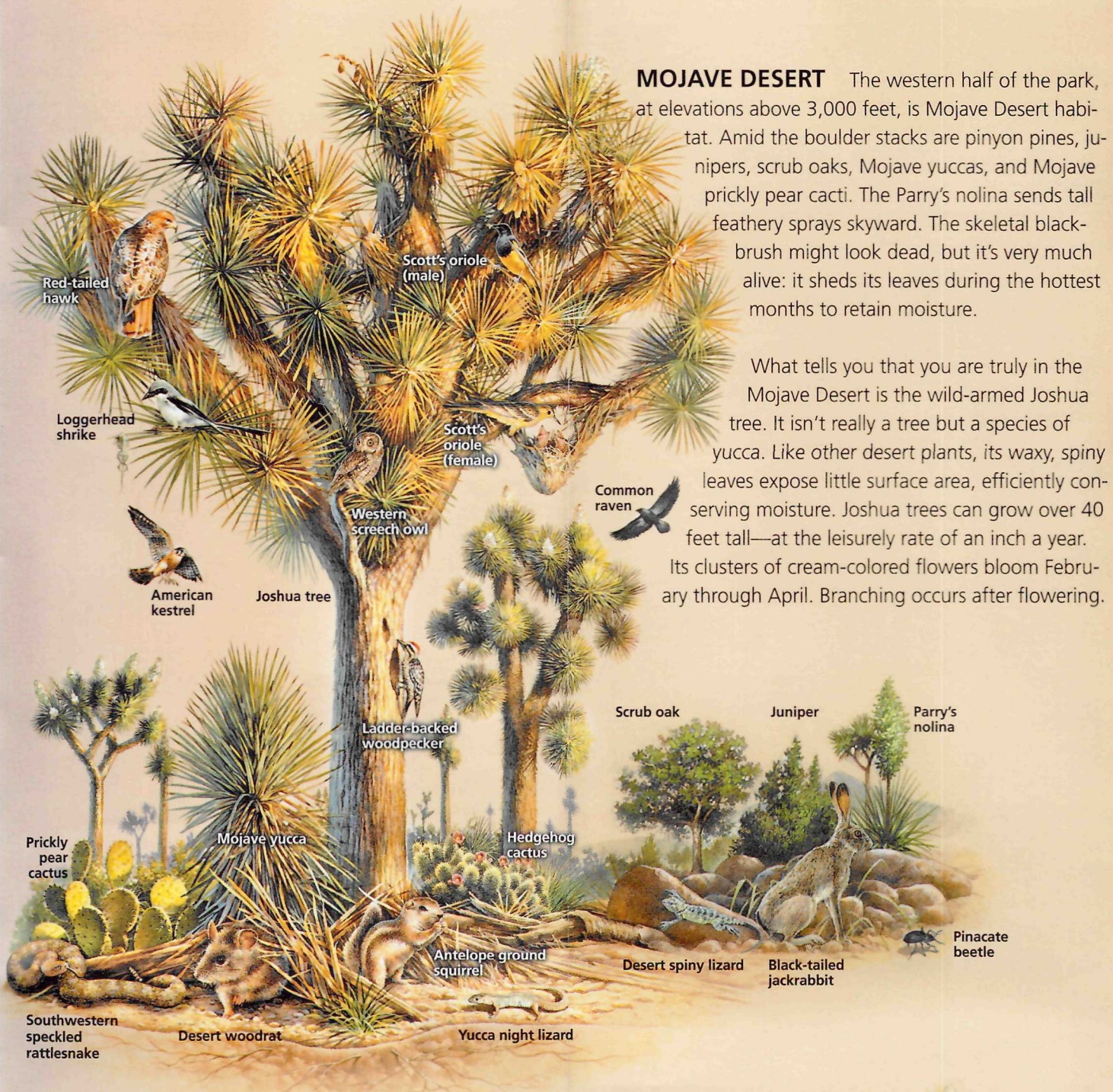
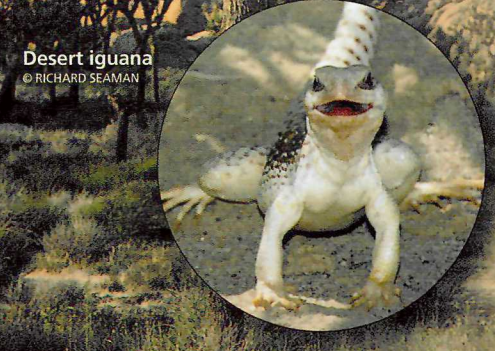
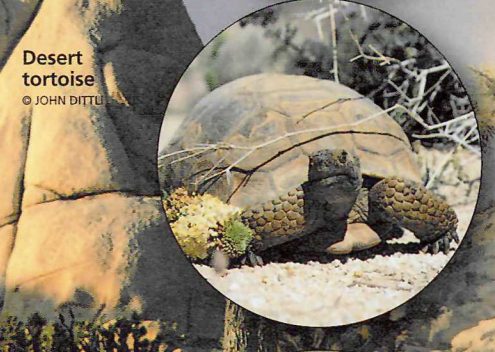
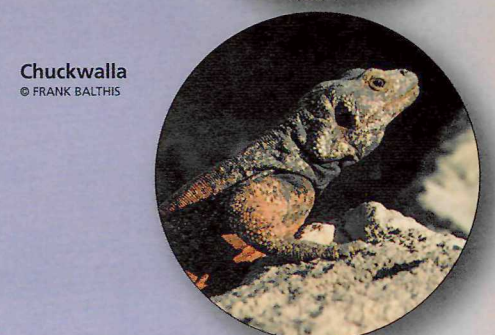
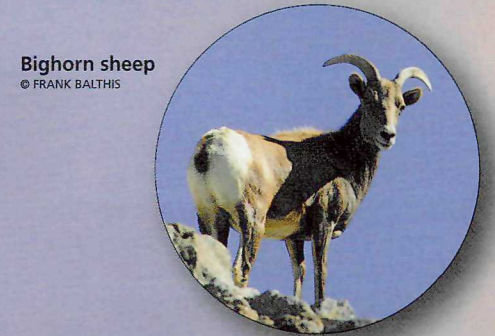


# VARIED YET VULNERABLE

The desert has much to teach us about the marvels of adaptation. Relentless sun, little water, and summer temperatures over 100°F can make a forbidding world for non-desert dwellers. Yet hundreds of species conserve moisture and beat the heat in fascinating ways.

Hardy as these plants and animals are, their world is fragile. In the 1930s Minerva Hoyt, a community activist and desert-lover, recognized the threats from humans. She saw beauty in the spiny plants and slithery creatures where others did not. She persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt to proclaim Joshua Tree National Monument in 1936. In 1994, as part of the California Desert Protection Act, Congress renamed the area Joshua Tree National Park. Thanks to the efforts of Hoyt and others, this park protects 792,510 acres—more than 80 percent of it managed as wilderness—where the Mojave and Colorado deserts converge.

**THE TRANSITION ZONE** Deserts don't have firm boundaries, and much of the park lies in the overlap between the Colorado and Mojave deserts. This transition zone has a wealth of biological diversity and is home to species characteristic of each desert ecosystem. Below are some residents:



**COLORADO DESERT** The eastern half of the park, below 3,000 feet above sea level, lies within the Colorado Desert. This habitat of the lower Colorado River valley is part of the much larger Sonoran Desert, which spans southern Arizona and northwestern Mexico. Creosote dominates this sun-baked bowl, punctuated here and there by spidery ocotillo, green-barked palo verde, and patches of jumping cholla cactus. Jumping cholla is also called teddy bear cholla, but don't try to cuddle it! Intermittent water in washes and bajadas sustains smoke trees and ironwoods.

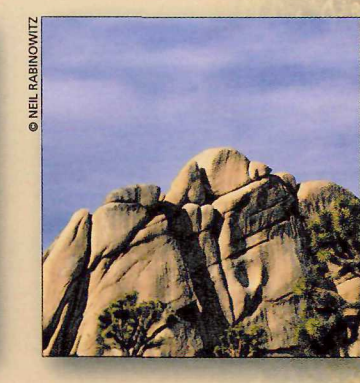
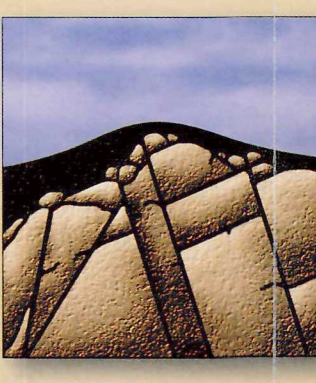
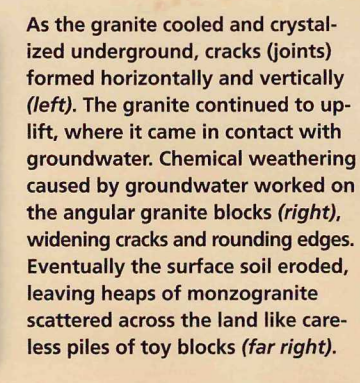
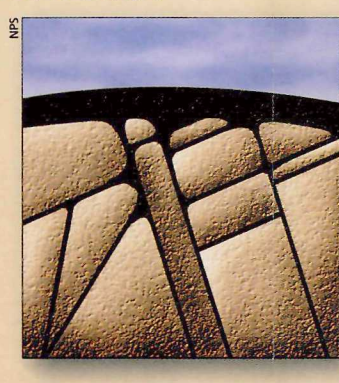
Wildflowers abound. Red-orange blossoms of the chuparosa attract hummingbirds, for which the plant is named, as well as the tiny checkerspot butterfly. Annuals like the desert sand verbena survive drought by living only in spring and going to seed when conditions harshen. Seeds can lie dormant for several years until conditions are again favorable. Animals here display many forms of adaptation. The kangaroo rat obtains

water from the food it eats—seeds, leaves, stems, and insects. It can store food for weeks in its cheek pouch. Its large hind feet are adapted for hopping over desert sand, which it does throughout the night. A kit fox, equally well-adapted to desert travel, may follow in close pursuit.

## WHO PILED UP ALL THOSE ROCKS?

Roads and trails lead you through a jumble of stacked boulders where you can use your imagination to see unlikely shapes.

The rock piles began underground eons ago as a result of volcanic activity. Magma—in this case a molten form of the rock called monzogranite—rose from deep within the Earth. As it rose, it intruded the overlying rock, the Pinto gneiss formation.



**OASIS** When you're at one of the park's fan-palm oases, you're atop a crack in the Earth's crust. Geological faults crisscross the park area. When groundwater hits a fault plane, it rises to the surface and creates conditions for an oasis.

Dependable surface water nourishes lush vegetation, a welcome refuge from desert extremes. Besides the majestic California fan palms, there are cottonwoods and mesquites. Look carefully and you may see un-desertlike species like orchids and amphibians.

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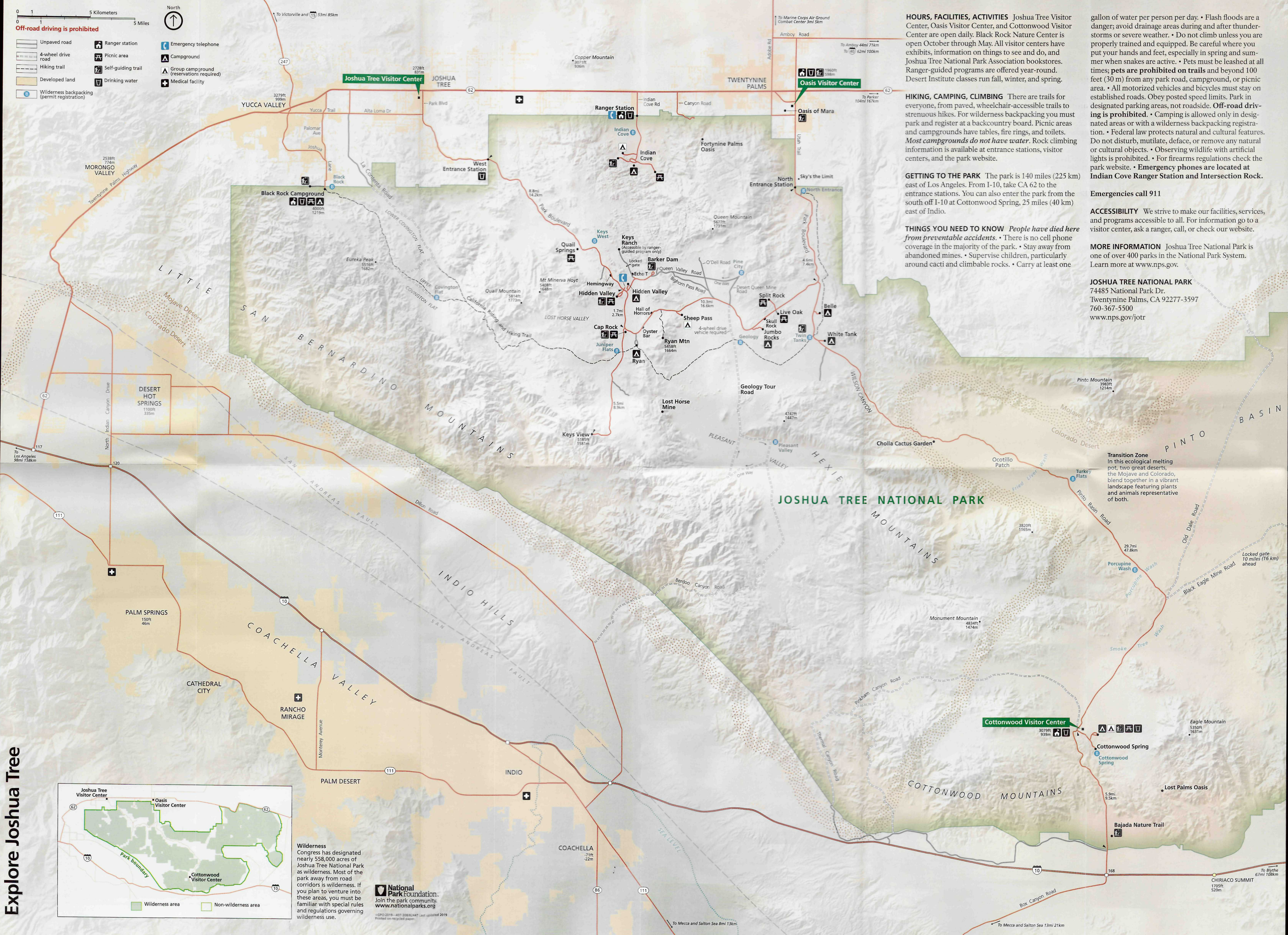


In the Mojave Desert (above), look for pinyon/juniper/scrub oak woodlands, Mojave yucca, and Joshua trees.  
© TOM GAMACHE



The ocotillo, a plant typical of the Colorado Desert, shows off red blossoms in spring and often again in fall.  
© JOHN DITTLI





**HOURS, FACILITIES, ACTIVITIES** Joshua Tree Visitor Center, Oasis Visitor Center, and Cottonwood Visitor Center are open daily. Black Rock Nature Center is open October through May. All visitor centers have exhibits, information on things to see and do, and Joshua Tree National Park Association bookstores. Ranger-guided programs are offered year-round. Desert Institute classes run fall, winter, and spring.

**HIKING, CAMPING, CLIMBING** There are trails for everyone, from paved, wheelchair-accessible trails to strenuous hikes. For wilderness backpacking you must park and register at a backcountry board. Picnic areas and campgrounds have tables, fire rings, and toilets. *Most campgrounds do not have water.* Rock climbing information is available at entrance stations, visitor centers, and the park website.

**GETTING TO THE PARK** The park is 140 miles (225 km) east of Los Angeles. From I-10, take CA 62 to the entrance stations. You can also enter the park from the south off I-10 at Cottonwood Spring, 25 miles (40 km) east of Indio.

**THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW** *People have died here from preventable accidents.* • There is no cell phone coverage in the majority of the park. • Stay away from abandoned mines. • Supervise children, particularly around cacti and climbable rocks. • Carry at least one

gallon of water per person per day. • Flash floods are a danger; avoid drainage areas during and after thunderstorms or severe weather. • Do not climb unless you are properly trained and equipped. Be careful where you put your hands and feet, especially in spring and summer when snakes are active. • Pets must be leashed at all times; **pets are prohibited on trails** and beyond 100 feet (30 m) from any park road, campground, or picnic area. • All motorized vehicles and bicycles must stay on established roads. Obey posted speed limits. **Off-road driving is prohibited.** • Camping is allowed only in designated areas or with a wilderness backpacking registration. • Federal law protects natural and cultural features. Do not disturb, mutilate, deface, or remove any natural or cultural objects. • Observing wildlife with artificial lights is prohibited. • For firearms regulations check the park website. • **Emergency phones are located at Indian Cove Ranger Station and Intersection Rock.**

**Emergencies call 911**

**ACCESSIBILITY** We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

**MORE INFORMATION** Joshua Tree National Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn more at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

**JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK**  
74485 National Park Dr.  
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277-3597  
760-367-5500  
[www.nps.gov/jotr](http://www.nps.gov/jotr)

**Transition Zone**  
In this ecological melting pot, two great deserts, the Mojave and Colorado, blend together in a vibrant landscape featuring plants and animals representative of both.

**Wilderness**  
Congress has designated nearly 558,000 acres of Joshua Tree National Park as wilderness. Most of the park away from road corridors is wilderness. If you plan to venture into these areas, you must be familiar with special rules and regulations governing wilderness use.

**National Park Foundation**  
Join the park community.  
[www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org)  
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