

# Cerro Gordo Mine Field Trip

This month our members will have a special field trip that the general public will never see! We will be joining the Lone Pine Gem & Mineral Society on a trip to the Cerro Gordo Mine! This is a "5-5-5" fee adventure. Each person is asked to bring \$5.00 cash, 5 gallons of drinking water and 5 pieces of firewood for the site caretaker.

Mineral collecting is not normally permitted for the general public at Cerro Gordo, but as guests of the Lone Pine club we will have this opportunity to look for specimens. Whether or not your interest is in mineral specimens bring your camera. The opportunity to visit an old mining town and the views of the Owens Valley from nearly a mile high is an experience few will ever have in their lives.

**WHEN:** Sunday, June 29. Day trip.

**MEET:** 7:30am for coffee and staging at Lee's Frontier Chevron, 1900 S. Main Street, Lone Pine, CA - South end of Lone Pine. Check-in is at 8:00am for briefing and to pay the fee. We will head out **PROMPTLY** at 8:30 am. Our club will make an effort to consolidate the donations of water and fire wood in one vehicle. You will want to top off your gas tank in Lone Pine, either at Lee's Chevron or one of the other stations.

**VEHICLES:** The road to the mine is a graded mountain dirt road, 9 miles long and climbs to 5000' elevation. While the use of a four-wheel-drive vehicle is recommended, nearly any two-wheel-drive car or truck with moderately adequate ground clearance, good brakes and a sound drive train should suffice. Be sure to fill your coolant reservoir. On the way down the hill use your lower gears and try to stay off of the brakes as much as possible to avoid overheating them.

**WHAT TO BRING:** Rock collecting bags/buckets, rock hammer, small hand rake, walking stick, spray bottle and camera. Also layered clothing, hat, gloves, long pants, sturdy walking/hiking shoes or boots, sunscreen, sunglasses, bandanna, whistle, personal medications and first aid kit. Bring lunch and more drinking water than you think you can use - about 16 ounces per hour of field time. This widespread field trip offers no shade, and the temperature can vary from over 100° to a chilly 60° at 5000 feet - so bring layered clothing and a warm jacket.

**MATERIAL:** A number of minerals can be collected at this site, including anglesite, anhydrite, argentite, atacamite, aurichalcite, azurite, barite, bindheimite, bouronite, calcite, and caledonite, cermrgyrite, cerussite, ceruantite, chrysocolla, dufrenoyite, dufrenoyite, fluorite, galena, eothite, greenockite, hemimorphite, hollosite, hydrozincite, jamesonite, leadhillite, limonite, linerite, lironite, malachite, mimetite, plumbgumite, pyrite, quartz, silver, spharlerite, tetrahedrite, willemite and wulfenite. Of special interest to rockhounds is the smithsonite, which is world class!

**CAMPING AND LODGING:** See the Motel List on the Calendar Page of the website for this month's field trip. One of our members has stayed at the Mt. Whitney Motel and can recommend it.

There is camping available at the intersection of CA-136 and Cerro Gordo Road near Keeler. If you are planning to camp and attend the field trip - the field trip leader will be at this intersection at 8:45am to collect your fee and to lead you to the mine.

**DO NOT go to the mine without the field trip leader of the Lone Pine club in the lead!** Doing so will damage our relations with the mine caretaker and ban you from future field trips!

As usual, please confirm with your field trip coordinator if you are planning to attend so that he or she can keep you updated on the trip or notify you if it changes in any way.

## **Cerro Gordo History**

Discovery of the silver ore in the eastern Sierra is credited to Pablo Flores, who began mining and smelting operations near the summit of Buena Vista Peak in 1865. Due to hostile Indian activity early mining efforts were rather limited. When hostile Indian activity subsided following the establishment of Fort Independence, mining efforts increased. These early miners employed relatively primitive techniques of open pits and trenches, and used adobe ovens to smelt the ore.

In 1868 Mortimer Belshaw arrived in Cerro Gordo, attracted by the rich deposits of galena ore. After establishing a partnership with another stakeholder in the Union Mine, he brought the first wagon load of silver from Cerro Gordo to Los Angeles. In Los Angeles he was able to secure financing to build his own smelter

that was superior to all other smelters at Cerro Gordo, as well as to build the first wagon road up the mountain. This road became known as the Yellow Road from the color of the rock that it had been cut through. By operating the Yellow Road as a toll road, Belshaw was able to earn income and control the shipments of silver from the mountain.

Businessman Victor Beaudry of nearby Independence, California, became impressed by the quality of silver being taken out of Cerro Gordo and opened a store near the mine. He soon acquired several mining claims to settle unpaid debts and proceeded to have two modern smelters built. Beaudry continued acquiring mining rights from debtors until he soon owned a majority of the richest and most productive mines in the area, including partial interest in the Union Mine.

Present day

Cerro Gordo is currently a ghost town. It still has several buildings including the general store and the American Hotel. It is on private land and permission to visit must be obtained.

**ABOUT CERRO GORDO:** <http://www.cerrogordo.us/> or <http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/ca/cerrogordo.html>

