

# VIEWPOINT

Bonnie D. Stone

Vote could kill tourism dollars

By voting to allow development around the Prime Desert Woodland, the Lancaster City Council shortsightedly voted to kill potential tourism.

The area is on the verge of attracting tourists to all the sites in the Antelope Valley. The annual Poppy Festival has a built-in audience. Once the shopping center is built on the land formerly used for excess parking, the city will have to find another place. Even more important is the fact that people who are attracted to the poppies would also be interested in seeing the unique Joshua trees and other native plants saved in the Prime Desert Woodland. By linking the two, tourists could be enticed to stay over and explore. If this park is allowed to die, so too dies the link with tourist dollars. Lancaster could play a pivotal role in planning for the future.

Too many travelers just pass through the Antelope Valley on their way to northern California or Nevada, never stopping, never aware of all the extraordinary places to explore within the region.

There's so much to see including the airplanes built, flown and tested; exotic animals such as tortoises, ostriches and endangered felines; the largest producer of wind energy in the world; the only poppy reserve in the state as well as other unique flora; sites of hundreds of movies shot on location; extraordinary deposits of minerals including the largest open pit mine in the state, and places to explore to learn about the early Native Americans including the largest concentration of petroglyphs in the western hemisphere.

To properly sell the area to tourists, it will take a coordinated effort of two counties and cities including Palmdale, Lancaster, Mojave, Boron and Ridgecrest.

An AEROSPACE TRAIL map, for example, is sorely needed. This self-guided map would include all the places to see and learn about airplanes built, tested and flown here. The map might include a listing of restaurants, coffee shops and motels. From Palmdale to Lancaster. Mojave, Boron and Ridgecrest, the trail would include:

**BLACKBIRD PARK** in Palmdale, on the corner of Avenue P and 25th Street East, holds the world's only display of a Lockheed SR-71 "Blackbird" alongside an A-12, a D-21 drone and a U-2 spy plane.

**PLANT 42 HERITAGE AIRPARK**, 2001 East Palmdale Boulevard between 20th Street East and 25th Street East on the north side of Avenue P, Palmdale, commemorates the myriad aircraft built at Plant 42. Displays include F-86,

F- F-100, F-104, T-38, F-105, A-4, A-7 and a scale model of the B-2 Stealth bomber.

B.J.'s CORNER, Avenue N and Sierra Highway, is a premier spot for close ups of aircraft as they take off and land on the main runway for Plant 42.

AEROSPACE WALK OF HONOR on Lancaster Boulevard between Sierra Highway and 10th Street West incorporates displays of some 65 granite markers saluting pilots honored for their "imagination, reason and skill."

APOLLO PARK, on Avenue G near 40th Street West, just east of Fox Field in Lancaster, features the Apollo 11 command module trainer on display.

THE MILESTONES OF FLIGHT AIR MUSEUM, sandwiched between Apollo Park and General William J. Fox Airfield, holds a display of airplanes including a German World War II observation airplane and home-builts including a Cessna 120, a C-97 and an F-102.

FOX FIELD is an excellent place to view the super tankers when they're fighting fires, take offs and landings of smaller aircraft, and to explore vintage, WWII aircraft when they visit.

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE not only hosts an annual air show open to the public but also bi-monthly tours that include the AIR FORCE FLIGHT TEST CENTER MUSEUM, which is a must see for all flight enthusiasts who want to learn more about the evolution of flight and flight testing at Edwards AFB, and the NASA DRYDEN FLIGHT RESEARCH FACILITY. Additionally, there is an annual Pancho Barnes Days in September.

MOJAVE AIRPORT is home to the National Test Pilot School, the nation's only civilian test pilot school, and Burt Rutan's Scaled Composites that developed the Voyager and SpaceShipOne. A visitor cannot tour those facilities but can arrange a tour of the BONEYARD, an impressive storage area for large commercial airplanes.

COLONEL VERNON P. SAXON JR. AEROSPACE MUSEUM in Boron includes Boeing and Lockheed Martin displays, history of Edwards, Air Force Flight Test Center, NASA Dryden and the Air Force Propulsion Directorate, a Pancho Barnes display.

The U.S. NAVAL MUSEUM OF ARMAMENT AND TECHNOLOGY in China Lake, Ridgecrest, features a major collection of tactical air weaponry including guided missiles from WWII to the present.

But there's so much more.

For those who want to experience animals up close, one brochure might include all that this region offers including the ostriches at the Indian Point Ostrich Ranch in Tehachapi, the desert tortoises found in the Desert Tortoise Natural Area in California City, The Exotic Feline Breeding Compound in Rosamond, the lamas at Pitchfork Ranch in Leona

Valley, and for adults only, the monthly tours of Tippy Hedren's Shambala preserve in Acton.

There could be separate flyers for the:

History buffs might want to learn more about the four distinct groups of Native Americans by touring the Antelope Valley Indian Museum (currently closed for earthquake retrofitting), spring and fall hikes to Tomo Kani and China Lake to view the largest collection of petroglyphs in the western hemisphere.

A movie map could direct movie goers to places where the films were made.

Engineering marvels could include the Tehachapi Loop, Wind Farm and Rio Tinto Minerals in Boron.

A listing of museums would include Antelope Valley Indian Museum, Edwards Air Force Flight Test Museum, Lancaster Museum, Maturango Museum, Milestone of Flight Museum, Mojave River Valley Museum, Randsburg Desert Museum, Route 66 Mother Road Museum, Tehachapi Museum, Twenty Mule Team Museum, Western America Railroad Museum, the U.S. Naval Museum of Armament and Technology and the Western Hotel Museum.

And of course, a self-guided geology map featuring places to see the mighty San Andreas Fault including the world's only drive through fault on the 14 freeway, Vasquez Rocks and the Devil's Punchbowl.

Bonnie D. Stone is the author of *San Andreas Ain't no Fault of Mine*, a guide to the Antelope Valley. Her Web site is [www.bonnedstone.com](http://www.bonnedstone.com)

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