

## A trip to Bisbee – March 2022

I love to travel and write about it but haven't written much in the last two years. A two-day trip to Bisbee, AZ, provided an excuse to get started again. Bisbee is an old (copper) mining town that, since the mines closed in the 1970s, has become an interesting regional attraction with good restaurants, art, independent book stores, and lots of stair climbing!



Bisbee is nestled in the Mule Mountains, as you can see on the picture (provided by the city [website](#)). In places, it just hangs on to the Canyon walls. The orange arrow above points to the El Dorado Hotel, a good place to stay, and the blue one to the Queen Mine entrance.

Main Street combines an eclectic set of buildings: romanesque revival (Post Office), art deco (Copper Queen Plaza), neo classical, gothic, and italian renaissance revival (the 'Central School'). I noticed the variety and looked up what they were generally considered (great youtube [here](#) and [info](#) here).



Main Street, with Post Office at the end





The Copper Queen Plaza



Building in a town like this poses its risks, as the below picture on the left shows. I read a book called *Bisbee Walls* and that made me look at retaining walls in a different light: they are everywhere and often beautiful.

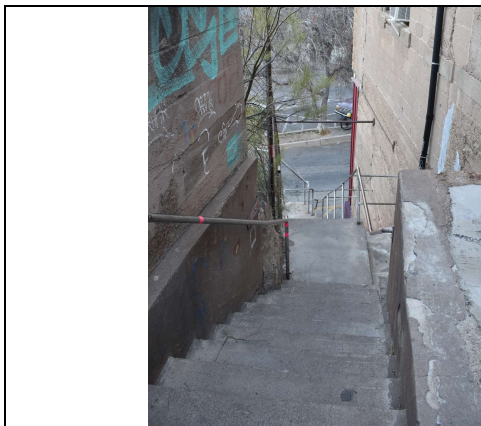


Further up Main Street/Tombstone Canyon

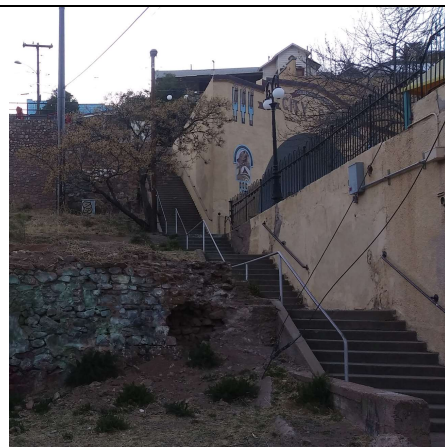


Retaining wall from the 1970s behind the Post Office, with azurite and malachite

The stairways make Bisbee unique and, once a year, there is a 4.5 mile 'Bisbee 1000 The Great Stair Climb' which "is arguably one of the most unusual and challenging events in the world", according to its [website](#). The run/walk includes a 1000 steps on 9 staircases that are connected by winding roads. The next event is 15 October this year.



Stairs everywhere



The finding of copper reserves in the late 1800s is the reason Bisbee was founded in 1880. At one point, it is said to have been the third largest town west of the Mississippi. And, at its height, the Queen Mine was the largest copper mine in the world, producing good amounts of gold, silver, lead, and zinc as by-products. Malachite and azurite are also frequently from this particular mine.

The mine was owned by Phelps Dodge from its start in 1885 to when it closed in 1975 but is now owned by Freeport McMoran. With the rising price of copper, the mine might be starting up again but, if the mine publishes its estimates of what may still lie in store below, it may have to pay 'reserve taxes'.



Touring the mine



Into the mine

There is also an open pit mine in Bisbee, the Lavender Mine, which closed in the 1970s as well. Many smaller towns were incorporated into Bisbee or gobbled up by the expanding mines. Erie Street is what's left of Lovell but it is a lovely remnant of the mid 1900s America; see here for a [video](#).



Erstwhile Lovell, AZ – now part of Bisbee



## References

Bisbee Design Guidelines, 1991. <https://www.bisbeeaz.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4914/Bisbee-Historic-Districts-Design-Guidelines>

Crowlie, Colleen et al 2018. *Bisbee Walls: Past and Present*. Arena Publishing.