Touring Fort Union

Fort Union National Monument is 28 miles north of Las Cruces, N. Mex. on I-25. Take exit 366 and then drive eight miles west on N. Mex. 161. The park is open every day from 8 am–6 pm, Memorial Day through Labor Day; 8 am–4 pm the rest of the year. It is closed Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. There are no camping facilities, but picnic tables, drinking water, and modern restrooms are provided. Las Vegas has food, lodging, and auto, medical, and camping services.

Fort Union National Monument
P.O. Box 127
Watrous, NM 88273
505-425-8025
www.nps.gov/futo

Fort Union is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

Fort Union National Monument is a military installation on the 19th-century southwest frontier. The diagram below, which you should use while touring the ruins, is an attempt to re-create something of the size, appearance, and function of the original Fort Union complex. Remember, too, that it is against the law in all NPS areas to pick up artifacts, plants, animals, and minerals. Look at them. Enjoy them. Leave them for others to enjoy.

The ruins of Fort Union are an impressive memorial to the men and women who won the West. It may be difficult, however, to look at these melted adobe walls and the few chimneys that rise above ground level and realize that this was once the largest U.S. military installation on the 19th-century southwestern frontier. The diagram below, which you should use while touring the ruins, is an attempt to re-create something of the size, appearance, and function of the original Fort Union complex. Remember, too, that it is against the law in all NPS areas to pick up artifacts, plants, animals, and minerals. Look at them. Enjoy them. Leave them for others to enjoy.

A word of caution: Fort Union is being preserved as an outdoor museum. While every effort has been made to provide for your safety, you must remain alert and exercise caution during your visit. The ruins, though stabilized, can fall if climbed on. Stay on the established paths and be alert for rattlesnakes when the ground is warm. If you do encounter one, back away slowly, go around it, and report it to a park ranger. Also, thunderstorms with accompanying lightning, hail, strong winds, and occasional tornadoes are common during summer afternoons. Be alert, watch the clouds.

Fort Union Post

The stone building foundations and some of the adobe walls are still visible, so you should have no difficulty matching what you see on the site to appropriate locations on the diagram. A self-guiding trail (shown in white on the diagram) leads through the ruins and to the remains of the second fort erected during the Civil War. The ruins of the ordnance depot are visible across the valley to the west, on the first fort site.

The post garrison officers led a difficult life. According to one of their officers, the post commander's home, each had four spacious rooms on each side of a wide central hall. Col. Randolph B. Marcy, who inspected the fort in 1867, called them "far better than any officer's quarters that I have seen at any other frontier post." The quartersmaster, as commanding officer of the depot and the man in charge of all construction, had the finest residence at Fort Union. This is evident in the workmanship of the foundation stones, the arched fireplaces, the brick cellar, patios, and sidewalk leading to the privy in the rear.

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