



Destination: Rachel, Nevada

Dubbed the “Extraterrestrial Highway” in 1996, Nevada State Route 375 unrolls for 98 miles through the heart of alien country. With no gas stations, no major road intersections, and only one town, the Extraterrestrial Highway is a lonely empty stretch of road—some say perfect conditions for alien visitation!

Located close to Area 51, an ultra top-secret Air Force base, the Extraterrestrial Highway is a popular location for alleged UFO sightings. Avid alien fans flock to South Central Nevada where they find all things alien-related in the town of Rachel, Nevada, the sole town on the E.T. Highway, with a human population of 98. Visitors come daily from China, Europe, and Las Vegas to share their spacecraft abduction tales, scan the skies for UFOs, and stay at the Little A’Le’Inn. (Don’t be fooled; it’s not French. It’s pronounced “Little Alien.”) I came for the delicious Alien Burgers, complete with “alien secretions.” I hope they’re just talking about ketchup!

“So do you believe in aliens?” I ask waitress Sharon Taylor. “Absolutely,” she says. “We’d have to be pretty arrogant to believe we’re alone in the universe.” A couple sitting next to me nod along in

agreement. “So what do you think is going on out there?” I ask, nodding my head in the direction of the secret government compound. I take a big bite of my Alien Burger while I wait for the answer. But instead of telling me about the UFOs and Martians that could be locked up in Area 51, she gives me stern warnings about crossing into the forbidden sector. Government employees with telescopic lenses patrol nearby hillsides, so if an explorer steps just one toe over “do not cross” lines, they will be spending the night in a Nevada jail cell.

I buy an area map and head up the road to check out the black mailbox that’s not black anymore. This mailbox is just a few miles up the dusty highway, and several reported UFO sightings have occurred near it. The mailbox belongs to rancher Steve Medlin. Fed up with people messing with his mail, he’s painted the box white and put a heavy-duty lock on it. People still make the pilgrimage to his mail stop in hopes of leaving a letter for an alien. I search the grounds, but seeing no alien tracks, I head home and hang out with Earthlings instead. ♣

Jennifer Vandenberg is a freelance writer and geography teacher who lives in Las Vegas, Nevada. This is her first article for *ODYSSEY*.