

Public Tours of the Nevada National Security Site

Background

Since the establishment of the Nevada Test Site (now known as the Nevada National Security Site – NNSS) in 1951, thousands of people from around the world continue to visit this vast outdoor laboratory. Larger than the state of Rhode Island, the site features artifacts and archaeological sites from the early settlers, as well as the many relics remaining from nuclear weapons tests, nuclear rocket experiments, and a variety of other defense, environmental, and energy-related programs.



The Apple-2 houses, part of Operation Teapot, a weapons-related series of nuclear tests in 1955, are a highlight of the Nevada National Security Site tour.

Taking a Tour

The U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office provides monthly general interest tours open to the public, civic or technical organizations.

Visitors to the NNSS must be at least 14-years old. Pregnant women are discouraged from participating in tours because of the long bus ride and uneven terrain at the site.

Transportation

The NNSS is located 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada. Each tour covers approximately 250 miles. Transportation is provided in the form of a chartered coach bus, equipped with a restroom. Tours depart from the Atomic Testing Museum, located at 755 East Flamingo Road Las Vegas, Nevada.

What should I bring?

Tour participants are required to bring their own food and drinks because there are no lunch facilities. Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited.

Casual clothing is recommended (light clothing in the summer and layers in the winter), and sturdy shoes are required for the rugged terrain. No shorts or sandals are permitted.

What will I see?

Mercury is the main base camp for the Test Site.

Frenchman Flat is the location of the first atmospheric nuclear test, ABLE, on the NNSS, in January 1951. Thirteen subsequent atmospheric nuclear tests were conducted on Frenchman Flat between 1951 and 1962.

The Hazmat Spill Center (HSC) is used by the chemical and petroleum industry, and government agencies to test spill dispersion, test sensors, and mitigation; and first-responder training procedures.



The Non-Proliferation Test and Evaluation Complex (NPTEC) is the world's largest facility for open air testing of hazardous toxic materials and biological simulants.

Area 5, one of two disposal facilities in the Radioactive Waste Management Complex, is the depository for low-level radioactive waste from the dismantlement and cleanup of Department of Energy and Department of Defense weapons production complexes.

Control Point was the command post used for conducting nuclear tests. Today, it plays an important role supporting other test site missions.

News Nob is the viewpoint from which journalists such as Walter Cronkite and visiting dignitaries witnessed atmospheric tests.

Sedan crater resulted from an experiment conducted as part of the Plowshare program which explored the peaceful uses of nuclear explosives. The 104-kiloton nuclear explosion displaced about 12 million tons of earth, creating a crater 1,280 feet in diameter and 320 feet deep.

Security Requirements

Because the NNSS is a restricted access government reservation, visitors must apply well in advance to attend a tour. Prospective visitors must supply the following information:

- Full name as it appears on driver's license or other photo identification
- Date and place (city and state) of birth
- Home and business address, to include name of employer
- Home and business phone number
- Citizenship (foreign citizens will be asked to supply additional information)

Foreign nationals are required to provide additional information at least six weeks before their visit.

Prohibited Articles

- Visitors are not permitted to bring cameras, binoculars, telescopes, or tape recorders on the tour.
- Firearms are not permitted under any circumstances.
- Visitors may not remove soil, rock, plant samples or metal objects from the NNSS.
- Personal cell phones and pagers are not permitted inside security areas (Control Point).

Registration

Groups and individuals wishing to tour the 1,375-square-mile Nevada National Security Site should write, call, fax, or e-mail the Office of Public Affairs at the National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office.

For more information, contact:
U.S. Department of Energy
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News Nob, a stop on the NNSS tour, was a gathering place for members of the press to witness atmospheric tests.

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