

Airplane Graveyards

Have you ever wondered where old airplanes go when they are no longer used? Some airplanes end up in special places called “airplane graveyards” or “boneyards.” These huge



storage areas are found in the dry deserts of the American Southwest. Two famous airplane graveyards are at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona and Mojave Air and Space Port in California.

The biggest military airplane graveyard is located near Tucson in the Sonoran Desert. The desert is the perfect place to store airplanes because the air is dry and there is very little rain. Moisture can cause metal to rust, but the desert climate helps keep airplanes in good condition for many years. The hard desert ground also keeps heavy planes from sinking into the soil.

Thousands of retired military planes are lined up in rows at Davis-Monthan. Some of these planes may fly again one day, while others are used for spare parts. A few are even saved for museums. Workers carefully prepare each airplane before storing it. They cover windows, engines, and openings with a special white material called Spraylat. This coating protects the planes from heat, dust, and animals.

The stored airplanes are divided into four groups. Some are kept ready in case the military needs them again. Others are taken apart so their parts can help repair active aircraft. Some planes are almost ready to fly at any time, and others are meant for museums or scrap metal.

One famous airplane stored there was the B-52 bomber, which was used during the Cold War. Many old B-52s were cut apart after the

United States signed an arms reduction treaty with the Soviet Union. Giant steel blades sliced the planes into pieces so satellites could confirm they had been destroyed.

Another famous airplane graveyard is at Mojave Air and Space Port in California. This location stores retired commercial airplanes instead of military planes. After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, many airlines could not afford to keep all their airplanes flying. Large passenger jets were parked in the desert because airports did not have enough space for them.

Today, airplane graveyards are important for recycling, repairing, and preserving aircraft. Some planes are restored and displayed in museums, while others are turned into useful metal products. Even though these airplanes no longer fly, they still tell stories about history, war, travel, and technology.