

Barstow, CA - Harvey House Rail Depot (BAR)

Opened in 1911, the old depot was originally a Harvey House known as the "Casa del Desierto"; today it houses various museums, a visitors center and city offices.

Harvey House Rail Depot
685 North First Avenue
Barstow, CA 92311

[Station Hours](#)

Annual Station Ridership (FY 2025): 3,287

Ownerships	Routes Served	Contact
Local Community Links		
• Facility Ownership: N/A • Parking Lot Ownership: City of Barstow • Platform Ownership: BNSF Railway • Track Ownership: BNSF Railway		

The Amtrak stop at Barstow is a platform located adjacent to the “Casa del Desierto” train depot, which was purchased and rehabilitated by the city in the 1990s and sits on the north side of the tracks opposite downtown. Better known as the Harvey House Railroad Depot because of its origins as a Harvey House restaurant, the current facility opened on Feb. 22, 1911, replacing an earlier Harvey House depot from 1885 that burned in 1908.

The station currently houses the Western American Railroad Museum, the Barstow Route 66 “Mother Road” Museum, offices and event spaces. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

Started by English immigrant Fred Harvey in the 1870s, the company that took his name ran a series of eating houses along the Santa Fe Railway. Before dining cars were common west of the Mississippi River, passenger trains stopped at particular stations to allow riders to have a bite to eat. Fred Harvey developed a highly efficient system that guaranteed quick, quality meals.

Following the success of the eateries, Fred Harvey, in partnership with the railroad, branched out into the hotel business. Although many were located in important trade and business centers such as Santa Fe and Albuquerque, N.M, other Harvey Houses like Casa del Desierto were created with an eye to developing tourism in the region.

Harvey Houses and Santa Fe depots were often designed in historical revivalist architectural styles that recalled the artistic traditions of Southwestern American Indian tribes and early Spanish colonists. According to contemporary accounts, the Casa del Desierto cost approximately \$250,000 and was designed by Francis W. Wilson of Santa Barbara, Calif. Wilson had previously designed two other major hotel/station complexes for the Santa Fe and Fred Harvey: the Fray Marcos in Williams, Ariz., and El Garces in Needles, Calif. Santa Barbara was then developing as a center of Mission and Spanish Revival architecture, to which Wilson contributed greatly.

Influenced by Mediterranean architecture, the Barstow Harvey House is a concrete frame structure faced with red tapestry brick and beige artificial stone. Majestic arcades and colonnades line the exterior, separating towers capped with pointed roofs or painted domes. The towers visually punctuate the building’s corners and the central projecting bay facing the tracks. Red clay barrel tiles, common to Spanish Revival architecture, cover the roof.

The main floor contained the lobby, dining room, lunch room, kitchen and other spaces, while upstairs there were 50 guest rooms that shared communal bathrooms. The broad terraces shaded by arcades allowed visitors to enjoy the area’s warm weather without being exposed to direct sunlight for most of the day. Of note at the time of the building’s completion was the inclusion of electricity.

Located in San Bernardino County, Barstow was founded along the Mormon Corridor in the late 1840s. Much of Barstow’s history is closely related to railroad activity in the region, and the community takes its name from William Barstow Strong of the Santa Fe Railway. Some of the earliest activity in this city resulted from railroad lines being built through the town in order to connect miners to nearby silver deposit sites. Lines were later built by the Southern Pacific to connect Needles to Mojave, Calif., by way of Barstow; they were transferred to the Santa Fe in 1884.

Today, Barstow continues to act as a major transportation junction in California. Several major highways meet at Barstow and freight rail lines owned by BNSF Railway court trains by both BNSF and Union Pacific Railroad. The city is also home to the fast-food restaurant chain Del Taco, and the original facility still stands.