

Your roadmap to ‘The Wall’

Thank you for visiting “The Wall.” Our goal with this project was to educate and empower Americans, because we knew this moment was coming: The moment when a national debate over this issue roils the nation, from congressional hallways to kitchen tables.

We invite you to explore the entire project on your own, but please allow us to share some highlights here:

The map: <https://usat.ly/2yqqsJN>

The USA TODAY NETWORK has produced the most current and comprehensive public map of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border by flying and driving the entire 2,000-mile border and then verifying its findings with public records, digital property maps, on-the-ground reporting and satellite imagery.

An interactive digital map, based on this extensive reporting, allows users to pick any spot on the border and cue up aerial video taken from a helicopter at that exact location, as well as see the type of fencing used along the border. This map is an important accountability tool. Moving forward, we can report exactly what has or has not been built, and at what cost.

The findings: <https://www.usatoday.com/border-wall/>

An overview of we learned, reported and revealed, including the first-ever report on how many parcels of property may be disrupted by a wall in Texas.

The flight video: <http://azc.cc/2wV8n11>

In 2017, a team of journalists set out with a mission: To visit, examine, video and map every foot of the U.S.-Mexico border. The task was beyond daunting. The trip would be 2,000 miles and would require almost two weeks in the air and on the ground. They spent months researching what they would be watching for. But their journey, like all such journeys, brought both new delights and unforeseen challenges.

The flight story: <https://usat.ly/2hfkCqe>

No helicopter flight can capture the flavors, smells, sounds and feel of the zone known in Spanish as la frontera. The cultural milieu and contrasts. The vastness, emptiness and brutal heat of deserts. The vibrancy and unease of an evening on the Juarez streets. The enormous economies of binational cities where backyards and front porches sit in sight of the fence. Our job is to fly the border and imagine what could be. Our questions, at heart, are the same ones all Americans must now examine: Can a wall be built? Should it be built? Will it work?

Virtual reality: <https://vimeo.com/251397573>

Virtual reality allows you to stand inside a virtual space in real proportions, in this case looking at the terrain and vegetation of border regions, and even hearing original sound from the area. “The Wall” project used a helicopter equipped with video and LIDAR technology, essentially a laser that measures distances, to help re-create geographical features of the border for the VR experience. The three on-the-ground experiences for “The Wall” allow you to immerse yourself into a virtual representation of three locations along the border:

- Near Tecate, where a steel border fence marks the line through rocky hillsides between California and Mexico.

- In the middle of a canyon in Big Bend National Park in southwest Texas, where thousand-foot cliffs soar higher than any border wall could be built.
- At the foot of Mount Cristo Rey, home of a religious shrine near El Paso, which serves as a pilgrimage site for people in both the U.S. and Mexico.

In addition to the virtual reality, in this experience you can also immerse yourself in a dozen videos and accompanying slideshows that capture stories along the border. To fully experience this groundbreaking virtual reality, you need a HTC Vive system. However, this video explains and highlights the experience. The multimedia innovations in “The Wall” were a key reason the project received a \$28,000 grant in 2017 from Journalism 360, a news initiative by Google News Lab and the Knight Foundation.

SHORT DOCUMENTARY VIDEOS

So much of the power of “The Wall” comes from the on-the-ground video reporting. We invite you to immerse yourself in them all, at <https://usat.ly/2wKwToG>. To get started, we recommend these:

Border crossings: A Deadly Desert: <http://azc.cc/2wV70aT>

Ranchers: Violence on the Land: <http://azc.cc/2wVoVJm>

Vigilantes: A Dangerous Game: <http://azc.cc/2wji11g>

Migrants: A Final Journey?: <http://azc.cc/2wjwwlS>

STORYTELLERS PROJECT

Story and video: <http://azc.cc/2xistqX>

In September, men and women from across the Southwest shared true, first-person stories from lives lived on and around the U.S.-Mexico border on stages in Phoenix, El Paso and Indio, Calif. Live storytelling was another interactive way to share “The Wall.”

BEHIND THE SCENES OF ‘THE WALL’

The full series: <https://usat.ly/2jPrImk>

Journalists have the best stories. Not just the ones they write or document on video. But the ones they share when they come back from assignments. In this podcast series, Arizona Republic Editor Nicole Carroll introduces you to the journalists behind “The Wall.” Hear what they went through to bring you these stories — and the surprising things they learned along the way.

Sample: Inside the mind of a human smuggler: <https://soundcloud.com/wallpodcast/smuggler>

Longtime immigration reporter, Daniel González, travels to the historic center of Mexicali to meet a pollero, a man who is paid to get migrants over the border fence and illegally into the United States. The pollero describes how — and why — he does this job.