

# Hunting for Area 51's aliens along Nevada's "Extraterrestrial Highway"

By Trevor Hughes, USA Today, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.05.18

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Image 1. The sign for the Little A'Le'Inn with a flying saucer hanging from a tow truck in Rachel, Nevada, near Area 51. Photo: Getty

The grim-faced little green man holding a sign saying "Welcome Earthlings" tells you this is no ordinary diner.

Inside the Little A'Le'Inn in Rachel, Nevada, pictures of UFO sightings, alien masks and military memorabilia decorate and otherwise dominate the walls and ceiling. If you're looking for alien central, surely this is it.

That's because this tiny town in central Nevada is the closest form of (human) civilization to the storied U.S. Air Force base at Groom Lake. Although you might know it better by its other name: Area 51.

At the Little A'Le'Inn, you can order an Alien Burger and chat with the staff about their spooky sightings. You can also rent a room or camp out nearby. You can browse pictures claiming to show distortions created by invisible interstellar visitors. Buy a 33-cent map showing the best places to scope out Area 51 without violating federal laws. Spring brings a rush of tourists, from Germans in

rental cars to Englishmen on motorcycles. Among them on a recent day were Reece D'Silva and Alexis Esparza. They came in from Las Vegas and took advantage of the sunny spring days to explore.

"We've lived here all of our lives and never made it up," D'Silva said. "We had some free time and the weather is perfect."

### **Nevada's Route 375**

Area 51 has long simmered in the public consciousness. There have been movies about it such as "Independence Day." There was also the popular TV show "The X-Files." The government's refusal to discuss what really goes on there has only added to the mystery. And you see it for yourself on a long, lonely drive through central Nevada on Route 375. The Route has been called the "Extraterrestrial Highway."

Long a popular drive for tourists, the route is getting new attention thanks to recent news. In December, the U.S. government acknowledged that it's been tracking UFOs for years. Area 51 is where conspiracy theorists believe the government stores crashed aliens and their spaceships. And, the revelation that the Pentagon's "Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program" was a real thing has only added fuel to the fire.

Visiting what's effectively the "front gate" of Area 51 is a weird experience in itself. Visitors to the area report being buzzed by all manner of military aircraft. You reach it via a long drive down one of the straightest dirt roads ever made, which then makes a few bends and drops into a small gully. Suddenly, large signs warn that you're approaching a U.S. Air Force installation, but they don't say which one. The signs caution visitors not to take any photos of the surveillance cameras and other sensors sitting just across a line marked by razor wire and the start of asphalt road pavement.

There's no obvious security until you look up the hillside to see an unmarked white truck sitting ominously above, presumably staffed by some stern-faced security contractor who wouldn't appreciate you taking photos. Visitors can't even approach the truck without crossing the base perimeter, so your questions will remain unasked.

### **Are They Hiding Aliens In There?**



D'Silva, who is in the U.S. Army, said he grew up hearing stories about Area 51. He persuaded his fiancée to join him on an adventure before he gets a new posting in another state. The two split an obligatory Alien Burger, checked out a dead cow on the side of the road and drove all the way to the Area 51 perimeter to snap selfies.

"There's no aliens in there," D'Silva said confidently.

Shot back Esparza: "You're awfully sure about that!"

## Quiz

- 1 Read the introduction [paragraphs 1-5].  
Select the detail that explains where Area 51 is located.
- (A) The grim-faced little green man holding a sign saying "Welcome Earthlings" tells you this is no ordinary diner.
  - (B) Inside the Little A'Le'Inn in Rachel, Nevada, pictures of UFO sightings, alien masks and military memorabilia decorate and otherwise dominate the walls and ceiling.
  - (C) That's because this tiny town in central Nevada is the closest form of (human) civilization to the storied U.S. Air Force base at Groom Lake.
  - (D) Buy a 33-cent map showing the best places to scope out Area 51 without violating federal laws.
- 2 Which sentence in the section "Are They Hiding Aliens In There?" supports the inference that the trip to Area 51 was disappointing for D'Silva?
- (A) D'Silva, who is in the U.S. Army, said he grew up hearing stories about Area 51.
  - (B) He persuaded his fiancée to join him on an adventure before he gets a new posting in another state.
  - (C) The two split an obligatory Alien Burger, checked out a dead cow on the side of the road and drove all the way to the Area 51 perimeter to snap selfies.
  - (D) "There's no aliens in there," D'Silva said confidently.
- 3 Which sentence from the section "Nevada's Route 375" BEST provides a reason WHY Area 51 is popular?
- (A) Area 51 has long simmered in the public consciousness.
  - (B) There have been movies about it such as "Independence Day."
  - (C) The Route has been called the "Extraterrestrial Highway."
  - (D) Visitors to the area report being buzzed by all manner of military aircraft.
- 4 What is MOST likely the reason the author included the information about the fences and cameras around Area 51?
- (A) to persuade readers to not visit Area 51
  - (B) to explain why so many people have been able to break into Area 51
  - (C) to demonstrate how important security is in Area 51
  - (D) to explain why the public knows so much about Area 51