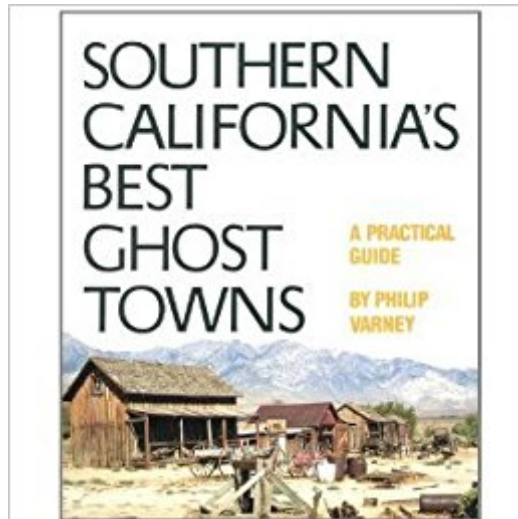




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Southern California's Best Ghost Towns: A Practical Guide



Synopsis

The ghost towns of Southern California-some dramatic and nearly intact, others devastated-are well worth visiting. Most are remnants of once-colorful mining towns, though there are also railroad towns, a World War II relocation center, a promoter's swindle, and a failed socialist colony. Some excellent attractions remain. One of the best-preserved stamp mills in the West is in Skidoo. Smelters, homes, stores, and the remarkable wooden American Hotel can be found in Cerro Gordo, which the author calls "California's best true ghost town." Seasoned back-roads traveler Philip Varney, who has visited nearly a hundred ghost towns in the area, provides a down-to-earth and helpful guide to more than sixty of the best in Southern California and nearby Inyo and Kern counties. He defines a ghost town as a town with a population markedly decreased from its peak, one whose initial reason for settlement no longer keeps people there. It can be completely deserted, have a resident or two, or retain genuine signs of vitality, but Varney has eliminated those towns he considers either too populated or too empty of significant remains. The sites are grouped in four chapters in Inyo County, Death Valley, the Mojave Desert and Kern River, and the regions surrounding Los Angeles and San Diego. Each chapter provides a map of the region, a ranking of sites as "major," "secondary," and "minor," information on road conditions, trip suggestions, and tips on the use of particular topographic maps for readers interested in more detailed exploration. Each entry includes directions to a town, a brief history of that town, and notes on its special points of interest. Current photographs provide a valuable record of the sometimes fragile sites. Southern California's Best Ghost Towns will be welcomed both by those who enjoy traveling off the beaten path and by those who enjoy the history of the American West. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Ghost town aficionados, Western history buffs, desert lovers, backroads wanderers--all will find Varney's guide interesting and useful. Over 50 sites are listed with readable histories, colorful descriptions, and detailed directions. The guide is arranged geographically in four sections from north (Inyo) to south (San Diego). Each section concludes with summary information, including topographic map references and road conditions. The enthusiasm with which Varney describes his topic is contagious. Readers will want to jump in their cars (four-wheel drive not needed) and go. Extremely readable and informative, and profusely illustrated with photos, maps, and drawings, this is recommended for all public libraries in Southern California and most major public libraries in the United States.- Thomas K. Fry, UCLA Libs.Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Philip Varney is the author of highly regarded books on the ghost towns of Arizona and New Mexico and a writer for Arizona Highways magazine. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Great book for anyone interested in ghost towns, yes the book is out of date but then again so are ghost towns.

This book is well written and compiled. If you are planning to visit some of the locations in this book though, I would suggest doing a web search for current information on the site as this book is a littled dated now, but the information is still valuable. The drawings in the book are good, I wish the pictures had been in colour though.

Its all black and white, some of it is a little out of date but its easy to read and refer to when out on the road. Along with the internet and my camper I managed to find most of the sites. Be careful! A lot of the roads to the Ghost towns are a bit dangerous!

I'm 67 years old, retired, and a Volunteer Docent (Guide) at a Western History Museum up here in the Sequoia National Forest. The information in this book helps me to be a better guide when discussing the local Ghost Towns. Thanks for the help!

Very informative, like the background stories on the ghost towns. Good directions on how to get to them, and the photos give a good idea on what to expect. Great book.

Great book

The book is a nice, but limited resource as it has been quite a few years since publication. Photos are B&W, but it is generally well written and has directions to the sties that are described.

The author visited the various ghost towns. He tells their stories, what's left and how to get there. The hardcover 1990 edition is lavish with photos and maps. The book itself is putting on some years. Though published twenty years ago (before the world wide web!), the research was done in the previous decade. So some of the information is a quarter century or more old. Eagle Mountain, for example, is no longer accessible, being fenced and gated according to Wikipedia. A modern work would probably include some of the Salton Sea towns. The drawings are not by the author but by James Davis and are exquisite. Why is a book about Southern California ghost towns published by the University of -- Oklahoma -- ? Doesn't the University of California have a press? Varney doesn't seem too old in a couple of the photos. I'm hoping he's working on an update. Apparently he published another book this year (2010, "Ghost Towns of the Mountain West") so there is hope he'll run out of material and come back to old stomping grounds for another look around.

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