

Bodie, California Ghost Town



VISUAL TRAVEL TOURS

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Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Tour Summary](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Tips](#)

[Chapter 1 - Entering Bodie](#)

[Chapter 2 - To the Museum](#)

[Chapter 3 - Up the Hill](#)

[Chapter 4 - The Standard Mill Mine](#)

[Chapter 5 - Infamy & Fame](#)

[Chapter 6 - Bodie's Boot Hill](#)

[Chapter 7 - Bodie Epitaph](#)

[Maps](#)

[Author Biography](#)

[Publisher](#)

Tour Summary

Bodie State Historic Park is both an authentic ghost town and a living museum of the Gold Rush days of the mid-1800s. With more than 150 buildings and hundreds more sites scattered in a valley among the lush green California Sierra foothills, it is located two hours south of Reno and five hours north of Los Angeles along US 395. This is truly a journey through history!

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Introduction





“Goodbye God, I’m going to Bodie.”



Those poignant words, reportedly penned by a young lady in her diary before her family moved from civilized San Francisco to a raucous gold mining town near the California-Nevada border, echoed the prevailing 19th-century impression of Bodie.



Fast forward almost 150 years to the present, and her rueful comment provides a colorful epitaph for one of the most notoriously wicked towns in the West. So untamed was Bodie, California, that one minister referred to it as “a sea of sin, lashed by the tempests of lust and passion.”



Heady stuff for a ghost town that looks to some, at first glance, like a near-deserted collection of tired board-&-batten buildings and rusted-out mining gear.



Despite two fires, endless harsh winters and the ravages of time, much remains of this once sprawling community of 10,000 people; enough to give your imagination room to roam among what remains of this 14-carat boom-&-bust town.



Today, Bodie lives like no other ghost town in the American West as a 1000-acre museum, and an officially designated historic monument that gives modern visitors a glimpse into a wild and hedonistic era in the state's history. Placed under state protection as a historic site in 1961 and maintained in "arrested decay" since then by park rangers and a private preservation foundation...



...Bodie lives again as a visual reminder of what happened following the Gold Rush of 1849 on the other side of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Incidentally, “arrested decay” means protected but not restored.



Okay. So, where exactly is Bodie? Bodie State Historic Park sits 13 miles east of US 395 at the end of California Highway 270, roughly equidistant between Bridgeport and Lee Vining.



The small town of Lee Vining is home to...



...Mono Lake, with its bizarre tufa formations. Lee Vining also serves as the eastern portal to Yosemite National Park through Tioga Pass, the same route gold seekers followed in the 19th century in search of the next Mother Lode.



Bridgeport, the next town north of Lee Vining, is two hours down 395 from Reno, and home to the exquisite Mono County Courthouse.



California 270 takes you east into the Sierra foothills over a nicely paved road, ten miles up through a lush canyon.



At the top of a grade, and out onto a sagebrush-covered ridge, you'll begin three miles of gravel road to the entry station at the end of the highway. Tour buses and family cars easily make the trip during the warmer months; prudence, however, requires slow going in some places. It'll take about as long to cover the last three miles as it does the first ten.



On a hill less than a mile from Bodie you get your first glimpse of some 175 wood and brick buildings, and the cluster of structures that comprise the old metal-clad Standard Mill complex.



Appropriately, a weather-beaten sign marks the entrance to Bodie State Historic Park.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)