

## Welcome to History

In the earliest days of World War II, when this nation was thrust into the greatest global conflict the world has ever seen, the virtually uninhabited deserts of California and Arizona became a combat training ground for the young troops who would carry that early training on to victory in the sands of North Africa.

A site near Shavers Summit (now known as Chiriaco Summit) between Indio and Desert Center was selected as the headquarters of the Desert Training Center (DTC). This site, called Camp Young, was named after Lt. General S.B.M. Young, the Army's first Chief of Staff.

The DTC encompassed over 18,000 square miles of land from Pomona, CA to Phoenix, AZ south to the Mexican border and as far north as Boulder City Nevada. There were also 10 divisional camps established within this area receiving direction from Camp Young.

This made this the largest military training area in the world. Close to 1 million troops were trained here between 1942 and 1944.

Major General George S. Patton Jr. came to Camp Young as the first Commanding General of the DTC. His first orders were to select other areas within the desert that would be suitable for the large scale maneuvers necessary to prepare American soldiers for combat against the German Afrika Korps in the North African desert.

## Patton Commands

The General assumed control in March of 1942. During that period he personally scouted this desert area to establish the auxiliary camps that would provide specialized training. The General was offered executive lodging in Indio, but declined in favor of staying in a tent on post. He had a small plane that he personally flew to survey rural areas and to monitor training operations as they were carried out. He was in radio contact with ground commanders and often issued instructions while flying overhead. General Patton purchased radio equipment using his own funds which was utilized to play music and broadcast news events. Often, the General would break-in to these broadcasts to address the troops himself impromptu.

Patton commanded DTC a total of 6 months from March to August of 1942. After this he was dispatched to North Africa. The camps continued to operate under several different commanders. During this time, the name of the training center was changed to the California-Arizona Maneuver Area (CAMA). When the direction of the war shifted to the Allies' favor in 1944, the camps were closed.

## The Camps Today

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) now oversees the lands on which these camps lie. The agency is engaged in an effort to protect and interpret these sites.

At Camp Young, a private nonprofit organization has built the General George S. Patton Memorial Museum which opened in 1988. This facility provides information and displays legally collected artifacts related to the DTC. BLM supports this effort and provides technical assistance and general support. You can visit the museum located off Interstate 10 at Chiriaco Summit.

## Looking Toward the Future

In an effort to preserve and interpret the remaining features of these camps, BLM has prepared the Desert Training Center Interpretive Plan.

Protecting and maintaining the present condition of the sites, restoring many of the remaining features, and interpreting the camps are the primary goals of the plan.

All of the camp sites are considered *Historical Period Archaeological sites* eligible for the National Register. The use of metal detectors and the collection of artifacts by individuals are prohibited.

# World War II

## Desert Training

### Center

### California-Arizona

### Maneuver Area



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MAP 1



Map at left shows the area of the DTC-CAMA, the location of Headquarters at Camp Young, and the ten satellite training camps. This was the largest military training facility in the world.

**OHV Use**

Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) provide fun, entertainment, and discovery. However, many of the desert's most attractive and fragile resources can be destroyed if vehicle access is not properly controlled. Resources, cultural and natural, can be unintentionally damaged or destroyed by uncontrolled vehicle use. We all have the responsibility for the proper use of vehicles, so please remember to TREAD LIGHTLY on public and private lands. Stay on open routes of travel

**NO CROSS COUNTRY TRAVEL**

**BLM/CA/GI-2009-021+8300**

**Please Be Advised**

Military explosives can be found most anywhere in the desert. Large areas of the desert were and still are used for bombing ranges and maneuvers by the U.S. Armed Forces. There may be unexploded devices that can cause serious bodily injury or death if handled. Report any such devices to the Federal Interagency Communications Center toll free at (888) 233-6518 or call 911.

The Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center borders the western edge of the Needles Field Office Area of responsibility. This is a live bombing range. Do NOT enter the bombing range!

**Desert Safety**

- Summer temperatures routinely exceed 110° Fahrenheit. Each year people are lost, injured, and sometimes die while visiting desert areas. Take precautions to prevent finding yourself in an emergency situation.
- Always tell someone your plans, or leave a visible note on the dash of your vehicle with your expected route, destination, and time of return. Stick to your itinerary.
- Carry plenty of water. Drink at least a gallon per day.
- Take food or snacks. In the heat, you may not feel hungry, but your body needs nourishment.
- Never go alone.
- Take a good map and compass.
- Carry a first aid kit, signal mirror, flashlight and matches.
- Take a CB radio or cellular phone.
- Wear sunscreen and sunglasses.

- Dress in light colored, loose fitting clothes. Long-sleeves, long pants, a hat, and sturdy shoes will help protect you from the sun, coarse volcanic material, and sharp, spiny vegetation.

- Bring a jacket with you, as evening temperatures may drop 30 degrees or more.

- Make sure your vehicle is in good working condition. Check your tires, spare tire, jack, lug wrench, and fluid levels. Always start with a full tank of gas and try not to let it fall below half a tank before filling up again.

- If you are stranded, stay with your vehicle. Don't panic. Your vehicle is easier to spot than a person walking. Lift your hood. Attempt to signal for help using a mirror or by using newspapers to make an X on the ground.

- Watch for snakes, spiders, and scorpions among the rocks.



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