Welcome to Barry M. Goldwater Range East. Enjoy your visit!

The Barry M. Goldwater Range is the third largest land-based military range in the U.S. Since its establishment in 1941, the BMGMR has served as a tactical air combat training complex of vital importance to national security. The land area of the range covers approximately 1.7 million acres in southwestern Arizona and is operated as two independent segments: Luke Air Force Base manages the eastern portion (BMGR East), and Marine Corps Air Station Yuma manages the western portion (BMGR West). The BMGMR complex also includes about 2.7 million acres, or 57,000 cubic miles, of restricted airspace. This airspace extends over most of Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The BMGMR is a large component of one of the largest and best-protected desert landscapes in the U.S. Portions of BMGMR are open for public recreation, but only under a permit system with rules necessary to ensure safety, prevent interference with military training, and protect natural and cultural resources. This map depicts the three areas of BMGMR East available for public recreation: Area B, Ajo Air Force Station, and Bender Spring. The visitor permit for BMGMR East is also valid for BMGMR West, Cabeza Prieta NWR and Area A of the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

Military Operations

The BMGMR is a training ground for warfare, complete with lethal dangers of a real battlefield. Targets in BMGMR East may be attacked by aircraft at any time, day or night, weekday or weekend. No warnings of attack, such as sirens or prior overflights, occur. Although these attacks are training exercises, the weapons are real. Furthermore, there is some risk of encountering unexploded ordnance. No location in BMGMR East should be assumed free of military hazards. Restrict your visits to the locations and times specified on your permit. Much of BMGMR East’s boundary is barred by locked gates and fences to prevent inadvertent entry. However, while you are on BMGMR you will see few gates, signs or other warnings to prevent you from entering unauthorized and dangerous areas.

Your Responsibilities

You are responsible for your own safety, for avoiding military assets and training, for protecting natural and cultural resources, and abiding by all BMGMR East Rules of Conduct. Always know your location and keep out of unauthorized areas. Ensure others are aware of your itinerary before you enter BMGMR. Failure to properly plan your visit and comply with regulation can lead to revocation of future access to BMGMR East, incurring fines or imprisonment, or may result in an arduous or even deadly ordeal.

Environmental Hazards

The remoteness that adds to the appeal of the BMGMR also adds to its danger. Depending on your location, you may be hours from vehicles and medical attention. There are no sources of safe drinking water at BMGMR. You must bring your own water. One to two gallons of water per day are required to maintain hydration for a person exposed to 90°F + temperatures; more is needed with physical exertion. Summer days can be extremely hot, with temperatures in BMGMR East often exceeding 120°F. Winter temperatures can drop well below freezing, particularly at higher elevations. Sunlight and hot desert winds can burn unprotected skin after only a few hours. Dangerous flash floods occur, primarily during the late June through September monsoon season. Neither camp in washes during threat of rain or attempt to cross flooded channels by vehicle or on foot. Stay alert for hazardous vegetation, such as cacti and acacia, and animals such as rattlesnakes, wasps, bees, ants, scorpions, and centipedes. When hiking, avoid wildflowers that may be protected species.

Resource Protection

The BMGMR landscape has been preserved to the greatest extent possible to facilitate the military training mission, in concert with protecting unique and sensitive natural and cultural resources. The Air Force relies on your commitment to protecting these resources during your visit. The relatively undisturbed character of BMGMR East is largely due to its status as a military training area. Livestock grazing, mining, and oil and gas exploration are incompatible with the safety constraints imposed by military use and are prohibited. The Sonoran Desert environment is extremely fragile, and is particularly sensitive to damage from vehicles. Because vehicles compact fragile soils and can remain visible for decades, only drive on roads designated as Open (see map) and do not park or camp more than 50’ from the roadside.

Natural Resources

The BMGMR contains some of the world’s most unique and well-preserved desert. Located in the Sonoran Desert, one of the hottest and driest deserts in North America, BMGMR is home to many species of plants and animals adapted for life in an arid environment. More than 400 species of plants have been identified at BMGMR, including the iconic Saguarocactus, as well as barrel, cholla, organ pipe, and prickly pear cacti, agave, ocotillo, creosote bush, burro sage, palo verde, mesquite, ironwood, cacti, and more. More than 60 species of birds, 250 birds, 5 amphibians, and 44 reptiles occur at BMGMR. During your visit, you may see Sonoran pronghorn, desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer, javelina, or mountain lion. The vast majority of the remaining U.S. habitat of the Sonoran pronghorn antelope, a federally-listed endangered species, is within the BMGMR and adjacent Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.

Protected Species

Several endangered species call BMGMR home. Acacia cactus occurs at BMGMR; collection or disturbance of this plant is a violation of federal and state laws. Native plants are also protected by AZ Department of Agriculture. Endangered Sonoran pronghorn were recently released in the Area B Visitor use area. If you observe pronghorn, stop your vehicle and allow them to move at least ½ mile from the roadway before proceeding. The Sonoran Desert tortoise occurs throughout the public use areas. The desert tortoise is an Arizona “Species of Concern,” and collection or removal of its habitats is illegal and for which a Federal Wildlife Permit (SUP) is required. Additional fire restrictions may be implemented.

Cultural History

Archaeologists have confirmed that people inhabited the present-day BMGMR over 13,000 years ago when the climate was colder and wetter and early hunters stalked mammoth and other now extinct animals. About 10,000 years ago the region began an 8,000 year transition to the Sonoran Desert we see today. Humans had to adapt to a changing environment and new food sources. New tools were developed to grind seeds, harvest agave and cholla fruit, and hunt deer, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn. Farmers appeared 2,000 years ago and settled at villages where they grew corn, beans, squash and other crops by means of runoff agriculture. Traces of prehistoric human settlements, sites and trails are scattered across the landscape. Historically, the Tohono O’odham (Papago/Desert People) and Hia Cedi o’odham (Sandam People) lived, and continue to live, in the area. By the early 1790s, the region was an important route for Spanish explorers and missionaries, and later, for American pioneers bound for California. Beginning in the 1880s, ranching and mining became more prevalent. The first military use of the area is documented by the 1941 auxiliary air fields where pilots trained for WWII.

Rules of Conduct. These rules of conduct are for your safety!

Visitors must comply with all applicable federal and Arizona laws including but not limited to the Endangered Species Act, Antiquities Act, and Archaeological Resources Protection Act. Illegal or unauthorized activity may result in personal harm and injury, being escorted off BMGMR, revocation of future access to BMGMR East and neighboring lands, criminal or civil felony prosecution, fines, and/or imprisonment. You are free to visit BMGMR for recreation or exercise, but only under a permit system with rules necessary to ensure safety, prevent interference with military training, and protect natural and cultural resources. This map depicts the three areas of BMGMR East available for public recreation: Area B, Ajo Air Force Station, and Bender Spring. The visitor permit for BMGMR East is also valid for BMGMR West, Cabeza Prieta NWR and Area A of the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

Pack it in, pack it out! When leaving BMGMR, take all possessions with you.