

## YUMA COUNTY, ARIZONA

EST:1864



### History

Yuma's first settlers were the Native American Tribes whose descendants continue to occupy the Cocopah Reservation in Yuma County, and the nearby Quechan Reservation. Yuma's first recorded historic event was in 1540 when Spanish explorer Hernando de Alarcon became the first European to see the area of the City and County of Yuma. It was clear that Yuma was a great natural crossing of the Colorado River and an ideal location for a city.

In 1701, [Father Eusebio Francisco Kino](#) was the first person to recognize the Yuma Crossing as a gateway to California. About a hundred years later, Father Francisco Garces led Juan Bautista de Anza and his pioneering expedition to the Yuma Crossing in their search for a land route to California. Garces founded two missions at the Crossing in 1779, but was killed in the last major Indian uprising shortly after.

Kit Carson rediscovered the Yuma Crossing in the 1850's when Yuma became the major river crossing for California gold-seekers. From 1540 to 1854 Yuma was under Spanish and Mexican control. Through the Gadsden Purchase in 1854, Yuma became a territorial possession of the United States. Yuma County became one of the original four counties in the State of Arizona when it was created in 1864.

In these early years, the City of Yuma held several different names. From 1854 through 1858 Yuma was known as Colorado City. From 1858 to 1873 it was named Arizona City. Finally in 1873 the Territorial Legislature settled on Yuma. The County and City of Yuma's name is derived from the name of the areas original inhabitants—the Yumas. The Yumas consisted of the Indian tribes of the lower Colorado region: Quechan, Cocopah, and the Mohave tribes. These tribes were related because they are all members of the same linguistic group.

The County Seal reflects some of this Indian Heritage along with the Arizona sun, open desert landscape, the areas agriculture, historical sites, Colorado River, near-perfect flying conditions, and other aspects of Yuma County.



There are a few historic sites in Yuma County, most notably the Yuma Territorial Prison State Park and the Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Park. The Quartermaster Depot was used by the US Army to store supplies and distribute them as needed to Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Texas. There was a continuous supply of at least six months worth of clothes, food, ammunition, and other military goods at the Depot.

Yuma Ferry Crossing 1889



Ocean vessels went around the Baja Peninsula to Port Isabel near the mouth of the Colorado River. There, supplies were loaded and taken up the Colorado via river steamers to Yuma. From here, freight was shipped further upriver on steamers and by land with mule drawn freight wagons.

In 1877, the Southern Pacific Railroad expanded to Yuma and the Quartermaster Depot and Fort Yuma soon came to an end.

The Signal Corps established a weather station in Yuma in 1875 and the Army officially terminated the Supply Depot in 1883. The Signal Corps remained until 1891 when the United States Weather Service operated the Depot site until 1949.

Yuma 1886 (railroad bridge built in 1877)



The Yuma Territorial Prison State Park is also a part of Yuma County’s history. In July 1876, the first seven inmates stepped into the cells they had built themselves. During its thirty years of operation, 3,069 prisoners (including 29 women) inhabited the walls of the Territorial Prison. Inmates served sentences for crimes ranging from murder to polygamy. The most common crime was grand larceny.

Territorial Prison Guard Watchtower

Since pardons and paroles were easily obtained, many of the prisoners served only a portion of their sentences. There were one-hundred and eleven deaths at the prison—most were due to tuberculosis which was common at the time. Twenty-six people escaped while serving their sentence, but only two of them came from inside the prison walls. The others occurred during work duty and other activities outside of the prison. There were no capital punishment executions at the prison.



The Prison’s infamous reputation painted a grim picture of the treatment encountered by prisoners while inside. Perpetuating this notoriety were stories published about the prison. Most notably, *Three-ten to Yuma* by Elmore Leonard and its later film adaptations both titled *3:10 to Yuma*—one in 1957 and the other in 2007. In the 1961 western *The Comancheros*, John Wayne also mentions the Prison. However, despite this notoriety, historic evidence says the prison was run humanely. Punishments for inmates were the “Dark Cell” for misbehavior and ball-and-chain for those who attempted to escape.

The Territorial Prison was home to one of the first public libraries in the Arizona Territory. A fee was charged for visitors to tour the institution and proceeds went to purchasing new books. One of the earliest electrical generating plants was used to power the lights in the prison buildings as well as ventilate the cellblock.

By 1907 the Prison was overcrowded and there was no room for expansion on Prison Hill. Prisoners began construction of a new facility in Florence, Arizona and the prison closed on September 15, 1909.

From 1910 to 1914 the Yuma High School occupied the prison buildings. The football team was scheduled to play a favored-to-win football team in Phoenix. The Phoenix team dubbed the Yuma High School team “the criminals.” When Yuma unexpectedly won, Yuma adopted the nickname and mascot with pride and thereby earned the unique nickname “The Criminals.” This continues to be their mascot and team name to this day. Empty cells also served as a makeshift hotel for hobos riding the freights in the 1920s and as housing for families displaced by the Great Depression.



Prison Cells

## Yuma's Location

Yuma County is Arizona's southwest border county. To the west is the State of California and to the south is Mexico. The Colorado River forms the County's western border. Arizona's two largest cities, Phoenix and Tucson, are in the 2 counties immediately east of Yuma. From the City of Yuma, the drive to Phoenix is about 3 hours. The drive to Tucson is about 4 hours. San Diego and the Southern California beaches along the Pacific Ocean are a 3 to 4 hour drive.

Yuma County consists of approximately 5,522 square miles. Much of the area is open desert. The County's population is concentrated in the vicinity of the City of Yuma, which is located on the Colorado River and is about a 30 minute drive to Mexico.

## Climate

Yuma is one of the hottest cities of any kind in the United States. The average July high temperature is 107 degrees Fahrenheit compared to Death Valley's 115 degree July average high. The average high temperature in January is 69 degrees. The Guinness Book of World Records notes that Yuma is the sunniest place on earth. There are around 4,456 hours of possible daylight annually and Yuma is sunny for about 4,050 hours—a little more than 90% of the time. The moderate winter temperatures and abundance of year-round sunshine attract many winter-visitors.

## Population and Demographics

When compared to Arizona, Yuma County is small and rural. In 2010, Arizona's population was 6,392,017 and Yuma County's population was 195,751. The City of Yuma, Arizona's 11th largest city had 93,064, or 48% of the County population. When we look inside Yuma County we get a picture of a region with impressive growth in its population.

Yuma County grew 22.3% between 2000 and 2010

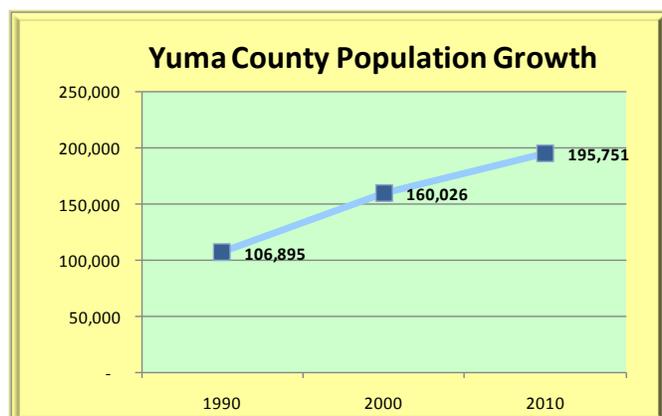
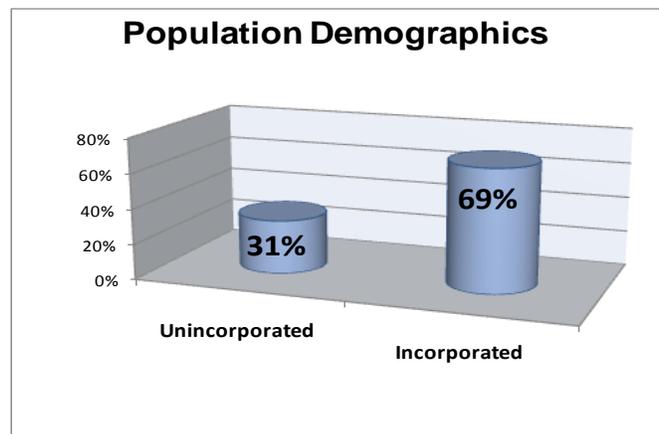
- The City of Yuma grew by 20.1%
- Somerton grew by 96.6%
- San Luis, on the U.S.-Mexico border, grew by 66.5%
- Wellton grew by 57.6%

Incorporated Population: 135,738,  
 Unincorporated Population: 60,013,  
 Total Population: 195,751.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census and Arizona Workforce Informer

Incorporated Cites and Towns within Yuma County*	Population
San Luis city	25,505
Somerton city	14,287
Wellton town	2,882
Yuma city	93,064

\* Source: US Census Bureau, 2010 Census & AZ Workforce Informer



## Household Size

Whereas the "typical" household in Yuma County averaged 2.93 persons in 2010, place-to-place differences are substantial. For example, the town of Wellton had only 2.36 persons per household, while the average household size in San Luis was almost twice as large (4.20 persons).

## Foreign-Born Population

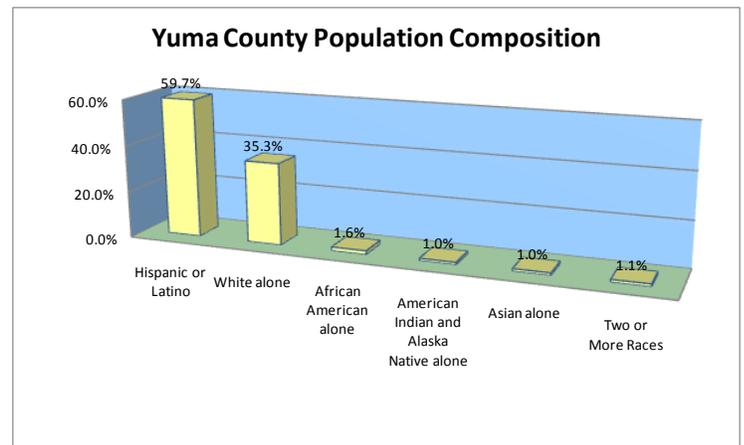
One out of every four Yuma County residents (25.0%) is foreign born. Statewide the foreign-born group is only approximately one out of every seven residents (14.7% of the State's population). Further, Yuma's foreign-born group is more likely to be long-term residents. About 77.1% of Yuma's foreign-born residents came to Yuma before 2000. Statewide there is more of a bias toward newcomers; 32.2% of the foreign-born entered the State after 2000.

## Household Incomes

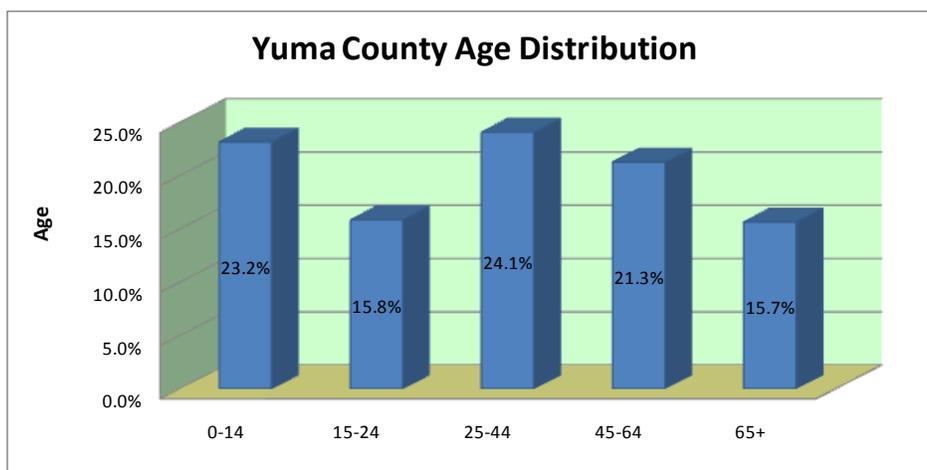
Household incomes throughout Yuma County tend to be relatively low compared to the statewide average. Statewide, 22.90% of all households have an income less than \$25,000. In Yuma County the figure is 31.0%. At the other end of the spectrum outcomes are similar. Statewide, 18.6% of all households have incomes of \$100,000 or more. In Yuma County the figure is 10.0%. The City of Yuma makes slightly more than the County as a whole with 12.1% of households in the \$100,000 plus income range. The percentages for the Foothills and San Luis are 9.4% and 1.9%, respectively.

## Ethnicity and Age Population

Yuma County is heavily Hispanic; 59.7% of its residents are Hispanic or Latino (the Arizona figure is almost one-half that of Yuma County at 29.6%). Non-Hispanic white residents represent 35.3% of the County's population. The sum of these two percentages is 95%, which means that there are relatively small numbers of Asians, African American, and other non-Hispanic ethnic groups in Yuma County.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census and Arizona Workforce Informer





## Economy & Workforce

Per Capita Income	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Yuma (MSA)	\$27,009	\$27,748	\$27,617	\$28,897	\$28,742
Arizona	\$34,185	\$35,675	\$36,788	\$36,723	\$37,895

Source: [www.bea.gov](http://www.bea.gov)

As you can see from the table above, per capita income in Yuma County is less than the State of Arizona as a whole—similar to the Household Income figures.

The chart on the right shows the average wage by major occupational group of which none is higher than their respective national averages.

Average Wage by Sector	2016
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	\$ 41.17
Management	\$ 37.16
Computer and Mathematical	\$ 32.79
Legal	\$ 34.88
Business and Financial	\$ 31.66
Architecture and Engineering	\$ 30.82
Life, Physical, and Social Science	\$ 29.03
Protective Service	\$ 23.12
Education, Training and Library	\$ 20.62
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	\$ 21.62
Community and Social Services	\$ 18.95
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$ 19.48
Construction & Extraction	\$ 17.97
Transportation & Material Moving	\$ 17.97
Production	\$ 15.23
Sales & Related	\$ 14.23
Office and Administrative Support	\$ 14.35
Healthcare Support	\$ 12.90
Personal Care and Service	\$ 11.49
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	\$ 10.66
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$ 10.13
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$ 9.35

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics-[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

Employment by NAICS Sector			
	2013	2014	2015
<b>Total Non-farming</b>	51.7	52.3	53.2
<b>Total Private</b>	36.7	37.3	38.5
<b>Goods Producing</b>	4.4	4.4	4.4
<b>Mining and Construction</b>	2.4	2.3	2.3
<b>Manufacturing</b>	2.0	2.1	2.1
<b>Service-Providing</b>	47.3	47.9	48.7
<b>Private Service-Providing</b>	32.3	33.0	34.0
<b>Trade, Transportation, &amp; Utilities</b>	9.9	10.1	10.3
<b>Information</b>	.6	.6	.5
<b>Financial Activities</b>	1.7	1.7	1.8
<b>Professional &amp; Business Services</b>	6.0	6.4	6.6
<b>Educational &amp; Health Services</b>	7.1	7.2	7.3
<b>Leisure and Hospitality</b>	5.5	5.4	5.7
<b>Other Services</b>	1.5	1.6	1.8
<b>Government</b>	15.0	15.0	14.7
<b>Federal Government</b>	3.7	3.6	3.4
<b>State and Local Government</b>	11.3	11.4	11.3

Source: <https://laborstats.az.gov>

The chart to the left shows that in non-farm employment, most jobs are in the Service Providing sector (using the NAICS classification system), with State and local government being the largest employers in this sector. Not shown on this table but also important to Yuma's economy is the military.

The Yuma Marine Corps Air Station and the Army's Yuma Proving Ground are important employers. Indicative of the role the military plays in Yuma County is that for every 1000 civilian jobs there are 66 military jobs (Year 2010), and Statewide there are 9 military jobs for each 1000 civilian jobs (Year 2008, Year 2010 N/A).

The tables below show Yuma County's Top Ten Employers and Principal Sales Taxpayers. Reflected in these numbers are the strong agricultural, military, service, and production sectors.

Top Ten Employers		
Rank	Top Employers	Employees
1	Yuma Proving Ground	2,319
2	Yuma Regional Medical Center	2,080
3	Yuma Elementary School District #1	1,700
4	Wal-Mart Stores	1,394
5	Yuma City Government	1,388
6	Yuma County	1,350
7	U.S. Marine Corps Air Station	1,350
8	Bose Corporation	1,300
9	U.S. Border Patrol	920
10	Advanced Call Center Tech, (ACT)	814

\*\*All #'s from FY 2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

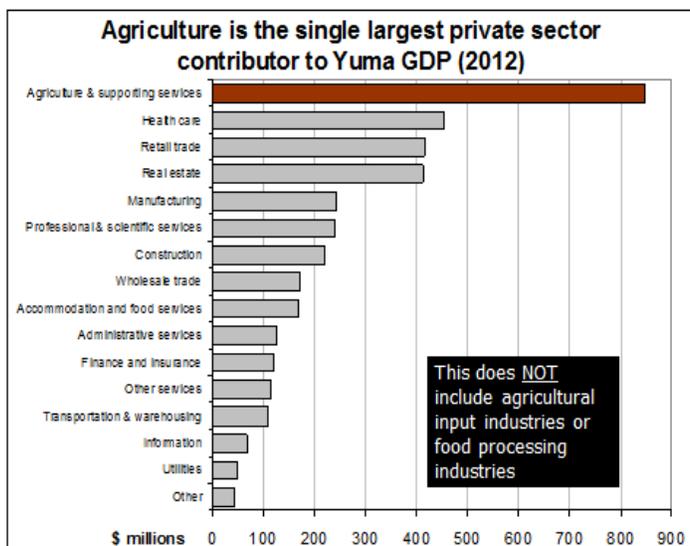
Principal Taxpayers		
Rank	Taxpayer	% of County's Net Assessed Valuation
1	Arizona Public Service Company	22.68%
2	Agua Caliente Solar LLC	20.80%
3	Union Pacific Railroad Co	3.80%
4	Arizona Public Service Company (REE)	3.30%
5	Wal-Mart Stores Inc De Corp	3.03%
6	Arizona Public Service Company (CWIP)	2.68%
7	Southwest Gas Corporation (T&D)	2.56%
8	Yuma Palms 1031 Delaware LLC ET AL	2.44%
9	Qwest Corporation	1.95%
10	Gowan Milling Company AZ LLC	0.40%
<b>Top Ten % of Total County's Net Assessed Valuation</b>		<b>63.64%</b>

\*\*All #'s from FY 2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

Reported unemployment rates have historically been very high in Yuma County, most likely associated with the economy's heavy reliance on agriculture and the seasonal nature of its employment.

Unemployment	2013	2014	2015
Total Civilian Labor Force	95.0	93.3	93.7
Total Unemployment	24.2	21.4	20.4
Rate	25.5%	22.9%	21.8%
Total Employment	70.8	72.0	73.3

As shown in the table below, Yuma County's gross domestic product (GDP) relies heavily on agriculture and supporting services. It is almost twice as large as the next sector health care.



The following table demonstrates Yuma County's ranking among all U.S. counties in terms of crop sales.

## Yuma is a Leading US County in Agricultural Sales

Commodity	Yuma's rank among US counties in sales
Vegetables & Melons	Top 0.1%
All Crops	Top 0.5%
All Agricultural Products	Top 1%
Other Crops & Hay	Top 1.2%
Nursery, Greenhouse	Top 23%
Grains, Oilseeds, Beans & Peas	Top 28%



Source: Photo & Information from Cooperative Extension - University of Arizona

The table below shows a five (5) year history of Transaction Privilege (sales), Use and Severance Tax collections by classification.

Sales (\$000's)	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
Utilities	247,551	246,395	256,129	260,368	258,642
Communications	68,650	68,338	65,110	62,191	57,325
Publications	-	1,768	1,628	1,915	1,918
Restaurants and Bars	206,530	219,275	225,096	232,139	246,276
Amusements	13,500	-	14,178	13,685	14,236
Property	64,634	82,386	70,063	75,969	42,973
Contracting	267,566	294,457	296,379	264,717	240,316
Retail	1,211,022	1,246,183	1,323,786	1,363,336	1,439,982
Hotel/Motel	48,254	51,792	48,434	45,376	48,376
Other Taxable Activities	65,782	84,440	85,852	81,145	74,231

\*\*Source: Arizona Department of Revenue

After a drop in FY2014, new housing units authorized in FY2015 increased to 768 total units. This reflects an increase of 113% since FY2011. The table and chart below show a five (5) year history of new housing permits authorized.

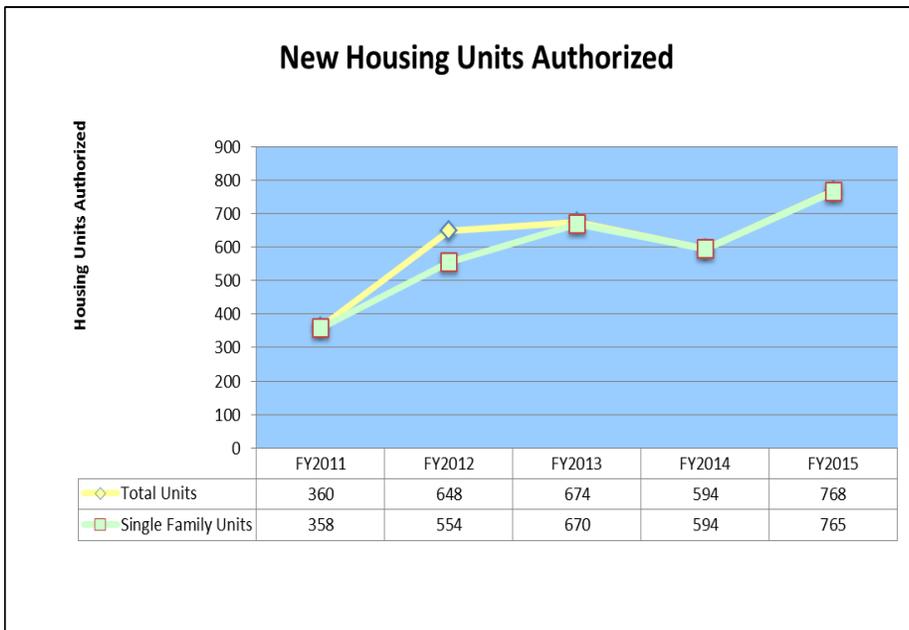


Photo taken by Bianca Acosta

## Education

### School Districts:

- ❖ Antelope Union High School District - Wellton, AZ
- ❖ Crane Elementary District - Yuma, AZ
- ❖ Mohawk Valley Elementary District - Roll, AZ
- ❖ Somerton Elementary District - Somerton, AZ
- ❖ Southwest Technical Education District – Yuma, AZ
- ❖ Wellton Elementary District-Wellton, AZ
- ❖ Yuma Elementary District-Yuma, AZ
- ❖ Yuma Union High School District-Yuma, AZ
- ❖ Gadsden Elementary District-San Luis, AZ
- ❖ Hyder Elementary District-Dateland, AZ

### Institutions of Higher Learning

Arizona Western College (AWC), Northern Arizona University, The University of Phoenix, University of Arizona and Arizona State University are all established features on Yuma’s educational landscape.

The most substantial campus is Arizona Western College (AWC). This community college offers transfer degrees in subjects ranging from Administration of Justice to Theater; Occupational degrees; AGEC or Arizona General Education Curriculum certificates; and different Occupational certificates.

Northern Arizona University offers degree programs including; Bachelors level, Masters level, and at the Doctoral level. The University of Phoenix offers several Bachelors and Masters Programs – mostly in education and business. The University of Arizona also offers Yuma County students the opportunity to complete their bachelors, masters certificates and masters degree in areas that include agriculture, engineering and nursing. Arizona Western College has recently partnered with Arizona State University; AWC students will be able to complete a bachelor’s degree in three areas - criminology and criminal justice, organizational leadership and a degree in secondary education.

### Recreation/Sites of Interest

Other than the aforementioned State Parks, there are some interesting sites/recreation available in and near Yuma County. Downtown Yuma is historic and maintains its charm despite the area’s growth. In addition, the Kofa Mountain Range and wildlife refuge area, Mittry Lake, Martinez Lake, and the nearby Imperial Sand Dunes in California provide recreation to visitors and locals.



Imperial Sand Dunes

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Glamis\\_Presidents\\_263.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Glamis_Presidents_263.jpg)

Many people enjoy the hunting and fishing opportunities provided by the vast uninhabited areas and the Colorado River. Dove and Quail season bring hunters to Yuma County every fall. The annual Colorado River Crossing Balloon Festival attracts many unique hot air balloons and spectators.

Colorado River & River Crossing Balloon Festival



The Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) and Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) bring a military presence to the community. MCAS performs an annual air show with large-scale military exercises. The Army's YPG base provides a testing venue for new military equipment.



## Transportation Systems

### Highways

- Interstate 8
- U.S. 95
- Highway 80

### Rail

- Union Pacific Railroad

## Transportation Providers

### Bus Lines

- Greyhound Bus Lines

### Air Service

- Yuma International Airport

Source: Arizona Department of Commerce, Community Profiles

## Airlines

- American Airlines
- Diamond Air Airlines, Inc (Charter)
- Wings Inc. (Charter)

## Public Transportation Services

- Yuma County Area Transit (YCAT)
- Greater Yuma Dial-A-Ride
- Taxicabs (Various)

## Trucking Service

Located on the border of four states (Arizona, California, Sonora, Mexico and Baja, Mexico) and two countries (United States and Mexico), Yuma is a natural transportation hub with over 52 million consumers within a one day truck haul east/west vial Interstate 8 or north/south via Highway.

Listed below are some of the trucking companies that service the Yuma County area:

- Ruan Transportation
- Knight Transportation
- Swift Transportation
- B4 Logistics Inc.
- DBR Logistics
- D & B Trucking



Data for this County Profile is largely drawn from the Yuma Data Bank web site located at <http://www.yumadata.com/>, the US Census Bureau <http://www.census.gov/>, Arizona Workforce Informer <http://workforce.az.gov/>, the US Bureau of Economic Analysis <http://www.bea.gov/interactive.htm>, wikipedia.com [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com), the Economic & Business Research Center <http://www.ebr.eller.arizona.edu/>, Yellow pages <http://www.yellowpages.com/yuma-az/trucking-companies>, Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation <http://www.greateryuma.org/> and several photos were taken by Bianca Acosta.



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