

San Diego Region Antique Automobile Club of America

Old Hwy 80 Tour

With Desert View Tower and Jacumba Resort

September 28, 2019



Old Hwy 80 Tour

Route 66 gets all the attention, but right here in our backyard is a highway that has a real old time feel, is significant to the history of the area and is perfect for a leisurely Saturday drive. There are spectacular vistas, major changes in terrain ranging from pine forests to high desert, and the Desert View Tower, which is unlike anything you'll see on Route 66.

Hwy 80, stretching from Savannah GA to San Diego, was one of the first transcontinental highways that was recognized as a numbered route by the U. S. Bureau of Public Roads in 1927. Colonel Ed Fletcher (Fletcher Hills) was a major proponent in developing this eastern route to the city and helped fund the plank road through the Imperial County sand dunes. Much of the original paved road in eastern San Diego County remains intact with only small portions under the newer I-8 freeway.

We will start our tour in the town of Alpine, right next to Hwy 80, so that we can avoid the problem of keeping a group together through traffic. From there we will go through Willows, past the Viejas casino, Descanso, Guatay and then a stop in Pine Valley. In the town of Boulevard there will be a stop at the Wisteria Candy Cottage, famous for chocolate turtles, truffles, fudge and lots of other goodies. From there we'll go through Bankhead Springs over the original 16 foot wide roadway from 1933 and on through Jacumba, where Hollywood stars such as Marlene Dietrich and Clark Gable once came to enjoy the hot springs and relax. The Desert View Tower is just a few more miles up the road. True to its' name, the Tower has vistas clear to the Salton Sea, a quirky souvenir shop and some fun rock sculptures.

After the Desert View Tower we will have lunch at Jacumba Hot Springs Spa and Resort. Then you may like to have a massage, a dip in one of the pools or return to San Diego, either by freeway for some different views or by the old route.

From Alpine to Desert View Tower is about 50 miles, with some gentle curves and no major grades. The intent is to travel at speeds appropriate for our older cars. There is not much traffic on this route anymore so we should be able to stay together, that's what a tour is for.

The meeting point will be at the shopping center near Willows Road, right by a Starbucks and a McDonalds. There will be a driver's meeting at **8:45** am, then leaving promptly at 9:00. Be there early if you want to get coffee or breakfast before. The address is 2963 Alpine Blvd, Alpine CA 91901, most easily reached from I-8 East to the Willows exit, then a right turn to head back west for about a mile

Be sure to gas up before arrival, there aren't many stations along the way.

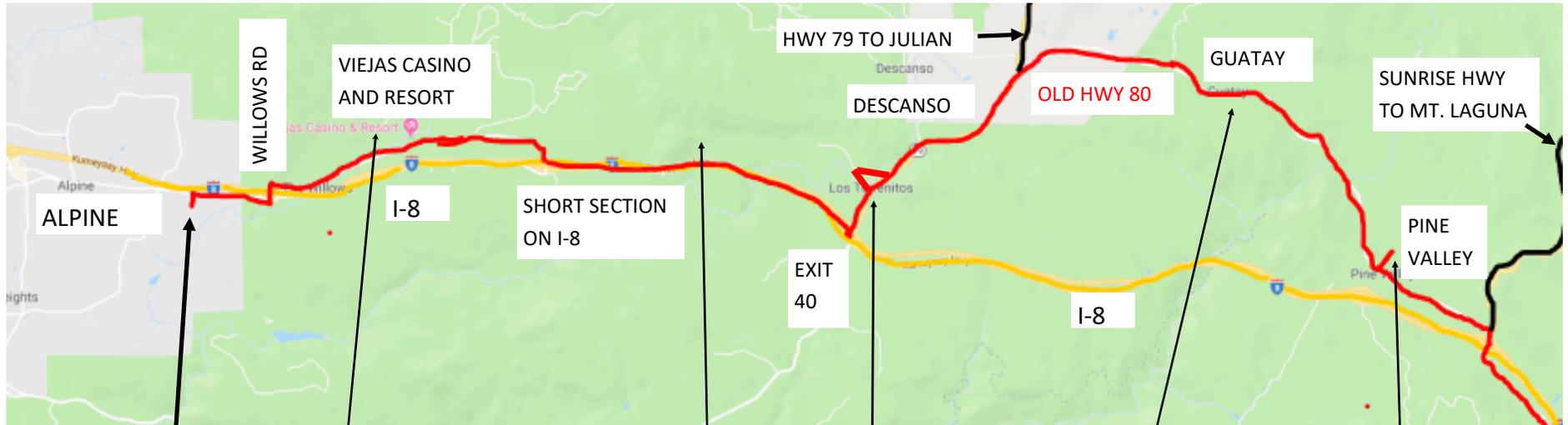
The cars will be organized with the slower vehicles in the front so that we can all keep together better.

If on the route you need to stop for any reason, call or text Mark at **541-517-1393** and we will pull over as soon as safe.

Please note that cell phone service may not be available along the entire route.

For questions contact Mark Richards: 541-517-1393 or richardsconsulting@yahoo.com

Old Hwy 80 Tour



Starting Point:

Parking lot between Starbucks, McDonalds and Albertsons. 2963 Alpine Blvd., Alpine CA

In the early days, Alpine was famous for beekeeping and honey production. John Harbison had over 2000 hives and is credited with making California the leading honey producing state in the nation

The Viejas Indian Reservation includes a beautiful valley between the hills with water and grassland. In 1776 reportedly a group of Indian men left the San Diego Mission and troops were sent after them. In this valley the troops had no luck finding them, but did come across a village with only old women in it. They called the area Valle de las Viejas (or valley of old women in English).

Look for parts of the Old Hwy 80 on the north hillside here. Interstate 8 was constructed in the 1960s and was built over the old road in this area.

There was not only one old Hwy 80 but several routes. Here is the Los Terrintos Bridge dating from 1917. We will cross it then double back to cross the Sweetwater River on a bridge dating from 1951.



MP 2.3 Guatay
EL 4000

This small hamlet was once a stage stop on the San Antonio to San Diego Stage Line.

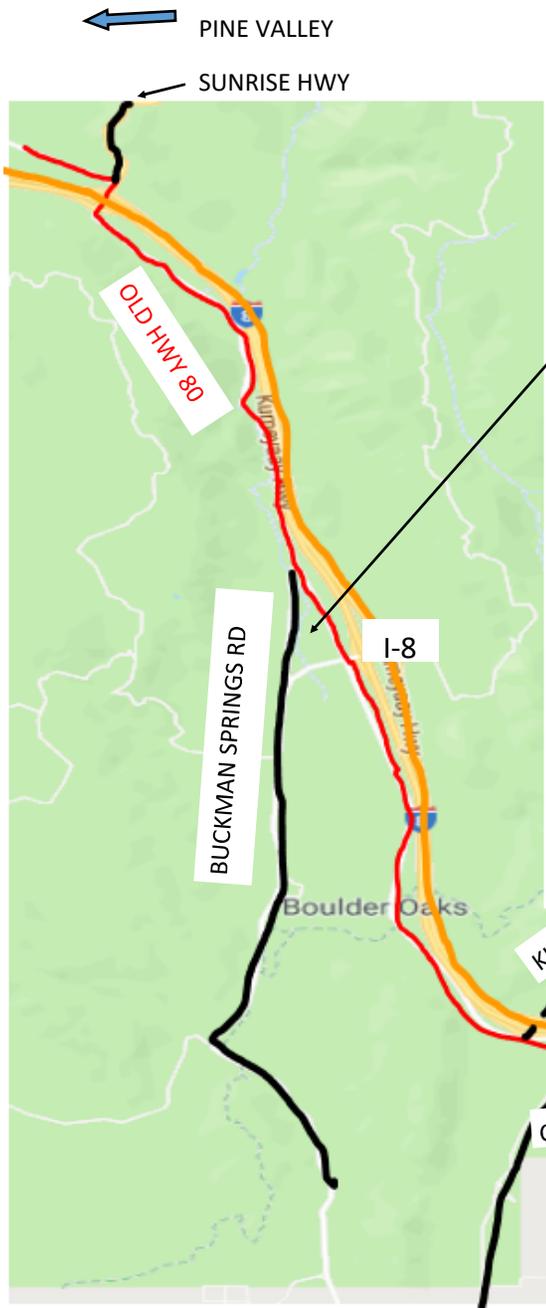
Of note is Tryn's Gallery and wooden spoon shop on the left. There are handmade spoons and spreaders for just about anything you can imagine. You'll have to come back on your own for this.

Don't miss Guatay Country Store.(left side). It's the kind of place locals hang out on the porch and trade stories.

We will stop for a short bathroom break at the County Park just before Pine Valley.

Pine Valley was originally settled in 1869 by Captain William S. Emery, a Scottish stagecoach drover for the Butterfield Stage Lines. He called it Pine Valley for the Jeffrey Pine forests in the area, a valuable lumber commodity as San Diego grew. His 12 year old son Charles found some gold which led to a number of successful mines in the area to the north, including the Stonewall Mine and the Treasury Mine.

Old Hwy 80 Tour



← PINE VALLEY
SUNRISE HWY

MP 10 Buckman Springs

Amos Buckman built a water bottling plant in the 1880's based on the slightly fizzy, reddish tinged natural mineral water spring here. You'll see the graffiti covered concrete building on the right where the business was based. The unique old glass bottles from here are valuable, to some people.

The construction of the new interstate highway ruined the spring and what you see is all that is left.



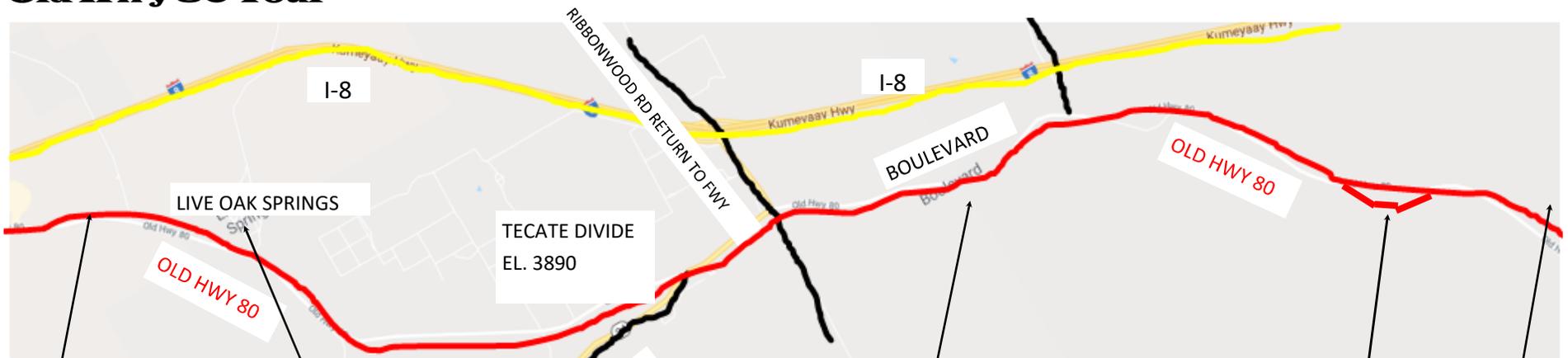
Not a lot going on with this stretch of road. But it is nice countryside with some big old oak trees and grasslands.

Keep your eyes open for the hidden cell tower

BORDER PATROL STATION

GOLDEN ACORN CASINO

Old Hwy 80 Tour



MP 23.7 on right
Stop in at "VINTAGE PARTS REPAIR" for all your old car needs. Be sure to call before coming out to make sure they are open.

Live Oak Springs was originally developed as a resort area with a distinctive A-frame store and cabins. The Interstate Highway led to the demise of this operation but still a number of people live in a little community here.

MP 25 Tecate Divide
Waters to the west of the divide flow to the Pacific Ocean and to the east to Imperial County.

MP 26.7
Wisteria Candy Cottage
Time to stop and stretch your legs and maybe pick up a few sweets. Its all good but the fudge and chocolate turtles are recommended. The store, which once was Boulevard's one room schoolhouse, has been hand-dipping chocolates since 1921.

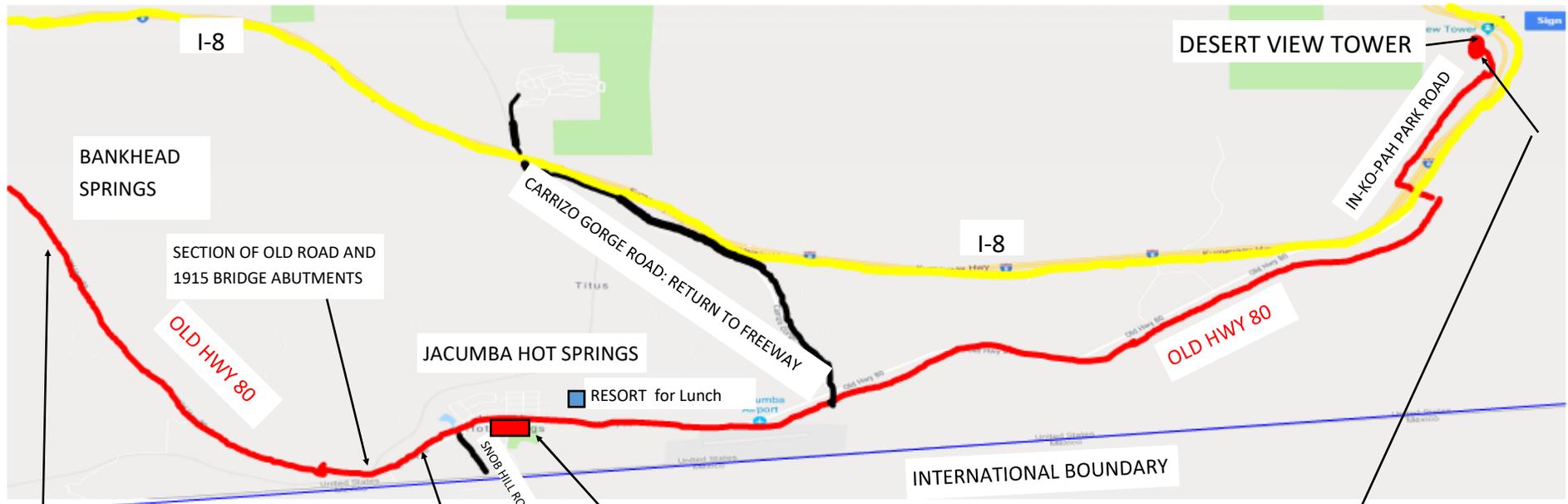
Here is a portion of the old original concrete road dating from the brass era. Can you imagine passing a truck on a road this narrow?

MP 31.1
Don't miss the old tow truck on the left at Jacumba Garage and Towing

Southwest of here, out Hwy 94 is Campo, with a lot of interesting, historic sites. There is the Motor Transport Museum, the site of a former Italian POW camp and the site of the famous Gaskill Brothers Stone Store Shootout. We'll save that for another tour, with a meal at the Barret Junction Café.



Old Hwy 80 Tour



MP 29.9

Bankhead Springs was a more peaceful alternative to vacationing in bustling Jacumba back in the day. Senator John H. Bankhead built a hotel here (left side, still standing) and cabins around the area. After this resort was no longer functioning the cabins gained notoriety as places where the construction workers for the freeway could be entertained by ladies.

One day the woman that owned the hotel came up missing. Investigating officers found the hotel totally unlocked, the rooms and beds made up and the dining room set for dinner. The county put locks the doors and left it until the property tax fund ran out. The mystery is unsolved to this day.

MP 34.4

On the right is the closed Jacumba School with the structure of the old one room stone school-house near the road. Now local students are bussed to Campo.

MP 34.7 Hotel Vaughn Ruins

Nothing remains of Bert Vaughn's famous old Hotel Vaughn (alternatively Hotel Jacumba) except the lobby fireplace chimney. It was destroyed by arson in 1983. In its heyday it was a place that Hollywood greats like Marlene Dietrich and Clark Gable would come to enjoy the hot springs and relax. To left side of the road are the arches of the old bathhouse building and an auto court.

The population of Jacumba at one time was over 5000 persons and there was anticipation that a major border crossing would be created in the area.



Hotel Vaughn



Imperial Avenue, Jacumba Hot Springs, Calif.

Desert View Tower

The Tower has long been a landmark for travelers on US 80. This 4 story structure was built by Bert Vaughn in 1922 to honor the pioneers that crossed the desert.. Today it houses a kind of museum of local Americana and a curio shop with much more than postcards. The stairway to the top of the tower yields a stunning view of the desert, the mountains and the remains of the old highway climbing the grade to the east.

To the west of the tower are a number of rock sculptures, created in 1933 by W. T. Ratcliff, an out of work engineer. There are a variety of whimsical animals carved from and painted on the native granite rocks.

Old Hwy 80 Tour

After our visit to The Desert View Tower we will return to Jacumba Hot Springs Spa and Resort for lunch.

Maybe you were wondering about the establishment that we passed before coming into The Desert View Tower. That's **Coyotes Flying Saucer Repair**. Conveniently located near the easily identified tower, it is just the place if your spacecraft needs a little work to be able to get home.



If someone is looking for a project car, In-Ko-Pa Machinery has several to choose from. Bring a trailer.



Lunch at the Jacumba Hot Springs Resort should be a treat. The menu includes specialties with a regional influences such as Santa Fe chicken salad, Jacumba Chili, Border Patrol Burger, Cemita de Pierna (pulled pork sandwich) and a wide variety of other lunch fare. Iced tea or sodas should be welcome after our long drive.

If interested, you can partake of the spa part of the resort. Relax in the internationally renowned mineral springs or schedule a massage. Bring a swimsuit because contrary to common notion, this spa is not a clothing optional facility.

I hope that you have enjoyed our tour and seen some parts old the Hwy 80 that you haven't before. I think that this old road is perfect for our old cars and a little nostalgia. Sometimes I think of my old car as a time machine of sorts, when its running right and with the rhythm of an old road I don't even need to reminisce.

Thanks for coming,

Mark Richards