

*“Nestled in the rocks and  
buttes of the Mojave  
Desert on Piute Butte is a  
precious gem that  
contributes immeasurably  
to the mosaic beauty of the  
desert, the Antelope Valley  
Indian Museum.”*

*—Shirley Harriman,  
Antelope Valley Woman Magazine*



## Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

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**[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)**

## **Antelope Valley Indian Museum**

**State Historic Park**

**43779 15th Street West**

**Lancaster, CA 93534-4754**

**(661) 946-3055**

# Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park



**S**tanding snugly among the majestic granite outcroppings of Piute Butte, the Antelope Valley Indian Museum incorporates the bedrock into its interior and exterior design. The folk art construction of this one-of-a-kind building—listed on the National Register of Historic Places—is fashioned after a Swiss chalet, inside of which is incorporated an entire natural formation. Located in the Mojave Desert at the northeastern corner of Los Angeles County, the museum displays artifacts of the American Indian groups of three major cultural regions—the Southwest, the Great Basin and California.

## **PARK HISTORY**

### **American Indian Peoples**

At the end of the Ice Age, lakes, springs and a variety of natural food resources provided the native people with all they needed to survive and thrive here. For at least 4,000 years, they traded with each other along vast routes that extended from Mexico to Northern California, and from the coast to the Southwest.

Artifacts discovered by archaeologists have been dated as far back as 11,000 years, though little is known of these ancient cultures. Later artifacts attest to the everyday lives of these people over time. Grinding tools reveal how they processed plants for food, while spear and arrow points provide insight into their hunting methods. Perhaps as much as 2,000 years ago speakers of the Shoshonean language group—the Kitanemuk, Tataviam, Kawaiisu and Serrano cultures—became the

valley's inhabitants. In the late 1700s, their lives were drastically changed by the arrival of the Spanish and other Europeans. Franciscan priest Father Francisco Garces passed among the native people in 1776 on a trip through the Mojave Desert, keeping a diary that has been invaluable in determining what groups lived here. Contact with Europeans and American immigrants increased gradually until the Indians found themselves being “resettled” in the mission system.

In 1853 Fort Tejon was established just west of the valley, ostensibly to protect the Indians. Though many Indians deserted the fort over the years, the U.S. government continued relocating them to reservations well into the 1900s.

### **THE COLLECTORS**

Howard Arden Edwards, a Hollywood set painter and self-taught artist, so admired the grandeur of the Antelope Valley that he decided to make Piute Butte his home. In 1928 he homesteaded 160 acres, and with his wife and

teenage son started construction on their home. The home included an exhibit area that Edwards called his Antelope Valley Indian Research Museum to display his large collection of prehistoric and ethnographic American Indian artifacts.

In 1939 Grace Wilcox Oliver, a student of anthropology, bought the Edwards home. She added her own collections, converted the living quarters to exhibit rooms, and opened it in the early 1940s as the Antelope Valley Indian Museum. Ms. Oliver operated the museum for more than three decades, continuing to add to the collection over time. In 1979, with the support of local groups and individuals, the State of California purchased the museum. Grace Oliver donated the artifacts at that time.

California State Parks designated the museum as one of its regional Indian museums in the mid-1980s. The collection of prehistoric, historic and contemporary artifacts comes from various geographic regions: The Southwest region is represented in the Kachina Hall and Southwest Room; the upstairs California Hall houses artifacts from California Indian cultures. The Great Basin and Antelope Valley rooms were once the kitchen and dinette.

### **THE COLLECTIONS**

The museum displays and stores thousands of artifacts, many of them rare or one-of-a-kind items:

**Pottery**—A variety of storage, cooking, utility and decorative types originate from the Southwestern and southern California cultures.



*The Antelope Valley Indian Museum*

**Baskets**—Twined and coiled baskets, bowls, cradleboards, hats and footwear from all three cultural regions were used for storage, carrying, winnowing and cooking, as well as for decorative and ceremonial purposes.

**Food preparation tools**—Bowls and cooking vessels were made of pottery, stone and basketry. Stone utensils include mortars and pestles for grinding acorns and seeds.

**Hunting/fishing equipment**—Spears, darts and arrows tipped with flaked stone points were the Indians' primary hunting tools. Fishhooks of bone and shell are also on exhibit.

**Work tools**—Knives, anvils, drills, scrapers, axes and arrow shaft straighteners were made of flaked and ground stone.

**Clothing**—Clothing items include a Hopi men's wearing robe (circa 1860), and fragments of 2,500-year-old sea grass garments made by California coastal and Channel Islands groups.

**Textiles**—The museum displays a number of Navajo rugs, mats, saddle blankets and a chief's wearing blanket.

**Adornment**—Jewelry made by various cultural groups is on display.

**Paintings**—The museum displays several tempera paintings by Navajo and Zuni artists, as well as murals, paintings, drawings and design motifs by Howard Arden Edwards.



**Kachina Dolls**—Originating from the Hopi Tribe, authentic Kachina dolls are carved from cottonwood root and decorated with fabric, paint, feathers, beads and yarn. The dolls are an important element in Hopi (and some other Puebloan) religious expressions.

In the Antelope Valley Indian Museum, exhibit styles of former owners blend with contemporary exhibits. They illustrate 75 years and several eras of evolution and change in the way American Indian materials are displayed and interpreted in museums such as this one.

*The museum has made every attempt to provide reliable identification and descriptions of the artifacts, but cannot guarantee complete accuracy. If errors are found, please contact the curator at (661) 946-3055.*

### GIFT SHOP

The Gift Shop features authentic handcrafted American Indian jewelry, kachina dolls and pottery. Publications on American Indian history and crafts are also available.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Because of the park's terrain, there are currently no (wheelchair) accessible activities here. However, there are some accessible features, such as parking, restrooms, and routes of travel, that meet some current accessibility guidelines.

Photo by Charles H. Brown



*Self-guided nature trail*

Accessibility is continually improving. For current accessibility details call the park, or visit [access.parks.ca.gov](http://access.parks.ca.gov).

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Pets are not permitted in the museum or on the nature trail; horses are not permitted in the park.
- No food, drink or smoking inside the museum.
- Call the park to make advance arrangements for guided tours (led on Tuesdays and Thursdays only, for groups of ten or more).

- Guided tours for third- and fourth-grade classes (led on Tuesdays and Thursdays only) are free and require advance arrangements. Adult tours are also available.
- The park is open from mid-September to mid-June, only on weekends.
- Admission is \$2.00 for adults; no charge for children 16 and younger.
- The park is closed when the museum closes.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve, Avenue I, 15 miles west of Lancaster, (661) 724-1180/942-0662
- Saddleback Butte State Park, Avenue J, 17 miles east of Lancaster, (661) 942-0662

*This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For information contact:  
Friends of the Antelope Valley Indian Museum  
P.O. Box 1171 • Lancaster, CA 93534 • (661) 946-3055*

# Antelope Valley Indian Museum

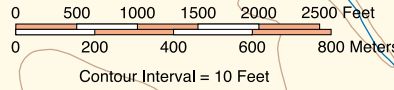
## State Historic Park

to Lancaster

Ave K

### Legend

- |  |                    |  |              |
|--|--------------------|--|--------------|
|  | Paved road         |  | Exhibits     |
|  | Graded road        |  | Nature Trail |
|  | Trail              |  | Parking      |
|  | Historic Buildings |  | Picnic Area  |
|  | Accessible Feature |  | Restrooms    |



Ave K-8

MOJAVE  
DESERT

**ANTELOPE VALLEY INDIAN MUSEUM STATE HISTORIC PARK**

3195ft  
974m

3037ft  
923m

PIUTE BUTTE

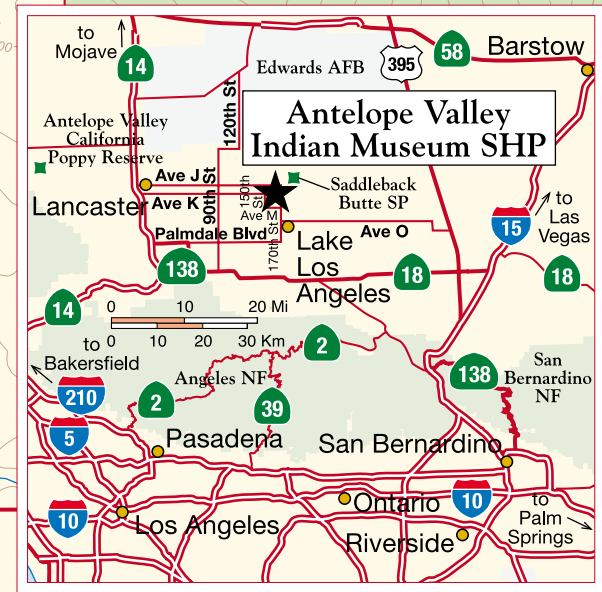
Museum

see detail map right

Ave M

Ave M

to Palmdale



SADDLEBACK BUTTE STATE PARK

