

Public Use of the Empire Ranch Headquarters & Las Cienegas National Conservation Area

For all general inquiries about Public Use contact:

BLM/Tucson Field Office, 12661 East Broadway, Tucson, AZ 85748-7208

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., M-F

Phone: (520) 258-7200; Fax: (520) 258-7238

Email: TFOWEB_AZ@blm.gov

BLM/Tucson Field Office webpage: http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/fo/tucson_field_office.html

Commonly Asked Questions

When is the Empire Ranch Headquarters open to visit?

The Empire Ranch Headquarters is located within Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (LCNCA). This is public property and is open to the public for self-guided touring on a daily basis, 365 days a year. There are no posted hours, however it is recommended that visitors visit during daylight hours, since the buildings and yards have no artificial lighting. Most of the doors in the Ranch House are unlocked and visitors may enter any unlocked door. Visitors are asked to close doors upon leaving to keep out rattlesnakes, skunks, bats, and other critters. Visitors are also cautioned to watch where they step, and leaving things as found, and unharmed. There are descriptive signs within individual rooms in the Ranch House. Background information is available in a Welcome Kiosk located in the Living Room of the Main Ranch House, and background information that can be downloaded from the Empire Ranch Foundation website, <http://empireranchfoundation.org/RanchInfo.htm>.

The Empire Ranch Foundation partners with the Bureau of Land Management's Tucson Field Office to help promote preservation and education at the Empire Ranch Headquarters and Las Cienegas National Conservation Area.

How do I get to the Empire Ranch?

Las Cienegas National Conservation Area is located 45 miles southeast of Tucson. From Tucson, drive south on Interstate 10 to scenic highway 83, exit 281. Head south on State Highway 83, between milepost 40 and 39, turn east into the LCNCA entrance, noted by the "Historic Empire Ranch" sign on the highway.

Are there organized tours of the Empire Ranch Headquarters?

There are no regularly scheduled tours of the Empire Ranch Headquarters, however there are occasional organized tours. Contact the Empire Ranch Foundation for more details at 888-364-2829. If you ask ERF for a special tour, you may need a Bureau of Land Management Special Recreation Permit (SRP). Please see "Do I need a Permit?" below.

Is the Empire Ranch Headquarters ADA accessible?

Some of the rooms at the Empire Ranch Headquarters are ADA & wheelchair accessible through the front breezeway entrance. The public restrooms in the parking area are ADA accessible.

Where can I obtain a map?

Maps are available at the BLM's Tucson Field Office, located at the east end of Broadway, 12661 E. Broadway, Tucson, AZ, 85748. Phone: (520) 258-7200, or by email, TFOWEB_AZ@blm.gov or online at:

<http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/az/images/cuenegas.Par.89522.File.dat/LasCienegasMap.pdf>

What are among the visitor activities?

Wildlife viewing, picnicking, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, historic site touring, hunting, photography and scenic drives. There are no picnic tables/chairs; visitors may bring their own.

Where can I hike?

If you call or visit the BLM/Tucson Field Office, 520-258-7200, they have maps available that can provide the information you need, including road and trail details. Hiking is allowed throughout LCNCA. There is a .5 mile hike through the Heritage Discovery Trail at Empire Ranch Headquarters. Most LCNCA back roads make good hiking trails. Oak Tree canyon just north of Headquarters connects to the Arizona Trail, three miles east on the Coronado National Forest.

Is horseback riding permitted?

Horseback riding is allowed throughout LCNCA, cross Cienega Creek and Empire Gulch at cement crossings. More information is available through Bureau of Land Management/Tucson Field Office, who manages these recreational uses. Contact the BLM/Tucson Field Office at (520) 258-7200, or by email, TFOWEB_AZ@blm.gov.

Are fires allowed?

Normally fires are allowed on the Las Cienegas NCA, but not within the Empire Ranch Headquarters area without special permission from BLM. However, due to the recent drought, a complete fire restriction order was issued May 16, 2011. Restrictions may be lifted after summer rains in mid-July.

When is hunting allowed? What can I hunt?

Arizona Game and Fish Department manage hunting. There are several types of hunts for deer, javelina and other animals. The Arizona Game and Fish determines all hunting seasons, and a hunting license is required. More information can be found: <http://www.azgfd.gov/>

Can I bring my dog? Does my dog have to be on a leash?

Yes, dogs are allowed, however it is advised to keep dogs on a leash. Be mindful that there is a catch-all law about creating a public nuisance or hazard if your dog interferes with other's enjoyment of the area. Dogs must be on a leash during Pronghorn Fawning season (April 1-June 30) in Pronghorn fawning areas.

Is there drinking water?

Yes there is drinking water in the water faucets at Empire Ranch Headquarters and at the Airstrip recreation group site.

Can I camp overnight? Are there RV hookups?

Overnight camping is allowed in designated camping areas or out on backcountry roads in dispersed sites. There are no RV hook ups.

Where can I drive?

All vehicles must remain on designated routes. Hazards include poisonous snakes, Africanized bees, and potential encounters with illegal users of public lands. The area can sometimes be a travel corridor for illegal immigrants traveling from Mexico. Visitors should report all suspected illegal activities to BLM or local law enforcement authorities. Stay safe by avoiding contact with persons exhibiting suspicious behavior or engaged in dangerous activities.

Can I bring my off-road vehicle?

Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) vehicles are allowed on roads only, not in washes or off-road (except for 49 wash road - a 4x4 wash route). High-speed dirt bikes are not recommended due to the low speed limits posted. The speed limit within LCNCA is 25 mph. All OHV users must follow the new the new OHV rules posted at: http://www.azgfd.gov/outdoor_recreation/ohvFAQ.shtml

Where can I find nearby camping or lodging?

Primitive camping is allowed and does not require a permit. Camping may not exceed 14 consecutive days. Visitors must camp away from cattle and wildlife water holes. Campers need to bring water and firewood. The nearest lodging is available in Sonoita, five miles south on Highway 83, and in Patagonia. Campfires are allowed, except during periods of extreme fire danger. There are restrooms just adjacent (north) of the Empire Ranch Headquarters, and at the "Airstrip Recreation Group Site".

Where are nearest location for food and supplies?

A gas station and a variety of restaurants and services are located in the town of Sonoita, AZ, seven miles south from the Highway 83 turnoff to Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, or three miles west of the southern entrance off of Highway 82.

Where are available First Aid or Emergency Services?

First aid is available at the Santa Cruz Sheriff's office in Sonoita or the Sonoita Elgin Fire Department, (520) 455-5854. The nearest hospitals are located in Sierra Vista, about 40 miles southeast or Tucson, approximately 50 miles northwest. The only Level 1 Trauma Center in Southern Arizona is UMC University Medical Center. Call 911 for all emergencies.

Do I need a permit?

Permits are not required to visit the national conservation area. However, commercial, competitive, and large organized group events require a Special Recreation Permit (SRP). Permits are generally required if the group number is over 29, or if the activity needs BLM oversight or will have an impact to public lands and people. Permits take time to process; apply for permits up to 180 days in advance of the event. Here is the general pre-application checklist to use Public Lands:

- Are you charging a fee?
- Do you expect to make money on the event or is the fee to cover expenses?
- Will there be a competition?
- Will you advertise?
- How many people do you expect to attend?
- Are you an organized group?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may need a permit from the BLM. Please review the "How To Apply" page on the BLM website:

http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/prog/recreation/recperm_how.html.

and contact BLM/Tucson Field Office, (520) 258-7200, or by email, TFOWEB_AZ@blm.gov.

Who do I call for a permit, or if I have specific questions?

Special Recreation Permits (SRP) are handled through the BLM/Tucson Field Office which has jurisdiction for this area. The representative for Las Cienegas National Conservation Area is Catie Fenn, BLM Outdoor Recreation Specialist, phone, (520) 258-7204, email, catie_fenn@blm.gov

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