



DAY TRIP TO SWANSEA

From Parker · La Paz County, Arizona



COPPER MINING



Photo: BLMArizona, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

OPEN · BLM

Public land, free to visit. Confirmed by BLM's visitor page, BLM photos from September 2025 and visitor reports into 2026.

Swansea takes a full day from Parker, and most of it is the drive. The townsite has no water, food or fuel, so fill up in Parker and pack lunch and plenty of water. Campers can stay overnight at the townsite's designated sites and walk the ruins in the cool of the morning.

A SAMPLE DAY

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| ☐ 7 a.m. | Leave Parker with a full tank and plenty of water. Take AZ 95 south and turn east on Shea Road. The computed drive is about 4 h 50 min because it treats the gravel as a slow track. A camper reported nearly two hours on a freshly rutted road, so you'll likely arrive well before noon. |
| ☐ Late morning | Arrive at the townsite. Start with the row of adobe worker cottages under their tin roofs, then the walls of the company store, office and mess hall. |
| ☐ Noon | Eat a packed lunch at a shaded picnic table, if a campsite is free. |
| ☐ 1 p.m. | Walk out to the smelter and ore-processing areas and the two cemeteries. Keep well back from the mine shafts. |
| ☐ 2:30 p.m. | Start back, aiming to be off the gravel before dark. On the computed time you'd reach Parker about 7:20 p.m.; at the camper's pace, closer to 4:30 p.m. |
| ☐ Dinner | Tierra Caliente on Joshua Avenue in Parker is a Latin American restaurant and meat market, open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day. |

From Phoenix, BLM's way in is through Bouse, described in the road notes below. We haven't computed a time for it.

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The worker cottages.** The long row of adobe cottages under new tin roofs is the classic Swansea view. Shoot along the row so the doorways repeat.
- **The smelter area.** Grey waste, concrete footings and rusted sheet metal. Low morning or late-afternoon sun brings out the texture.
- **The company office.** Its concrete walls stand against the desert ranges. Step back to take in the hills behind.
- **Then and now.** The gallery's photo of Swansea around 1920 was taken from higher ground. Try to match it from the hills, well clear of any shaft.
- **The cemeteries.** Two of them. Keep to the edges and leave the graves as they are.
- **Drones.** BLM's page doesn't mention them. Keep clear of anyone camping.



USGS topographic map, 1923 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	33 mi, about 4 h 50 min each way from downtown Parker. From Lake Havasu City: 71 mi, about 5 h 38 min.
OPEN	BLM posts no hours or season. Summer heat is severe, so go between fall and spring.
ADMISSION	Free. BLM lists no fee and no permit for a visit.
RESTROOMS	A vault toilet near the campsites, campers report. BLM's page doesn't list one.
FOOD AND WATER	None at the site. Bring all your food and water, and fill the tank in Parker or Bouse.
SUN AND SHADE	The campsites' picnic tables have shade roofs, campers report. The rest is open desert.
ROAD	Shea Road is paved for about 13 miles. The last 17 miles are graded gravel, rougher near the end and across several washes. BLM recommends a high-clearance vehicle; four-wheel drive isn't needed. BLM's rules ban driving in washes or off the road.
ON FOOT	Walk around the ruins, not on them. BLM's rules for the townsite ban climbing, leaning, sitting or walking on the walls, and entering any fenced area, shaft, tunnel or structure.
LEAVE IT	Nothing may be removed without BLM's written permission. That includes cans, nails, lumber, bricks and glass.
CAMPING	Designated sites only, up to 3 days in any 30. Fires go only in the fire rings provided, and wood collecting is banned.
PHOTOGRAPHY	BLM posts no photo or drone rules for Swansea.
CELL SIGNAL	Patchy, with a bar or two in a few spots, campers report.
ROAD CONDITIONS	BLM Lake Havasu Field Office, 928-505-1200.
WEBSITE	blm.gov/visit/swansea-historic-ghost-town

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Stay out of mine shafts, tunnels and unstable buildings.
- Leave artifacts where they lie. Removing them can be a crime.
- Carry water, a paper map and a charged phone; signal is often poor.

Coordinates 34.17000, -113.84610 • 34°10'12"N
113°50'46"W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/arizona/swansea/

Directions [Google Maps](#)

Details checked October 2026. Hours, prices and access change: confirm before you go.