Welcome to Mojave!

Spring is coming to Mojave National Preserve. While many people might assume that the winter skips over the desert, nothing could be farther from the truth. This winter, multiple snow storms blanketed—even paralyzed—much of the Eastern Mojave. Even Kelso Depot and Kelso Dunes had snow on the ground a few times. Combined with a few rainy days in the fall and winter and the increasing warmth and sun of spring, the winter’s precipitation should encourage a good wildflower season.

The seeds of many desert plants lie dormant near the ground surface until just the right conditions coax them into growth. Annual wildflowers, in particular, produce seeds that can wait for years, if necessary, until there is enough water available for a successful growing season. When the rains fall in abundance, the wildflowers follow in an equally bountiful riot of color.

That riot of color moves slowly through Mojave, starting at the lowest elevations and working its way higher as spring progresses. Some of the earliest blooms can be spotted along Zzyzx Road, near the western border of the preserve. Lupine, various species of phacelia, many members of the daisy family, and beautiful displays of beavertail cacti can be seen on the sides of the paved road leading to a desert oasis. For flower seekers with sharp eyes, lilac sunbonnets and desert five-spots lurk amid rocky surfaces.

Not long after Zzyzx, Kelbaker Road begins its own flower show. It is difficult to list all the many plants that often bloom on or near Kelbaker between Baker, Calif. and the cinder cones and lava beds. Showy plants like hairy sand verbena, dune evening primrose, bladder pod, and the slightly later desert mallow are obvious even at 50 miles per hour. Park your car and walk a few feet off the road, though, and you’ll find a wide range of flowers so small that several blooms can fit on a nickel. These miniatures include Fremont phacelia, purple mat, broad-flowered gilia, woolly daisies, and the Mojave gold poppy.

In good years, the Joshua tree forest blanketing Cima Dome puts on a show that is impossible to miss. Joshua trees, Mojave yuccas, and banana yuccas all produce massive, showy, and slightly alien-looking blooms late in the spring. Multiple types of cactus contribute bright colors along with tall stands of penstemon along Cima Road.

Penstemon makes an even more abundant appearance in the Mid Hills region. This area still shows significant scarring from a wildfire in 2005, but also has tremendous potential for wildflower displays. The northern portion of the Mid Hills to Hole-in-the-Wall Trail can be carpeted with penstemon, giant four-o’clocks, desert mallow, cactus, and a variety of smaller flowers at the end of spring.

Mojave National Preserve’s variation in elevation ensures a long, spread-out, flower-viewing season. From early to late spring, and even very early summer, flowers are blooming somewhere in the preserve. To get the most out of your trip, check the website and talk to a park ranger at any information center (see page 2 for more info.). Rangers can help you choose the best place—the best elevation—to see a wide range of beautiful spring wild flowers.

Angela Giore, Volunteer-in-Parks (VIP)

3 Mojave’s Roads

Just getting around Mojave National Preserve, the third largest unit of the National Park System in the contiguous United States, can be a trial for some. But it need not be. Plan ahead and prioritize; familiarize yourself with Mojave’s paved and dirt roads and the major sites to see along the way. And remember—you won’t see it all in one day (but you can always come back)...

4 Climate Change

What do springs, seeps, and Joshua trees have in common? They’re critical components of the Mojave Desert ecosystem, and global climate change threatens them all. Mojave National Preserve is taking steps to monitor potential impacts and ensure a healthy and sustainable desert for future generations.

6 Campgrounds

Mojave National Preserve is a camper’s paradise. Developed campgrounds, roadside camping, and backcountry camping offer opportunities for individuals and groups of diverse ages, interests, and skills. Careful planning and knowledge of camping rules and regulations will help ensure an enjoyable and safe experience for you, future visitors, and the fragile desert environment...


**Dry Heat:** Defining Desert Climate

### Mojave Temperatures: Average High / Low

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Granite Mountain (Elevation 4,200 feet)</th>
<th>Zzyz (Elevation 530 feet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>50°F / 36°F</td>
<td>61°F / 34°F</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>54°F / 38°F</td>
<td>69°F / 40°F</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>59°F / 41°F</td>
<td>74°F / 46°F</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>68°F / 48°F</td>
<td>83°F / 53°F</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>75°F / 54°F</td>
<td>93°F / 61°F</td>
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<td>85°F / 63°F</td>
<td>103°F / 70°F</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>90°F / 67°F</td>
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<td>August</td>
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<td>73°F / 52°F</td>
<td>79°F / 55°F</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>59°F / 41°F</td>
<td>73°F / 46°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>50°F / 34°F</td>
<td>62°F / 34°F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Average Annual Precipitation | 8.5 inches | 3.37 inches |

In spring and summer, come to Mojave National Preserve for any eventuality. Bring a variety of clothes that you can layer on and off as conditions change. Wear a hat and sunglasses, and use sunblocking lotion liberally. Even if you only plan to drive through the park, be sure to carry plenty of water—at least one gallon per person per day. Carry twice as much for more strenuous activity. It is easy to become dehydrated in arid desert environments.

Remember that dryness—not heat—defines the desert. So, should you find yourself wandering the Soda Lake plays a on a 110°F day in July (not recommended), drenched in your own sweat, and gazing quartz after quartz of water (you came prepared, after all), take comfort in the mantra: “At least it’s a dry heat.” Michael Glore, Park Ranger

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**Essential Information**

### Dates and Hours of Operation

The preserve is open all year. Information centers (see below) maintain regular hours of operation.

### Fees and Reservations

There are no entrance fees. See page 6 for information about campground reservations and fees.

### Information Centers

Three information centers provide orientation, information, and trip-planning advice. Park rangers are on duty. Western National Parks Association (WNPA) bookstores offer books, maps, and more.

- **Kelso Depot Visitor Center**
  - Located at Kelso Depot Visitor Center. Open daily, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

### Water

Drinking water is available only at Kelso Depot Visitor Center, Hole-in-the-Wall Information Center, Hole-in-the-Wall and Black Canyon campgrounds, Mid-Hills Campground, and the campground at Providence Mountains State Recreation Area (Mitchell Cavens).

### Gasoline

There are no gasoline stations within Mojave National Preserve. Gasoline can be purchased along I-40 at Needles, Fenner, and Ludlow, Calif.; along I-15 at Baker, Calif.; the Cima Road exit; and in Pahrump, Nev., and along U.S. 95 at Searchlight, at the Nev. 163 junction south of Cal Nev-Ari, Nev.

### Lodging

There are no motels within Mojave National Preserve. Lodging might be available in Barstow, Nipton, Ludlow, Needles, Baker, and TwentyMile Palms, Calif., and in Pahrump and Searchlight, Nev.

### Bicycles

Bicycles are allowed in parking areas, on paved roads, and on existing, open dirt roads. Bicycles are not allowed in Wilderness Areas or for cross-country travel.

### Pets

Though not allowed inside information centers, pets are welcome elsewhere. They must be leashed and never left unattended. Dogs used during hunting activities must be under the owner’s control at all times. Pet excrement must be collected and disposed of in garbage receptacles.

### Permits

Permits are required for all organized events, group events (more than 15 individuals or 7 vehicles), and commercial activities such as filming. Fees apply. Proof of insurance and posting of a bond might also be required. Call 760-252-6107 or visit www.nps.gov/moja for more information.

### Hunting and Firearms

Hunting is permitted in accordance with state regulations. All hunting activities require a license; additional permits and tags might apply. Visit the California Department of Fish & Game website at www.dfg.ca.gov for more information.

### Target shooting or “pinking” is prohibited. All firearms transported within the preserve must be unloaded, cased, and broken down, except during lawful/hunting activities. No shooting is permitted within 1 mile of developed areas, including campgrounds, information centers, Kelso Dunes, Fort Piute, Sweeney Granite Mountains Desert Research Center, and the Desert Studies Center at Zzyzx.

### Collecting and Vandalism

Disturbing, defacing, or collecting plants, animals, rocks, historic or archeological objects is prohibited. Leave these resources as you find them for everyone to enjoy. Metal detectors are not allowed.

### Private Property

Private inholdings are found throughout the preserve. Please respect the rights of our neighbors. It is your responsibility to obtain permission before hunting, hiking, or entering private property.

### Cattle and Fences

Most grazing within Mojave National Preserve occurs on public land. This land is open to you to explore, but please don’t disturb cattle, fences, or water tanks. Leave gates as you find them.

### Firewood & Campfires

Wood is scarce in the desert. Cutting or collecting any wood, including deadwood, is prohibited. All firewood, including kindling, must be brought in. Firewood might be available for purchase at Baker, Fenner, or Nipton, Calif., or at Providence Mountains State Recreation Area (Mitchell Cavens). Campfires are allowed in campground fire rings and other established sites. To minimize your impact, use a fire pan and pack out the ashes. Please do not leave fires smoldering or unattended.
Mojave National Preserve is vast. At 1.6 million acres, it is the third-largest unit of the National Park System in the contiguous United States. While much of Mojave’s wild and historic splendor is available only to those who travel its trails and unmaintained roads, the primary roads of the preserve offer endless opportunities for exploration (see map on page 8).

### Avenues to Adventure

**Mojave National Preserve**


**Cinder Cones & Lava Flows**

No signs or services.

About 1.4 miles southeast of Baker, Kelbaker Road traverses a 25,600-acre area of lava flows and volcanic cinder cones thought to range in age from 10,000 to 7.7 million years old. In 1973, the area was designated as Cinder Cones National Natural Landmark due to its scenic beauty and exceptional geological value. Aiken Mine Road (19 miles southeast of Baker, Calif.) offers an interesting side trip through the heart of the area and access to a lava tube. High clearance and four-wheel drive recommended.

**Kelso Depot Visitor Center**

Information, exhibits, orientation film, art gallery, bookstore, food (The Beanery @ Kelso), restrooms, water, picnic area.

Located 34 miles southeast of Baker, Kelso Depot began operation in 1924 and served as train station, restaurant, and employee housing on the Los Angeles and Salt Lake route of the Union Pacific Railroad. Now Mojave National Preserve’s principal information center and museum, extensive exhibits describe the cultural and natural history of the preserve. Historically furnished rooms offer a glimpse into Kelso’s past.

**Kelso Dunes**

Self-guiding trail, vault toilets, no water.

About 42 miles southeast of Baker (4 miles south of Kelso Depot), then 3 miles west on a graded dirt road. Nearly 700 feet high and covering a 45-square-mile area, the Kelso Dunes were created over the course of 25,000 years by mountain-building events that buried sand dunes. South Lake and Mojave RiverSink is located to the northwest. The Providence and Granite mountains served as barriers that trapped the blowing sand. The dunes produce a “booming” or “singing” sound when sand with the right moisture content slides down the steep slopes. Try it for yourself—run down a dune slope (but don’t trample vegetation!) to initiate the sound.

**Granite Mountains**

No signs or services.

An imposing jumble of granite marks the south entrance to the preserve, 50 miles southeast of Baker on Kelbaker Road. Portions of the Granite Mountains lie within the University of California’s Desert Research Center; please respect the signs that mark the boundary. High clearance and four-wheel drive recommended.

**Clark Mountain**

No signs or services.

The only portion of Mojave National Preserve north of I-15, Clark Mountain is also its highest point, 1,500 feet above the surrounding desert and provides ideal habitat for the world’s largest concentration of Joshua trees. The top of the dome is located west of Cima Road near the Teutonia Peak Trailhead; this unusual geologic feature is best seen from a distance. Try the view looking northwest from Cedar Canyon Road, 2.5 miles east of Kelso Cima Road.

**Cedar Canyon & Black Canyon Roads**

Mostly unpaved, the 20-mile Cedar Canyon Road connects Kelso Cima Road in the west with Ivanpah Road in the east, paralleling (and sometimes joining) the historic Mojave Road. Black Canyon Road (unpaved north of Hole-in-the-Wall) connects Cedar Canyon Road with Essex Road, 20 miles to the south.

**Rock Springs**

Wayside exhibits, no services.

A well-known watering hole for early travelers, Rock Springs is located 5.2 miles east of Black Canyon Road on Cedar Canyon Road, then 1.4 miles south on a sandy, unpaved road. Four-wheel drive recommended. Camp Rock Springs, a military redoubt established in 1866, was one of the most isolated and comfortsless army posts in the West.

**Mid Hills**

Campground, trash can, vault toilets, water. Not recommended for RVs.

About 2 miles west of Black Canyon on the road south to Wild Horse Canyon Road, mid hills support pinyon-juniper woodland habitat. The effects of a fire that swept through the area in June 2005 are evident, although several capesites in the popular campground still contain stashes of dry pine and juniper.

**Hole-in-the-Wall**

Information center, bookstore, campsites, picnic area, Hall Road, restroom, water, telephones. Just north of the junction of Black Canyon and the south and east end of Wild Horse Canyon Road, rhyolite cliffs ridden with holes and hollows are the backdrop for Hole-in-the-Wall.

**Plute Spring**

About 7.4 miles west of I-15 on unimproved Plute Road, then 3.1 miles west on an extremely rough unmaintained dirt road. High clearance and four-wheel drive recommended.

**Fort Piute and Plute Spring**

Trails, wayside exhibits, no signs or services. Willows, cottonwoods, and rushes thrive along a half-mile section of Plute Creek. Fort Piute (still visible) was once in a string of military outposts built along the Mojave Road. Please don’t climp on the foundations or remove anything.

**Teutonia Peak**

A 2,000-foot hill supported by mountains rising over 7,500 feet, a botanical “island” of chaparral plants remains from mountain glaciers._logic feature is best seen from a distance. Try or create new routes. This rule is strictly enforced; violators will receive citations. Driving in washes is not permitted. Watch for and respect Wilderness Boundary signs; motorized vehicles and bicycles are not allowed in designated Wilderness Areas.

**Zzyzx Road**

Six miles southwest of Baker on I-15, Zzyzx Road leads 5 miles south into the preserve along the western shore of Soda Dry Lake.

**Zzyzx/Soda Springs**

Self-guiding trail, way-side exhibits, vault toilets, non-potable water, picnic area.

Historically known as Soda Springs and later renamed Zzyzx (pronounced ZYe-zix), this oasis is home to the California State University Desert Studies Center. The buildings and pond were developed in the 1940s by Curtis Springer, who operated a health resort at the site. Zzyzx is open to the public—still owned by Lake Tujialal and along the shore of Soda Dry Lake. Please do not disturb participants when classes are in session.

**Nipton, Ivanpah & Lanfair Roads**

Eleven miles south of Primm, Nev., Nipton Road begins at I-15 and passes through Nipton, Calif., 11 miles east. Ivanpah Road (only the north-ernmost miles paved) heads southeast of Nipton Road, through the Ivanpah and Lanfair valleys, eventually connecting with the paved Lanfair Road and the Fenner Valley. Together stretching 46 miles, Ivanpah and Lanfair roads connect the northern preserve boundary (short of Zzyzx Road) with the southern near Goff, Calif.

**Hotel Nipton**

Privately operated hotel, store, campground, & more; for information call 760-856-2335 or email at stay@nipton.com.

Built in 1910, this charming hotel reflects the railroad, ranching, and mining history of the small community at Nipton.

**Carruthers Canyon**

Primitive camping, hiking, no signs or services. About 5.5 miles west of Ivanpah Road on New York Mountain Road, then 2.7 miles north on unpaved road, Carruthers Canyon is located in the rugged New York Mountains. Surrounded by mountains rising over 7,500 feet, a botani-cal “island” of chaparral plants remains from wetter times of the past. High clearance and four-wheel drive recommended.

**Dirt Road Driving**

Preparation of Vehicle

Ensure that your vehicle is in good condition: check tires, oil, and gas gauge.

For emergencies, carry tools, tire jack, tow ropes, extra water, and fluids for your vehicle.

**Know the Rules of the Road**

All vehicles operating within Mojave National Preserve must be street-legal in accordance with California DMV requirements, including current registration and tags, lights and turn signals, and valid insurance. California “Green Sticker” and “Red Sticker” programs are not recognized within the preserve.

Off-pavement travel is allowed only on existing, open dirt roads. Do not travel cross-country or create new routes. This rule is strictly enforced; violators will receive citations. Driving in washes is not permitted. Watch for and respect Wilderness Boundary signs; motorized vehicles and bicycles are not allowed in designated Wilderness Areas.

**Check Road Conditions**

Road conditions vary widely. Dirt roads might be rough, sandy, or muddy, rendering them impassable, and the unprepared motorist could be trapped many miles from help. Watch for cattle, burros, and other wildlife on roadways.

Not all roads are shown on all maps; traces and illegal shortcuts add to the confusion. Carry a good map, and ask a park ranger for current road conditions.

**Sand & Mud Driving Tips**

- Be sure to carry plenty of drinking water and emergency supplies.
- Engage four-wheel drive before entering deep sand or mud.
- Don't gun the engine—the engine will spin the tires, dig you in deeper, and could bury your vehicle to the frame. Smooth, easy power is better than too much power; use low gearing and just enough throttle to maintain forward movement.
- If you detect a loss of traction, turn the steering wheel rapidly from side-to-side—this might help to generate traction.
- Your vehicle gets stuck, place solid materials (such as floor mats) under the tires to provide traction.
- If you’re really stuck, it’s best to stay with your vehicle. A stationary, stranded vehicle is much easier to locate than a person traveling on foot. Avoid strenuous activity during the heat of the day; stay in the shade of your vehicle.

**Landfair Valley**

No signs or services.

South of the New York Mountains along Ivanpah and Lanfair roads, this high valley shelters an impressive Joshua tree forest and was an early ranching and homesteading center. From 1893 until 1923, the Nevada Southern Railway ran up the valley from Goffs, providing services to homesteaders and ranchers in the valley and to miners in the mountains beyond. While little evidence remains of homesteads that once dotted the valley, traces of private property still exist. Please respect the rights of landowners.

**Explore Mojave**

Scenic Cima Road connects I-15 with Cima, Calif., traversing the world’s largest concentration of Joshua trees.
The threatened desert tortoise is a marvel of desert adaptation. Its continued survival, however, is largely dependent on responsible human behavior.

Admire from Afar
Do not harass or approach a tortoise too closely. When no water is available, tortoises absorb water from their bladders. If frightened, they might release their bladders and lose this vital water supply.

Mindful Motoring
Stay on established roads. Vehicles can crush burrows, killing tortoises and eggs.

Check beneath your vehicle before driving away. On hot days, tortoises enjoy the shade that can provide.

Observe posted speed limits, and be especially watchful during and after rainstorms. Tortoises often enter roadways to drink from puddles.

Pet Smarts
Do not release captive tortoises. They might carry diseases that can be transmitted to wild tortoises. Instead, turn them over to a licensed tortoise-rescue center.

For more information, call 760-252-6101.

Climate Change and Joshua Trees

Hiking the Teutonia Peak Trail on Cima Dome, you enter the world's largest and densest Joshua tree forest. As you make your way up the gently sloping, sandy path, you might carry diseases that can be transmitted to wild tortoises. Instead, turn them over to a licensed tortoise-rescue center. For more information, call 760-252-6101.

It might surprise you to encounter this much life in the desert, but many animals depend on Joshua trees for food, shelter, and reproduction. Ecologists refer to Joshua trees as a “foundation species”—one that exerts an important influence over the rest of the web of life. Brilliantly colored Scott's orioles hang their basket-like nests to the underside of Joshua tree leaves. During dry spells, rodents like the antelope ground squirrel and desert wood rat seek moisture from this veritable desert canteen. Without Joshua trees, these animals might perish, diminishing the dining choices of coyotes, hawks, and owls further up the food chain. The Mojave Desert ecosystem would be much less diverse.

The Joshua trees of Mojave National Preserve are a different subspecies (Yucca brevifolia ssp. brevifolia) than their well-known relatives further south in Joshua Tree National Park (Yucca brevifolia ssp. brevifolia). The two plants are slightly different—Yucca brevifolia in Joshua Tree grows taller, while the Mojave subspecies is typically smaller, more compact, and has more branches. By whatever scientific name, however, the Joshua tree is considered the signature plant and symbol of the Mojave Desert.

But will these desert sentinels be here in the future? Although it’s not exactly understood how climate change will affect the California desert, many scientists foresee less-predictable rainfall patterns and increased temperatures. That means increased stress for plants and animals that already have to cope with extreme temperatures and scant precipitation.

During photosynthesis, the process by which plants create food from solar radiation, plants lose water to the air through transpiration—a type of evaporation from their leaves. The higher the air temperature, the more water is lost by the plant through transpiration. When the amount of transpired water becomes greater than the amount absorbed by the root system, the plant is in stress. At a certain point, the water loss becomes so great that the plant reaches permanent wilting point and subsequent death.

In short, climate change threatens to destroy the reproductive capabilities of Joshua trees. Continued on next page...
The Mojave Road

This country, as a whole, seemed a vast volcanic desert—of mountains, canyons, and mesas—and what it was ever made for, except to excite wonder and astonishment, is a mystery to the passing traveler... Water was found only at distances of ten and twenty miles apart... J.F. Rusling describing his 1866 trip on the Mojave Road in Across America

Originally a foot trail used by Mojave and other people of the Colorado River basin to transport goods for trade with coastal tribes, the Mojave Road later served the cause of westward expansion: military forts were established along the route to protect key water sources and provide assistance for travelers. Today it is a popular four-wheel drive road.

The Mojave Road enters the preserve near Frute Spring on the eastern boundary and at Soda Dry Lake near Zzyzx on the west. Some sections are rough and sandy; four-wheel drive is recommended. Much of the road might become slick, muddy, and impassable after rains. Be sure to inquire about road conditions, especially if you plan to cross Soda Lake.

The Mojave Road Guide by Dennis G. Casiaer provides in-depth history and mile-by-mile descriptions of the route. Get your copy at any information center.

Climate Change and Joshua Trees (continued from page 4)

from the southern half of their range, potentially eliminating them from Joshua Tree National Park, for example, in the next 100 years. Some Joshua trees in Mojave National Preserve, however, are predicted to survive, perhaps due to a more northerly latitude and slightly higher elevation. Regardless, scientists, public land managers, and concerned citizens alike are hopeful that Joshua trees will continue to play a vital role throughout the fragile Mojave Desert ecosystem. But they’re not taking any chances.

In February 2009, the National Parks Conservation Association, Mojave National Preserve, Joshua Tree National Park, Defenders of Wildlife, the Morongo Basin Cultural Arts Council, The Living Desert, Copper Mountain College, The Mojave Desert Land Trust, and The Wildlands Conservancy co-hosted the free, annual Climate Change and the California Desert Conference in Joshua Tree, Calif. Participants and featured guest speakers explored the many ways in which climate change will affect the Mojave Desert, including the declining range of Joshua trees. With this information and a renewed sense of cooperation and urgency, conference attendees are better equipped to make decisions—in the workplace and at home—that safeguard our shared natural heritage.

Seth Shote, National Parks Conservation Association

To learn more about how you can help protect national parks, for future generations, visit the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) online at: www.npca.org.

The Beanery @ Kelso

After a nearly two-decade-long hiatus, the Kelso Depot lunch room—"The Beanery"—is back in business. Enjoy a cup of hot coffee, cold ice cream, fresh deli sandwich, or the latest gossip in this historic setting, painstakingly restored to its 1924 appearance.

Location
Kelso Depot Visitor Center: 34 miles south of Baker, Calif. on Kelbaker Road

Hours of Operation
Friday through Tuesday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Contact
760-252-6165

The Beany @ Kelso's social center since 1924.

Park Ranger’s Pick: Michael Gloren on Wilderness

Before moving to the Mojave, I was a park ranger at Alaska’s Katmai National Park & Preserve, five million roadless acres of spruce trees, brown bears, spawning salmon, and volcanoes. Here, I thought, was an unqualified example of the Wild... When I signed on to Mojave National Preserve in Southern California, I felt resigned to the fact that I was leaving true wilderness behind.

I was wrong. I soon learned that nearly half of the 1.6 million-acre Mojave National Preserve is an incredibly diverse wilderness, ranging from the vast, desiccated playas of Soda Dry Lake near Zzyzx to the limestone crags and ancient white fir trees of Clark Mountain. Mojave Wilderness is congressionally designated wilderness: In 1964, by a nearly unanimous vote, the United States Congress enacted landmark legislation—the Wilderness Act—to “secure, for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.”

So what? What is the significance of the Wilderness Act?

For me, as a federal employee and park ranger, it means that Mojave Wilderness must be administered in a manner consistent with the guidance provided by the Wilderness Act: as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man...” Permanent roads, structures, and commercial services are prohibited. I’ll visit visitors, however, that “untrammeled by man” doesn’t mean that people should stay out of wilderness areas. Just the opposite: wilderness is meant to be visited, explored, and experienced. You can hike, camp, watch wildlife, photograph, ride horses, or even hunt. You just can’t use cars, trucks, or other motorized equipment to do so.

As a private citizen and frequent visitor to America’s public lands, however, wilderness has perhaps the most meaning. Cut off from other human beings and the sights and sounds of modern society, deliberate and thoughtful action becomes the primary means of communicating with the world around you. My “wild” experiences are somehow intangible, fleeting, and, admittedly, hard to describe, but that mysterious uncertainty keeps me returning to wilderness.

Conservationist John Muir believed that “wilderness is a necessity.” I agree: it has become an indispensable part of my life. But while it might be necessary, the existence of wilderness is not sufficient in itself. It requires action on our behalf. I think that’s what naturalist and philosopher Henry David Thoreau meant when he claimed that, “in wilderness is the preservation of the world.” Note that he wrote about wilderness (a state of being), not wilderness (a place). “Wildness” can happen almost anywhere. After all, by drawing lines on a map and placing signage around a landscape, can we really encapsulate “the Wild?” Some would argue that just the opposite occurs. But read between the signs: There truly is something special about designated wilderness that provides unique and unparalleled opportunities for “wild” experiences.

Mysterious, hard to define, life-affirming, wilderness is all those things. But perhaps most extraordinary of all is that in 1964 a government—the United States government—made available to every man, woman, and child, today and in the future, protected areas in which to experience something greater and more powerful than themselves: a humbling sense of vulnerability, a feeling of serenity growing with each passing moment, a sense of understanding and belonging to a shared natural heritage. If we could all have these experiences, the world would indeed be a better place.

So get out and into Mojave Wilderness. There’s plenty of it around. What will it mean to you?
Camping & Backcountry Travel

Backcountry Guidelines & Regulations

Backcountry travel and camping—backpacking, roadside camping, and horsepacking—require careful planning in order to ensure a safe and rewarding experience. Visitors should adhere to National Park Service regulations and are further encouraged to follow Leave No Trace guidelines to minimize their impact on the fragile desert environment. Additional regulations apply for roadside camping (see below) and horsepacking (talk with a park ranger or visit us online for more information: www.nps.gov/mojai).

Leave No Trace principles are rooted in scientific studies and common sense. The message is framed under seven Leave No Trace guidelines specific to Mojave National Preserve:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
   • There is no permit or registration system for backcountry camping at Mojave National Preserve; be sure to notify others of your travel itinerary.
   • Few established trails exist; carry a good map and familiarize yourself with desert travel and survival skills before beginning your trip.

2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
   • Reuse existing campsites (required for roadside camping—see below).
   • Do not make camp in a dry wash—flash floods develop quickly in the desert.
   • Camping is limited to a maximum of 14 consecutive days per visit/stay and 30 total days per year.
   • Campsites must be more than 200 yards from any water source.
   • Camping is not permitted: within 1/4 mile of any paved road, within 1/2 mile of Fort Flute or Kelso Depot, within 1 mile north (i.e., the crest of the dunes) or 1/4 mile south of the Kelso Dunes access road. (Exceptions may apply for roadside camping—see below.)

3. Dispose of Waste Properly
   • Store all food and garbage in a manner that will prevent access by wildlife. Carry plastic bags and pack out all trash.
   • Bury human waste in catholes 6-8 inches deep, at least 200 yards from all water sources.
   • Pet excrement must be collected and disposed of in garbage receptacles.

4. Leave What You Find
   • Disturbing, defacing, or collecting plants, animals, rocks, and historic or archeological objects is prohibited. As part of our national heritage, these resources should be left as they are found for all to enjoy. Metal detectors are not allowed.

5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
   • Campfires are allowed in established fire rings only, or with use of a portable firepan (be sure to pack out ashes). Do not leave fires smoldering or unattended.
   • Cutting or collecting any wood, including downed wood, is prohibited. All firewood must be brought into the preserve.

6. Respect Wildlife

7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

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Hole-in-the-Wall Campground
Facilities: pit toilets, trash receptacles, potable water, fire rings, picnic tables, dump station; no utility hookups.
Fees: $12 per site per night. $6 for America the Beautiful Senior/Access Pass holders.
Reservations: not accepted; campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis. At 4,400 feet in elevation, Hole-in-the-Wall Campground is surrounded by sculptured volcanic rock walls and makes a great basecamp for hikers (see p.7) and for exploring nearby Mitchell Caverns in the Providence Mountains State Recreation Area. Thirty-five campsites accommodate RVs and tents; two walk-in sites are also available.

Mid Hills Campground
Facilities: pit toilets, trash receptacles, potable water, fire rings, picnic tables, no dump station or utility hookups.
Fees: $12 per site per night. $6 for America the Beautiful Senior/Access Pass holders.
Reservations: not accepted; campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis. The Hackberry Fire swept through the Mid Hills area in June 2005, burning much of the vegetation. About half of the 26 camp sites were left unharmed, however—they remain surrounded by pinyon pine and juniper trees. At 1,600 feet in elevation, Mid Hills is much cooler than the desert floor below. The access road is unpaved and is not recommended for motorhomes or trailers.

Black Canyon Equestrian & Group Campground
Facilities: corals, pit toilets, trash receptacles, potable water, fire ring, grill, picnic shelter with tables.
Fees: $35 per group per night.
Reservations: required; call 760-928-2572 or 760-252-6104. Located across the road from Hole-in-the-Wall Information Center. Horses and riders are welcome at Mojave National Preserve! Permits required for large groups (see p.2 for permit information).

Roadside Camping
Roadside vehicle camping is permitted in areas that have been traditionally used for this purpose. By reusing existing sites, you help protect the desert from further damage. Sites with existing rock rings should be considered disturbed and suitable for roadside camping. Many roadside camping sites cannot accommodate multiple vehicles; please don’t enlarge them. Do not camp along paved roads or in day-use areas, and stay at least 200 yards from all water sources.

Commercial camping is also available at Baker, Barstow, Needles, and Nycton, Calif.

Nearby Camping Areas
Providence Mountains State Recreation Area (Mitchell Caverns)
16 miles north of I-15 on Essex Road, has six campsites with tables and fire rings available on a first-come basis for $12 per night. See page 7 for more information.

Afton Canyon
25 miles southwest of Baker on I-15, has a BLM campground with tables and fire rings for $6 per night.
Commercial camping is also available at Baker, Barstow, Needles, and Nycton, Calif.

Near Kelbaker Road:
Rainy Day Mine Site
15.2 miles southeast of Baker on Kelbaker Road, then 0.3 miles northeast on the unsigned and very sandy rock to the Rainy Day Mine. Four-wheel drive recommended; no RVs.
Granite Pass
6.1 miles north of I-40 on Kelbaker Road, north of Granite Pass, then west on one of several access roads. Campsites are located just north of the granite spires. High clearance vehicle recommended; no RVs.
Kelso Dunes Mine
4 miles west of Kelbaker Road on the unpaved Kelso Dunes Road. One campsite is located south of the road, ¼ mile past the marked trailhead. Several others are available ¼ mile beyond, near a clump of trees. Except at these sites, roadside camping is prohibited along Kelso Dunes Road (including at the trailhead).

Near Cima Road:
Sunrise Rock
12 miles south of I-15 on the east side of Cima Road. Trailhead for Tukutini Peak Trail is nearby on the opposite side of Cima Road.

Near Black Canyon Road:
Black Canyon Road (East)
4 miles south of Hole-in-the-Wall Information Center on the east side of Black Canyon Road, above a wash and near a hill with views of the Providence Mountains. Another site is located about 4 miles further south, near rock piles.

Near Ivanpah and Cedar Canyon Roads:
Caruthers Canyon
5.5 miles west of Ivanpah Road on New York Mountains Road, then 1.5 to 2.7 miles north to campsite. High clearance and four-wheel drive recommended; no RVs.
Hiking

Hikers at Mojave National Preserve can enjoy a variety of challenges, with sweeping views, solitude, and over 80,000 acres of designated wilderness.

Although there are few established hiking trails in Mojave National Pre-
serve, abandoned dirt roads, washes, and ridge lines offer an
abundance of cross-country hiking opportunities. Numbers on
map show general locations of trails and routes listed below.

All trails and routes listed below are shown on the National Geo-
graphic Trails Illustrated topographic map for Mojave National Pre-
serve. This and other maps are available for purchase
at all information centers (see page 2 for loca-
tions and other info.).

Recommended Routes

Warning: the routes described below are
not established trails; trailheads might
be unidentifiable or nonexistent. Check a
detailed map or guidebook—available at
all information centers—and consult a park
ranger for route information.

Developed Trails

1) Lake Tuendae Nature Trail
Trailhead: Zzyzx parking area, 5 miles south of
I-15 on Zzyzx Road.
Enjoy an easy, self-guided, 1-mile stroll around
Lake Tuendae. Wayside exhibits along the trail
reveal the rich cultural and natural history of this
oasis on the preserve’s western boundary.

2) Teutonia Peak Trail
Trailhead: 12 miles south of I-15, or 5 miles
north of Cima, Calif. on Cima Road.
Explore the world’s densest Joshua tree forest
en route to a rocky peak with expansive views
of Cima Dome and beyond. 4 miles round-trip.

3) Hole-in-the-Wall Nature Trail
Trailhead: Hole-in-the-Wall Information Center
and Campground, 20 miles north of I-40 on
Essex and Black Canyon roads.
Learn to identify desert plants on this easy, 11-
mile round-trip hike. Trailheads at Hole-in-the-
Wall Information Center and Campground.

4) Rings Loop Trail
Trailhead: Hole-in-the-Wall Information Center
parking area, 20 miles north of I-40 on Essex
and Black Canyon roads.
Discover how Hole-in-the-Wall got its name as
you ascend narrow Banshee Canyon with the
sand, then slide down the slopes.

5) Mid Hills to Hole-in-the-Wall Trail
Trailheads: Entrance to Mid Hills Campground,
and about 1 mile west of Black Canyon Road on
the south end of Mid Hills Canyon Road.
Hike 8 miles, one-way, through a maze of
washes decorated with barrel and cholla cacti,
than through the Hackberry Fire burned area.
Total elevation gain is 1,200 feet. Watch care-
fully for trail route markers.

6) Barber Peak Loop Trail
Trailhead: Parking area for walk-in tent sites at
Hole-in-the-Wall Campground.
The preserve’s newest trail, this 6-mile loop
encircles Barber Peak just west of Hole-in-the-
Wall Campground, passes the Outraie Cliffs, and
returns to Hole-in-the-Wall via Banshee Canyon.

7) Kelso Dunes
Start: 3 miles west of Kelbaker Road on the
well-gardened Kelbaker Kelso Dunes Road.
Hikers at sunrise and sunset are treated to both
cooler temperatures and the rose-colored glow
of the dunes. The roughly 5-mile round-trip hike
might take several hours as you slog through
the sand, then slide down the slopes.

8) Quail Basin
Start: 12.5 miles north of I-40 on Kelbaker
Road; then 2.5 miles west on an unmarked
signed road.
High clearance and four-wheel
drive recommended.

9) Keystone Canyon
Start: 3 miles west of Kelbaker Road on the
well-gardened Kelso Dunes Road.
Hikers at sunrise and sunset are treated to both
cooler temperatures and the rose-colored glow
of the dunes. The roughly 5-mile round-trip hike
might take several hours as you slog through
the sand, then slide down the slopes.

10) Caruthers Canyon
Start: Minnie campsites in Caruthers Canyon,
5.5 miles west of Kelbaker Road on New York
Mountains Road; then 2.7 miles north on un-
signposted road. High clearance and four-wheel
drive recommended.

11) Castle Peaks Corridor
Start: 4.9 miles east of Kelbaker Road on signed
Hart Mile Road; left at fork, then 0.9 miles,
left at fork, then 3.4 miles, crossing an earthen
bench; left at fork, then 1 mile more to where
road ends. High clearance and four-wheel
drive recommended.

12) Piute Creek
Start: 9.5 miles east of the junction of Lanfair
Valley and Cedar Canyon roads on a dirt utility
road, then 0.5 miles north. High clearance
and four-wheel drive recommended.

For reservations and information, call
760-928-2586.

Mojave National Preserve

Mitchell Caverns: A State Park within a National Preserve

Stalactites, stalagmites, helictites, shields,
and draperies are but a few of the forma-
tions that decorate the interior of Mitchell
Caverns at Providence Mountains State
Recreation Area. Located just south of Hole-
in-the-Wall on Essex Road, this
5,900-acre state park offers cave tours,
camping, and hiking in the spectacular
Providence Mountains.

Tours
Guided tours of Mitchell Caverns require a
11/2-mile walk and last about 1 1/2 hours.
The temperature inside the cave is a
comfortable 65°F; so dress accordingly
and wear sturdy shoes. Tour schedules are as follows:

Winter (Labor Day–Memorial Day)
Weekdays: 1:30 p.m.
Weekends: 10 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 3 p.m.

Summer (Memorial Day–Labor Day)
Daily: 1:30 p.m.

Fees are $5 for adults, $2 for children
under 16, children under six years old get in free. Tours are limited to 25 people.
Reservations (not accepted for individuals
or small groups) are required for groups
of 10 or more and can be made by calling
at least three weeks in advance.

Camping and Hiking
At 4,300 feet in elevation, the camp-
ground offers superb views of the sur-
rounding desert. Six campsites with tables
and fire rings are available on a first-
come, first-served basis for $12 per night.
Water and flush toilets are provided.

Three short trails—the Mary Beale Nature
Trail (0.5 miles round-trip), Nina Mora trail
(0.5 miles round-trip), and Crystal Spring
Trail (2 miles round-trip)—offer an intro-
duction to the area’s history, geology,
and flora while providing outstanding views.
Cross-country hikers can reach the peaks
of the Providence Mountains. Groups
planning to hike cross-country require a
free permit from the visitor center.