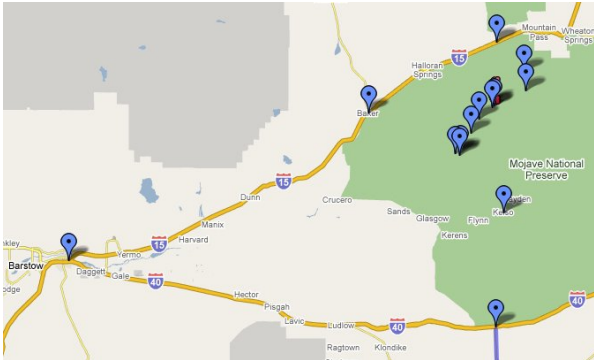


The Mojave Phone Booth revisited.



All you who like stories gather round for a true tale of the desert. In a time long before Huell Howser and long before the splitting of the 714 area code; in fact even before there were area codes there was, in the center of a triangle, between Baker and Cima, Ca on the north and Kelso, Ca to the south were the Aiken and Cima Cinder Mines. The product of the mines, volcanic cinders, have long been used as a building material with the cinders providing a smooth base for pipeline, road, rail and other uses in construction. Not far from the mines was a small mining camp home to the workers at the mines. Also dwelling there was a pretty glass and aluminum phone booth named Pacifica Bell; her number was BAKER 3-9969. Many say she was installed sometime around 1960 to provide for the miners however the little phone booth has been there since the establishment of the camp in 1948 when it was a just hand crank-tankerous telephone from the old days. All lived

happily along the Aiken Mine Road, the miners, the mines and Pacifica, all at home in the official(?) middle of nowhere latitude: 35° 17' 9.269" N longitude: 115° 41' 4.042" W (in what is now the Mojave National Preserve). The mines remained in operation until the 1990s and with the collapse of the Aiken and Cima mines the focus shifted to the Mountain Pass Rare Earth Mine not far away so all fell into disuse with only the little phone booth being left in the middle of nowhere occasionally ringing and occasionally being used to make calls. Poor Pacifica sat there knowing only the magnificent desolation of the desert while standing day and night alone in the stillness and only wanting to be heard.

In 1997 a couple of people, Simple-(ton) and Deuce, from Tempe, Az heard about the little phone booth, called and found the number busy and for want of adventure they created a mission: Find the phone booth and hang up the phone. So on Aug 27, 1997 Pacifica Bell, the Mojave Phone Booth (now 760-733-9969) alone for so long was found and thus started the push down the road that led to her eventual demise. The two city-zens made plans for their 15 minutes of fame as they photographed and documented Ms. Bell's home alone in the desert. Returning to Tempe via the Burning Man Festival they created a website and true to form a mindless cult following arose. People started to call Pacifica and more than a few took trips out the Aiken Mine Road to answer the lonely phone. Some spent several days there including one Rick Karr who camped by the booth for 32 days answering calls from someone who only identified himself as "Sergeant Zeno from the Pentagon." The phone company made more than a few trips to repair Pacifica as well so that after a few years the little booth started to become a "nuisance attraction"; glass broken out and strewn around, her doors torn off and covered in graffiti; a sad look at history gone by. Meaning that now there is another area destroyed by the visitors it was meant for and who left their marks. The National Park Service asked that the phone booth be removed. The execution was carried out on May 17, 2000. Officially, this was done to halt the negative environmental impact of visitors although the cult weenies of the booth have accused the preserve managers of simply being party poopers. I'm not sure how the locals felt though I would imagine they were saddened by the Pacifica Bell's passing. The cult also placed a plaque at the site and that too was removed by the park service. So passed Pacifica Bell the Mojave Phone Booth now part of our history even making her way into our culture in an award winning film that bears her name. Pacifica Bell; BAKER 3-9969, was a hidden treasure found; then taken from us all for the want of 15 minutes of fame. The moral of this story is to do as mummy says, "Keep your hands in your pockets". That way no one or no thing stands to get hurt.

[Google map with directions to the Mojave Phone Booth site](#)

FROM

Barstow: I-40 east to Kelbaker road turn north through historic Kelso, Ca. Go Northeast on Kelbaker Rd.

Palm Springs: Hwy-62 to 29 Palms, then up the Amboy Rd to Historic Route 66 the turn right to Kelbaker Rd to Kelso Ca.

Kelso: ~15 miles Aiken Mine Rd. Turn right.

Las Vegas: I60 miles west on I-15 to Cima Rd. Turn left (south) 7 miles to Deer Spring Rd. Turn right on Aiken Mine Rd. ~16 miles from the I-15 exit.

4WD and AWD SUVs recommended.



The Adventure

From the cities of Palm Springs, Twentynine Palms or Barstow, Ca and Las Vegas, Nv the trip to the Mojave Phone Booth is a true all day off-road adventure to see an empty space in the middle of nowhere. There are lots of ways to get into trouble going out the old dirt road; soft sand and buried rocks to tear tires. Do not depend on the rangers or anyone else to find you if you get stuck out there. Don't count on cell phone service either as coverage is very spotty. Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back. Although this is a day trip and there are motels in Baker and Ludlow, CA be sure to take proper supplies for an overnight trip. It's a 12-15 mile walk

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Bonnie Bandanna
asks
What's in your pack?

out if something goes wrong so make sure everything is perfect before you leave; people, vehicles and supplies. [Click here for a Google map showing routes and directions.](#)

Don't forget to visit [Desert Bandanna.Com](#) for more on what to take with you. Remember: **you are now on your own.** So enjoy the outdoor adventure, *safely*. After all it is your *responsibility*.

The name Pacifica Bell is fictional and represents the Pacific Bell phone company, her number was real. ~
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We don't want you going out unprepared. Here is a list of 25 items you should have with you along with a few hand tools. Remember to check the air pressure in the spare tire before you go on any trip.

1. Water; if you've gone into the desert without at least a case of water you just made a very BIG mistake. Turn back when it's half gone.
2. Knives and other sharpies; A wise sage once told me, "Inferior knives produce superior injuries". Carry more than one. You can always lose or break one. In order of preference:
3. Signaling devices like whistles, fires, flags, signaling mirrors and signal/smoke flares and the high-tech signals including cell phones and FRS/GMRS family radios.
4. Fire making stuff; can you make a fire with one match? For that matter, can you make a fire?
5. Compass/GPS and map of the area, don't get lost. Print and take the google map with you.
6. Food the only caveat here are food items like power bars, nuts, and dried fruit need water to digest properly.
7. First Aid Kit and to it add SPF-30 sun block, a 6" hemostat, surgical and crash regular scissors, disposable scalpel or x-acto knife and a small bottle of hydrogen peroxide to clean wounds. Have at least a 3 day supply of any medications you might need as well.
8. The venerable poncho a large good quality poncho provides shelter from sun and rain.
9. Solar Blankets used alone or with your ponchos solar blankets are invaluable. Daytime rig it overhead r on top of your shelter to reflect the suns radiation. At night wrap set it up behind you to reflect the fires heat or wrap yourself up nice and cozy.
10. 25-50 feet of light cord or nylon line.
11. [A Desert Bandanna Nature and Survival Guide - the 11th Essential.](#)
12. Over 50 facts and tips on the outdoors and survival printed on a 26"x26 piece of muslin for years of use. There are more than 100 uses for a bandanna.
13. Gloves, work gloves are ok.
14. Flashlight, light sticks, plus extra batteries.
15. Sunglasses and extra prescription glasses
16. Small camp stove and mess kit.
17. A towel, regular size. You should always know where your towel is. - Douglas Adams -
18. Camp tools, shovel, hand ax, folding or wire saw.
19. Tube or dome tent and 4 plastic tent stakes.
20. Mosquito netting
21. Personal Hygiene, TP, toothbrush, camper's soap.
22. Ziplock and trash bags
23. 4ft surgical tubing for slingshots.
24. Blankets or sleeping bag with ground pad.
25. 8'x8' plastic or oil cloth tarp.

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