

Tucson, Arizona

Welcome to Tucson, Arizona. If you look out your window, you may be able to see two gentlemen awaiting your arrival at the station. Meet Wyatt Earp and Doc Holiday. These statues are reminders of the historical legacy of Tucson, though its history began long before the “Wild West” era.

Evidence of human inhabitants dates back to mammoth and bison hunters who roamed the area in 6,000 B.C. and earlier. The Cochise and Hohokam cultures built settlements and farmed the valley floor for hundreds of years. In the 1700’s, Spanish missionaries arrived to convert the native peoples and to expand Spain’s holdings in the New World. Three missions were constructed near Tucson, and by 1804 there were 1,000 Spanish, Mexican and Native American people living in the adobe village, raising livestock and crops to support themselves and supply the missions.

When Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, Tucson became part of Mexico. Later, when the U.S. wanted a southern rail line for easier access to the west coast, especially during the California Gold Rush, they negotiated the Gadsden Purchase, and in 1954 Arizona became a U.S. territory. The railroad arrived in 1880, bringing hope for growth and a bright future.

World War I veterans were drawn to the hot, dry climate in hopes that it would heal their lungs after exposure to mustard gas; tuberculosis patients also sought Tucson’s healing air. But not all was well in the new southwest. The rapidly growing population, new wealth, and a scarcity of law enforcement officials made Tucson vulnerable to outlaws...leading to a “wild west” reputation for the booming city. It was not uncommon to hear gunfire in the streets of Tucson at the turn of the century. “Doc” Holliday and Wyatt Earp’s statues commemorate their run-in with the notorious outlaw, Frank Stilwell, an enemy of the Holiday and the Earp brothers back in 1881.

Today, Tucson is still attracting new residents, but justice is now in safer hands. The city is home to the University of Arizona, many museums, great restaurants and cultural attractions. Adjacent to the tracks is the Davis-Monthan Air Field Base, which was established in 1925 and is still used today to train pilots and store over 5,000 planes. You can still feel the history of this town when you look out the window as the train passes through. The people are still expressing

their ancestors’ culture through the adobe architecture, the ruins of old missions still standing, and the trains rolling by

Source(s):

Hoffman, Eva J. "A Guidebook to Amtrak's Sunset Limited." Flashing Yellow Guidebooks, Golden, CO, 2009

<http://www.arizona.edu/home/tucson-history.php>

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