake Havasu City, home of the London Bridge (:45). Have a relaxing lunch at a lakeside restaurant with a view of the bridge. This afternoon, grab your sunscreen and get in the water for a great view of the London Bridge and many photo opportunities. You can rent just about any type of watercraft imaginable – pontoon boats, wave runners, ski boats, kayaks, etc. Parasail or take an air chair or wakeboard lesson. Anyway you get around, be sure to spot all 15 of the 1/3 scale replicas of lighthouses from around the US. Or take a narrated scenic and historic trip up the Colorado River with Bluewater Jet Boat Tours. For dinner, relax and have a meal with a view of the lake as the sun goes down. Take a night Ghost Tour across London Bridge and learn of all its history. Overnight in Lake Havasu.

**DAY FIVE** After a good night’s sleep, get up with the birds and take in their view of the lake and surrounding desert in a hot air balloon or seaplane ride. Or golf with a view from the course at one of Havasu’s championship or executive courses. This afternoon, take an off-road Safari Tour. See stunning desert views, the Mohave Mountains and the desert at its best. By now you have earned a brew and another view. You’ll never forget an Arizona sunset over the water.