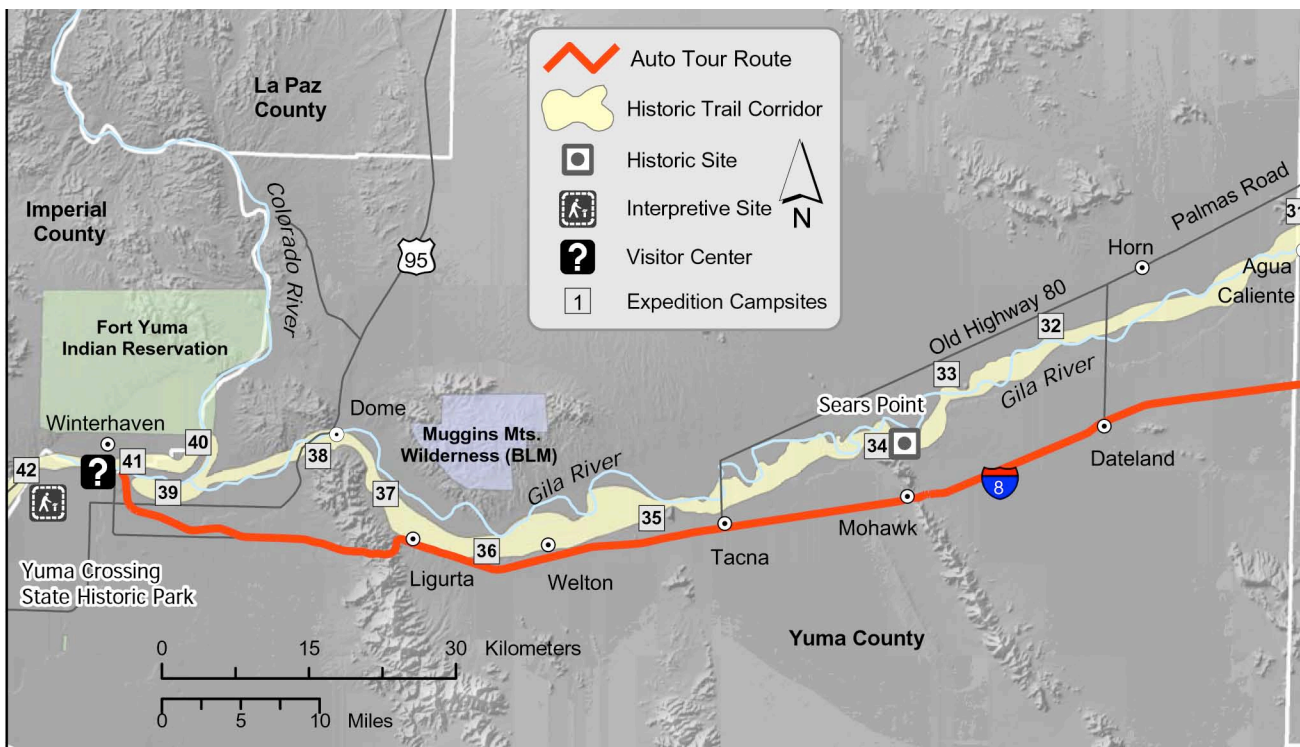


Yuma County – Down the Gila River to the Colorado Crossing





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Railroad Bridge looking north towards the mission.  
Photo: Ron Ory



Colorado River near Yuma.  
Photo: NPS

Long before Anza, the corridor along the Gila and Colorado rivers was a cross-roads where trails converged. It is still an important crossroad today.

## Driving Directions for Auto Route

From Maricopa County, travel west on I-8 through Mohawk, Wellton, Ligurta, and past US federal highway 95 near the city of Yuma. From I-8, take the Yuma/Winterhaven/4th Ave. exit and go south on 4th Ave. for 1/2 mile to the Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park. Travelers can see an interpretive plaque there and learn more about the Anza Trail in the area. Past Yuma, the historic route dips into Baja California, Mexico, and then turns north through the California desert to Imperial County. The auto route continues west on I-8 past Winterhaven to CA 98.

## Hiking/Biking Ideas

Check with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding visits to Sears Point (near Camp #34) and Antelope Hill (near Camp #35). There are hikes at the Muggins Mountains Wilderness north of Ligurta and Camp #37. One can also check with the Wellton–Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District regarding several trails along the dirt road adjacent to the Mohawk–Wellton Canal.



Petroglyphs near  
Sears Point. Photo: NPS

## Desert Water

Because of the life-giving waters of the Gila and Colorado Rivers, the American Indians along these rivers were known for their agriculture. On November 28, 1775 Anza writes, "...Indeed, they (Quechan) invited all members of the expedition to eat, giving them in abundance beans, calabashes, maize, wheat and other grains which are used by them, and so many watermelons that we estimated that there must have been more than three thousand... we all had more than we could use." The river tribes are still known for their agriculture. Today, the Colorado River supplies the irrigation for over 200,000 acres of cropland including lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, cantaloupe, watermelon, wheat and other crops.

## About Your Visit to Yuma County

Past *Agua Caliente*, the expedition continued southwest along the Gila River. At Cerro de San Pasqual (Camp #34), the expedition had their second birth. They crossed the Gila again near the Colorado river, and crossed the latter without serious incident with the help of the Yuma people and their chief, Salvador Palma. Father Garcés was carried over on the shoulders of three Yumas, two at his head and one at his feet, lying stretched out face up.

### Sites of Interest

#### A. Cerro de San Pasqual, Sears Point and Expedition Camps #32-#34

Before making camp at Cerro de San Pasqual (#34) November 18, 1775, they crossed the Gila again. It was at this camp that the expedition had their second birth since leaving Tubac, a boy named Diego Pasqual Gutiérrez. They rested there until the 22nd to let the mother and child recover. In the meantime, Carlos, a leader of the Cocomaricopa, arrived with a few of his tribesmen to travel with Anza to Yuma. The exact position of some of the camps along the river is uncertain because it has varied in its course over time. Today, the Sears Point Archaeological Area is situated above the flood plain of the river, and is a *petroglyph* site protected and managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

#### B. Antelope Hill and Expedition Camp #35

Font called the site Cerro de Santa Cecilia del *Metate*, naming it for the *grinding stones* made by the Indians. It was here that an expectant mother in pain was given medicine to protect her from miscarriage. A nearby site at Antelope Hill is located about six miles east of Wellton and is a prominent geologic feature beside the Gila River. The site, partially destroyed by quarrying, contains protected American Indian *petroglyphs* and a grinding stone quarry important to several tribes in the area. There is an interpretive kiosk at the base of the hill.

#### C. Along the Gila and Expedition Camps #36-#38

Camps #36 to #38 were on the south side of the Gila River. At the first camp, a native arrived telling that the leader of the Yuma was waiting to welcome the expedition. At Camp #38, at the Gila River Pass between the Laguna and the Gila Mountains, Anza writes, "Salvador Palma, captain of the Yumas, arrived at our camp with a following of more than thirty of his people, all unarmed. As soon as he saw me he began to embrace me and to give me the most emphatic signs of joy and satisfaction at my arrival, which he told me was shared by all his tribe and all those along the river who know me."

#### D. Yuma Crossing and Expedition Camps #39 - #41

Anza's Camp #39 was made after the expedition's third crossing of the Gila River. At night, they were entertained with *Yuma (Quechan)* and *Maricopa* singing and the beating of drums. With the help of *Palma* and his Yuma tribe, they safely crossed the Colorado River on November 30, 1775, and made Camp (#40) near its banks. They moved to Palma's village on December 3 (#41), where a shelter was being built for Fathers Garcés and Eixarch, who remained with several interpreters and servants (including Sebastián Tarabal). Prison Hill, part of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, looks out over Camps #39-#41. The Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park (201 N. 4th Ave.) displays an interpretive exhibit for the Anza Trail overlooking the Colorado River and interprets American period artifacts.

## Learning On The Trail in Yuma County

### Questions on the Trail

Graphic: Wade Cox



Members of the tribe help to protect the expedition's men, women and children during their Colorado River crossing on November 30, 1775. Question: What dangers and challenges did the colonists face on the crossing?

### On the CD: Yuman music and history

*Singing Braying Burros and Mule; Yuma Memorial song (flute)*

The Yuma people made a critical contribution to the founding of the Mission and Presidio of San Francisco in that they helped the colonists cross the Colorado River near its confluence with the Gila. The Yuma, who today prefer the name Quechan (pronounced Kwuh-tsan), had as their Chief Capitán Palma whose Quechan name was Olleycotequeibe. Palma, helped Anza on both expeditions, and the two men displayed a genuine respect and trust of one another. This was a critical aspect of Anza's route and plan. Upon the expedition's arrival, November 28, 1775, Quechan words such as *Queyé* (fellow citizens) were used, and when a mission site was discussed, the reply was *Ajót, ajót* (Good, good). At Palma's urging, Anza later took him to México City where he was baptized with several of his tribesmen in February of 1777. In 1780, Father Garcés established a mission near Palma's village. Father Font considered the Quechan somewhat simple people when he wrote, "...They liked to hear the mules bray, and especially some burros which came in the expedition, for before the other expedition they had never seen any of these animals." Unfortunately, others underestimated the Quechan, and the relationship established so carefully by Anza was not protected during subsequent visits by the Spanish. At the Mission *La Purísima Concepción* site today, a plaque reads, "...The Mission/Pueblo site was inadequately supported. The colonists ignored Indian rights, usurped the best lands and destroyed Indian crops. Completely frustrated and disappointed, the Quechan (Yumas) and their allies destroyed *Concepción* on July 17-19, 1781" [killing Fr. Garcés, Fernando de Rivera y Moncada and many others]. By preventing access to this strategic crossing, the Quechan effectively closed the trail for the rest of the Spanish colonial period and limited Spanish expansion into *Alta California* and beyond.

### Additional Resources

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Yuma Field Office –  
2555 E. Gila Ridge Rd.,  
Yuma, AZ 85365;  
tel.: 928-317-3200,  
web: [blm.gov/az/st/en.html](http://blm.gov/az/st/en.html)

Wellton–Mohawk  
Irrigation and Drainage  
District – 30570 Wellton–  
Mohawk Drive, Wellton,  
AZ 85356;  
tel.: 928-785-3351,  
web: [wellton-mohawk.org](http://wellton-mohawk.org)

Fort Yuma  
Quechan Nation –  
P.O. Box 1899  
Yuma, Arizona 85366  
tel.: 760-572-0213,  
web:  
[itcaonline.com/tribes\\_quechan.html](http://itcaonline.com/tribes_quechan.html)

Cocopah Indian  
Reservation –  
County 15th & Avenue G,  
Somerton AZ 85350;  
tel.: 928-627-1992,  
web: [cocopah.com](http://cocopah.com)

Yuma Territorial Prison  
State Park – 1 Prison Hill  
Rd., Yuma, Arizona  
85364;  
tel.: 928-783-4771,  
web: [azstateparks.com](http://azstateparks.com)

Remember that entering  
the U.S. or Mexico without  
using a port of entry is  
dangerous and illegal. For  
example, use the Port of  
Entry – Andrade, 235  
Andrade Road,  
Winterhaven, CA 92283;  
tel.: 760-572-0089,  
web: [cpb.gov](http://cpb.gov)