

SALTON SEA COMMUNITIES STREET MAP

Kym
Guide

MECCA * NORTH SHORE
BOMBAY BEACH * NILAND
DESERT SHORES * SALTON CITY

THE SALTON SEA STORY

The Salton Sea and the mountains that surround it provide a backdrop for one of the West's epic stories. Grand visions, contentious water rights battles, ambitious engineering projects and fevered land speculation have all played a part in this unique area's colorful history.

Geology

The Colorado Desert, also known as the Salton Basin, extends from San Geronio Pass, between the San Bernardino and San Jacinto mountains. The basin, earlier known as the Cahuilla Valley, was once part of an inland sea that included the Gulf of Mexico. Then, millions of years ago, a tremendous upheaval formed the mountain ranges that now surround the valley, cutting it off from the ocean. Lake Cahuilla, an inland lake about 100 miles long and 35 miles wide, formed as a result. The lake rose and fell over the centuries as the varying flows of the Colorado River sometimes filled it and other times passed it by.

Irrigation Schemes

The harsh environment of the Southern California deserts caused most early western immigrants to bypass the Coachella and Imperial Valleys for more hospitable areas. But by the early years of the 1900's there was significant development in the area, encouraged by water delivery from the Colorado River by Charles Rockwood's California Development Company. When silt blocked the canals, farmers were enraged. The desperate Rockwood tried to remedy the problem by cutting a canal connecting the Colorado to the Alamo River Channel. Unseasonal floods in 1905 caused the waterway to breach its banks and the entire Colorado River was diverted into the below-sea-level valley. Eighteen months later, after enormous effort and expense, the breach was repaired, but not before much of the ancient lakebed of Lake Cahuilla was refilled.

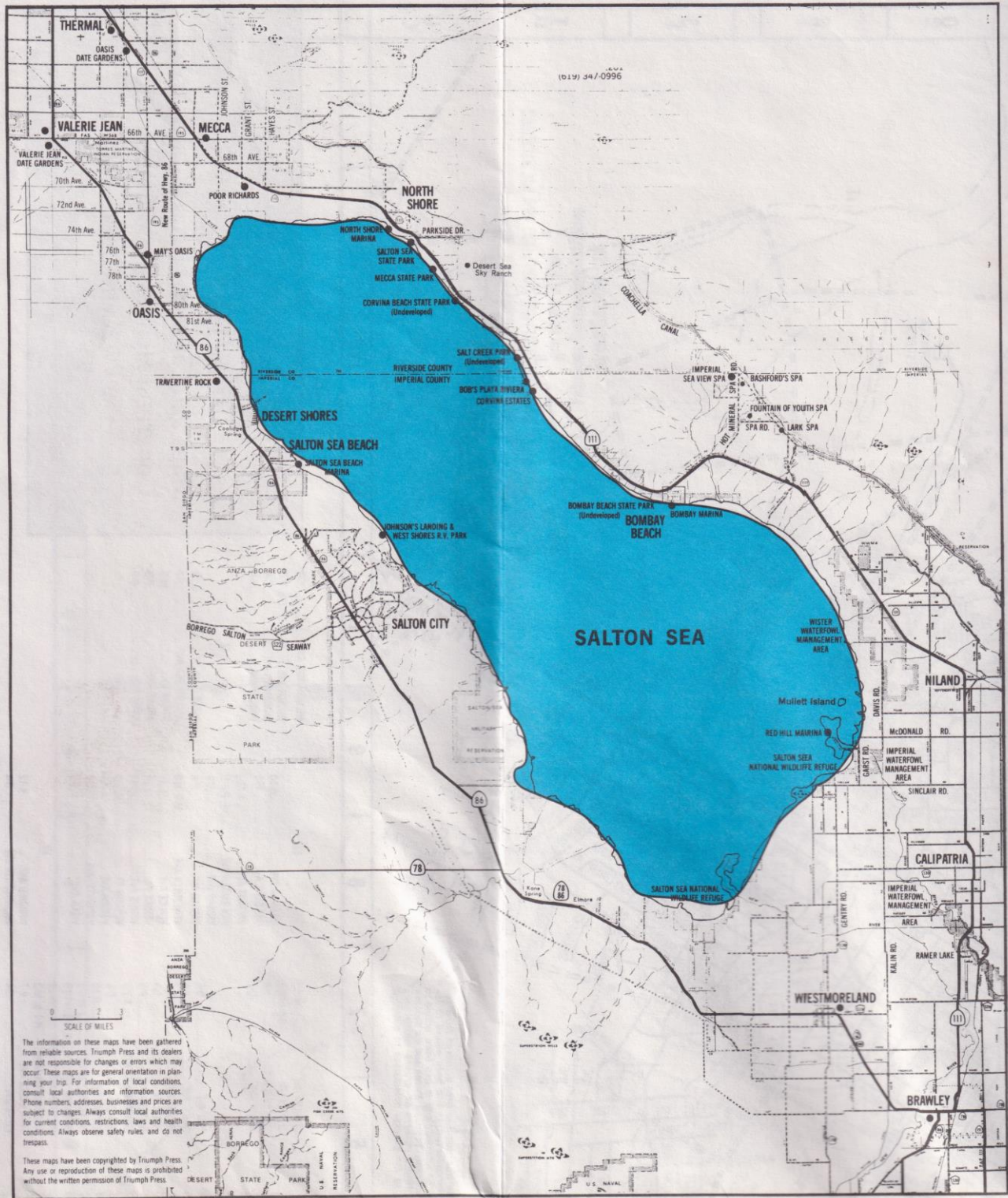
Real Estate

Situated only a few hours from major population centers of Southern California, the Salton Sea, ringed by majestic mountains, seemed an obvious place for a resort community. Advertised as a "New Mediterranean" and an "Investor's Dream," M. Penn Phillip's Salton City development posted \$4 million dollars in sales its first weekend in May of 1958. Between 1958 and 1964, 32,000 lots were sold in the development. The Salton Sea became a popular destination for fishermen and boaters from all over the west. Tourism peaked in 1962, nearing 2 million visitor days (more than Yosemite). Water quality problems caused tourism to drop as quickly as it had risen. Although the development industry is infamous for fraudulent sales schemes, the M. Penn Phillips Company delivered on its promises. The infrastructure for the planned community can still be seen, but the housing boom never came, and most early investors lost money.

Today

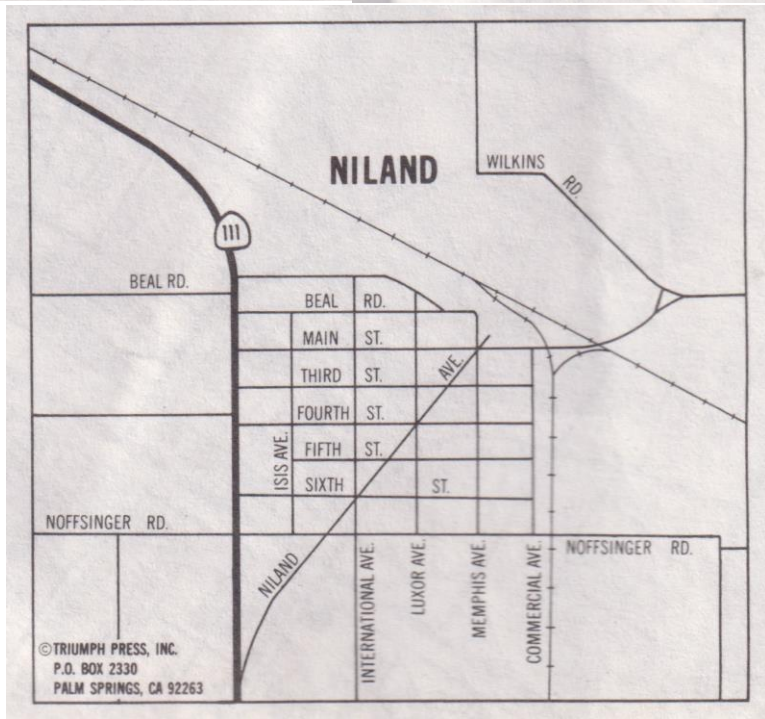
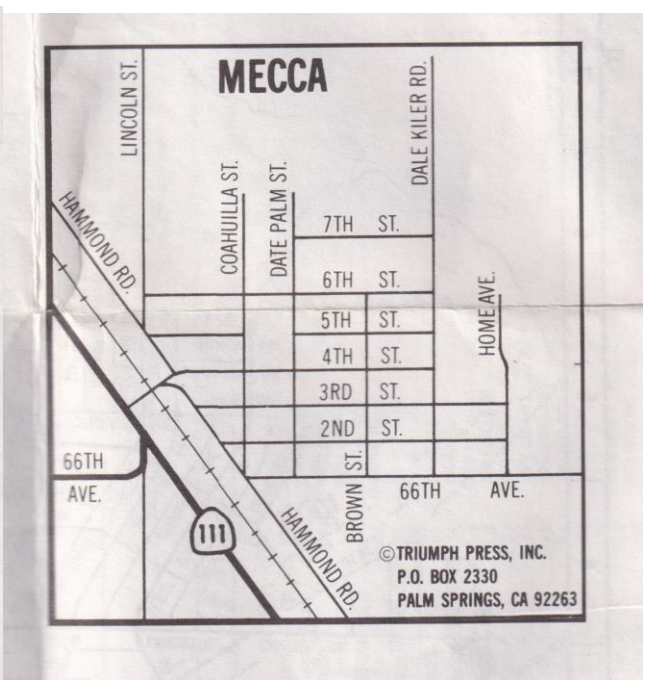
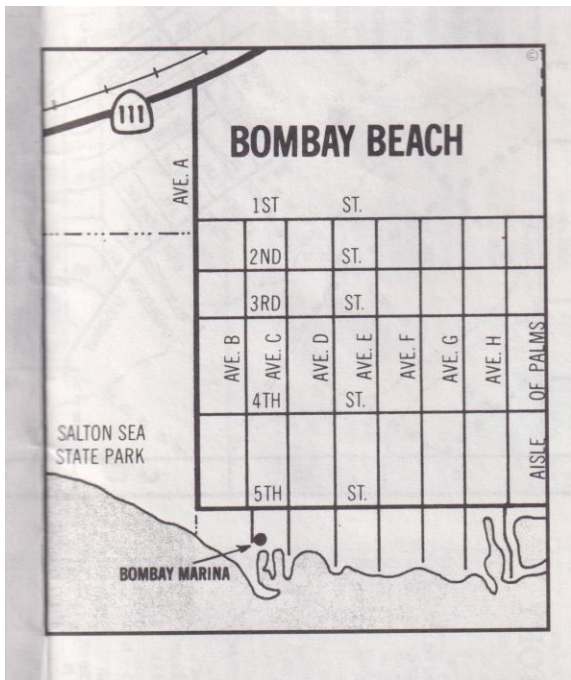
An ongoing discussion about the Salton Sea's problems and potential continues to this day. Run-off of farm wastewater has maintained the Sea for decades, and millions of migrating birds rely on this enormous inland body of water for their survival. The recent real estate boom in California is once again starting to lap at the shores of the Salton Sea, rekindling the dreams that have always been so much a part of the Salton Sea Story.

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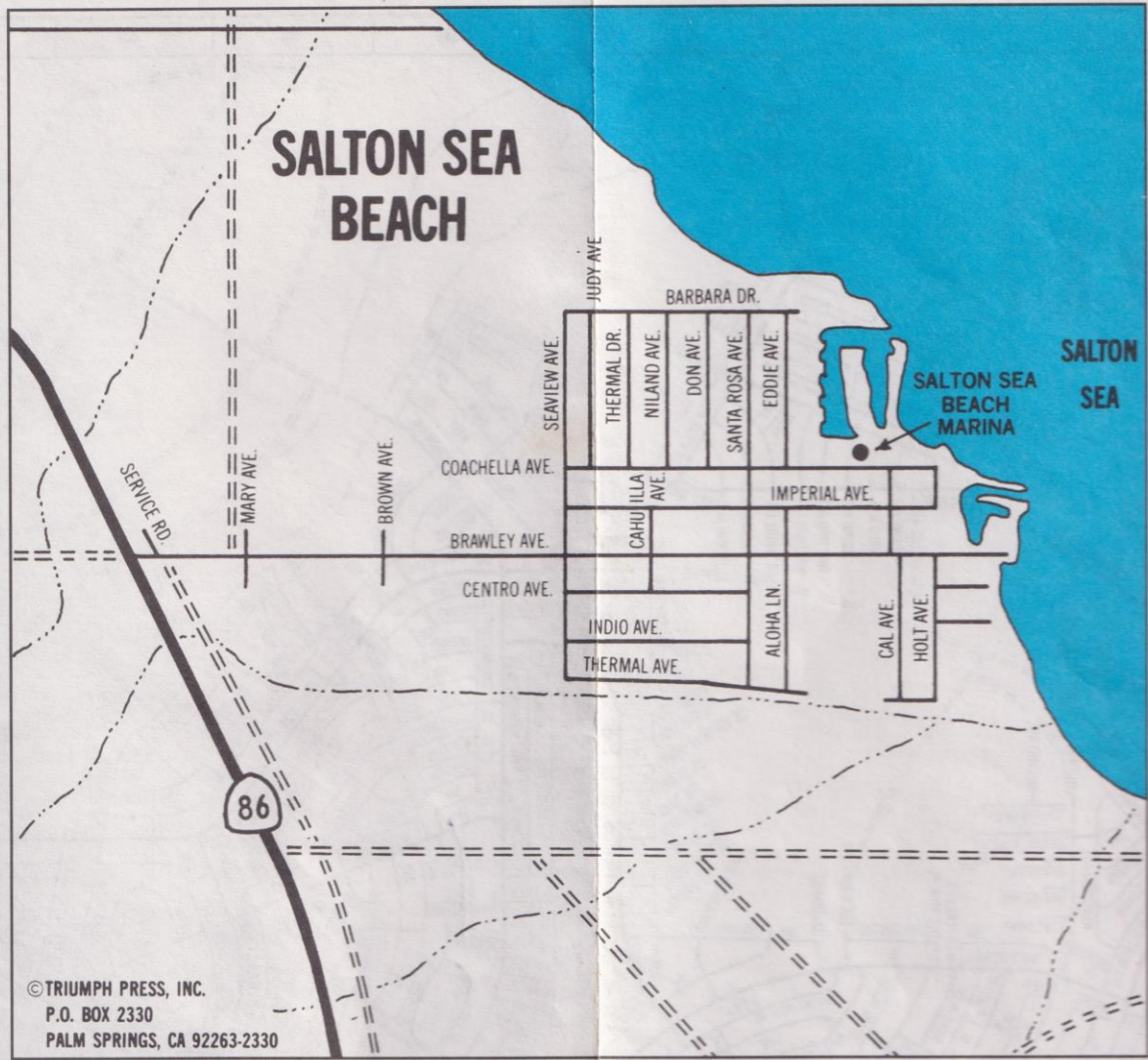


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SALTON SEA BEACH

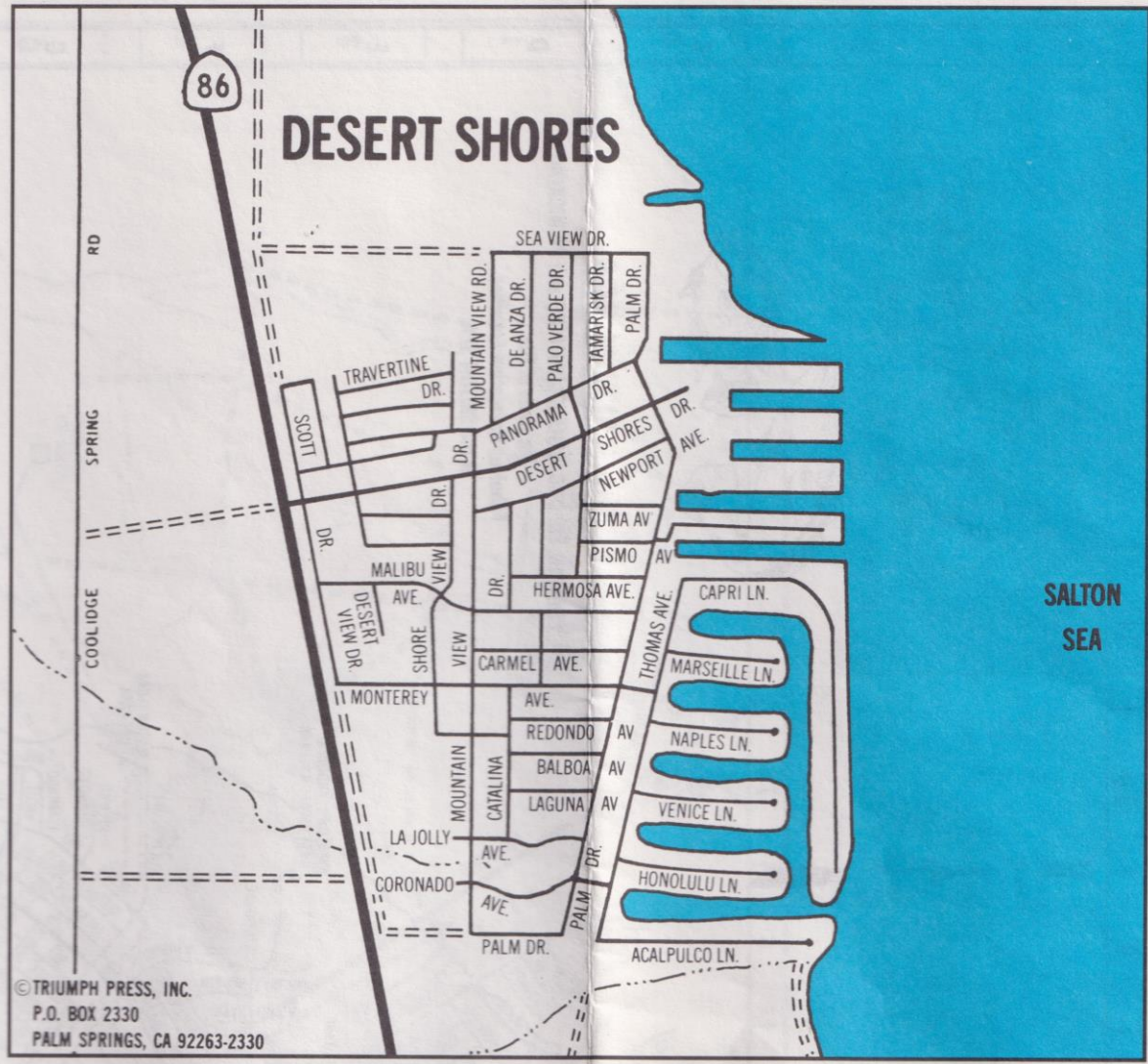


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