



500,000 YEARS AGO THE EARTH OPENED

Cracking and sputtering, it released liquid rock and rivers of fire across the landscape. Intermittent eruptions over thousands of years layered the land, leaving intricate caves, cones, craters, and black, jagged blankets of lava. The Modoc called this “the land of burnt-out fires.” Tule Lake and Lava Beds were then, and are today, the center of their world.

Lava Beds National Monument protects a variety of well-preserved geologic features, including lava tube caves (above left) and Gillem Bluff (above, in the distance).

This can be a forbidding place, a world foreign to outsiders. The Modoc and their ancestors lived in this rugged land for over 10,000 years. Following the rhythms of nature, they moved freely across their homeland until they were forcibly removed.

The blazing of the Applegate Trail through the heart of Modoc territory was the beginning of the end for the traditional Modoc way of life. Increasing numbers of White settlers claimed ancestral Modoc land, conflicts escalated, and both sides resorted to violent attacks. By the 1860s, settlers demanded area tribes be moved to the Klamath Reservation in Oregon. The Modoc reluctantly signed a treaty but consistently requested a reservation

in their homeland. Poor conditions and disagreements with other tribes on the reservation convinced some Modoc to return home. Broken promises, bitter resentments, and distrust made negotiations impossible.

The Modoc War began on November 29, 1872, when troops from Fort Klamath tried to force the resisting Modoc back to the reservation. They fled to the natural fortress of the lava beds, to what is today called “Captain Jacks Stronghold.” In April 1873, peace talks began. Toby Riddle (right), a Modoc woman married to White settler Frank Riddle, served as an interpreter between the Modoc and the Army. Kientpoos (Captain Jack) wanted his people to be allowed to stay in their homeland.

He also wanted peace. Modoc society ruled by consensus. Remembering the 1852 slaughter of 30 members of their tribe, a majority voted to eliminate the peace commissioners. On April 11, 1873, peace commissioners Gen. Edward Canby and Rev. Eleazar Thomas were killed. Gen. William T. Sherman soon called for the “utter extermination” of the Modoc.

For six months, 1,000 troops and volunteers fought to capture fewer than 60 Modoc warriors and their families. Those who resisted were exiled to the Quapaw Agency in Oklahoma.



Captain Jacks Stronghold

Modoc leader Kientpoos (above right), called Captain Jack by settlers, refused to accept the poor conditions on the reservation. He felt by returning to their homeland

and traditional ways his people could have a good life. Kientpoos surrendered on June 1 and was later hanged with three others.

MEDICINE LAKE VOLCANO

Medicine Lake is a shield volcano that has been active for 500,000 years. Its eruptions, from nearly 520 surface vents, have been gentle rather than explosive. This has resulted in a low, gently sloping, shield-like profile. Today, you can see evidence of over 30 separate lava flows throughout the park.



Northern harrier



Multiple eruptions from surface vents created most lava tube caves in the park.

Starting in 1910, the Bureau of Reclamation drained most of Tule Lake to create farmland for homesteaders.

Mule deer was a staple in the Modoc diet. People used dogs, fire, and the topography of the lava flows to aid in the hunt.

FROM LAVA TUBES TO CAVES

Eruptions occurring 30,000 to 40,000 years ago formed over 900 lava tube caves found in the park. Lava tubes form when streams of hot, flowing lava start to cool. The center of the stream stays hot and continues to flow as the outside begins to cool and harden. The hot lava drains out, leaving a pipe-shaped cave. Multiple eruptions can stack caves on top of one another, creating multilevel caves. When a lava tube ceiling collapses, it opens access to the cave below.



Lava tube in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, 1972

LAND OF BURNT-OUT FIRES

Modoc life and culture were perfectly tuned to this environment and the richness of the resources it provided. People lived in semipermanent winter villages along Lost River and Tule Lake. Each year as winter turned to spring, they began a seasonal round of fishing, hunting, and gathering.

Ragged and rough, the terrain of the lava flows could be dangerous, but to the Modoc it was a sacred landscape. It provided bounty in the hunt and challenged those seeking power and knowledge through vision quests.

Usually not seen in the high desert, ferns can be found in cave entrances.



Melissa blue butterfly



Leanira checkerspot butterfly



Wyoming Indian paintbrush

American pika

Scabland fleabane

Fragile fern

Western blue flax

Rock wren

Yellow pond-lily

Threadleaf phacelia

Make the Most of Your Visit to Lava Beds

Established in 1925, Lava Beds National Monument protects and interprets this volcanic land, its early human occupation, and the Modoc defense of their homeland. Learn about activities and trails at the visitor center.

Road Closures Some roads outside the park close in winter and early spring. Call 530-667-8113 to check road closures.

Fees Lava Beds collects fees from visitors who use the park. Recreation fees are used to enhance visitor experiences.

Services The visitor center bookstore has snacks, ice, flashlights, helmets, videos, batteries, books, and souvenirs. Gas, firewood, restaurants, and showers are available in nearby Tulelake, CA; Merrill, OR; and Klamath Falls, OR (20–50 miles from the visitor center).

Accessibility We strive to make facilities and programs accessible to all. Call, ask at the visitor center, or go to the park website for more information.

Firearms For firearms regulations check the park website or ask a park ranger.

More Information Lava Beds National Monument
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www.nps.gov/labe
Follow us on social media.

EXPLORING ABOVE GROUND

Highlights of the many things to do at Lava Beds include:

Mammoth Crater Impressive 36,000-year-old vents created lava tube caves in the area.

Symbol Bridge/Big Painted Cave Visit prehistoric pictographs and artwork.

Schonchin Butte Hike the trail to a fire lookout built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Fleener Chimneys Globes of lava created these volcanic vents and spatter cones.

Thomas-Wright Battlefield See the site of a decisive Modoc victory over the US Army.

Gillems Camp/Gillem Bluff Hike to a great view of this volcanic landscape.

Captain Jacks Stronghold Explore where Modoc families took refuge as they fought for their homeland.

Wildlife Overlooks Stop to view waterfowl on Tule Lake.

Petroglyph Point This former island with ancient carvings is significant to Native cultures.

Wilderness Congress has protected 28,460 acres of Lava Beds National Monument as wilderness under the 1964 Wilderness Act. For information about the National Wilderness Preservation System, please visit www.wilderness.net.



Smoothstem blazingstar Schonchin Butte Trail

EXPLORING THE CAVES

Before entering a cave, you must get a permit at the visitor center or fee booth. Stop at the visitor center for screening and information and to talk to a ranger about the caves.

Many of the 900-plus caves have steep entry points, rocky trails, and in some cases very low ceilings. Over two dozen caves have developed entrances and trails. They vary in difficulty, length, and complexity (right).

CAVE SAFELY

Wear Protective Clothing Caves are about 55°F (13°C) year-round; however, caves with ice are colder. Wear long sleeves, pants, and closed-toe shoes. Helmets, gloves, and kneepads are recommended in caves that are moderately and most challenging.

Bring Enough Light Each person should carry at least one flashlight with extra batteries. Flashlights are loaned free of charge at the visitor center.

Protect Your Head Wear a helmet in all caves. Bump hats are sold at the visitor center.

Do Not Go Alone Choose caves suitable for everyone in your group. Do not push beyond anyone's limits.

Know Your Route Observe your surroundings. Be aware of junctions and landmarks. Cave map books are available to buy at the visitor center. Tell someone where you are going.

CAVE SOFTLY

- Caves are amazing, fragile environments. Please take only pictures and leave only footprints. Leave no trace.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, or leave trash in caves.
- Cave slowly and carefully.
- Do not use caves as bathrooms.
- Stay on the trails.
- Do not touch cultural artifacts, paintings, cave formations, or gold and silver microbial mats.
- Use electric flashlights, not carbide or gas lamps.
- Do not disturb any cave life.
- Pets are prohibited in caves.



Learn About National Parks Lava Beds National Monument is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more, visit www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation Join the park community. www.nationalparks.org



Tundra swans



Most petroglyphs in the park, like those below, are at Petroglyph Point. Their meaning remains a mystery.



MODOC NATIONAL FOREST

	Turnout		Unpaved road
	Paved road		Trail
	Information kiosk		Picnic area
	Restroom(s)		Campground
	Self-guiding trail		

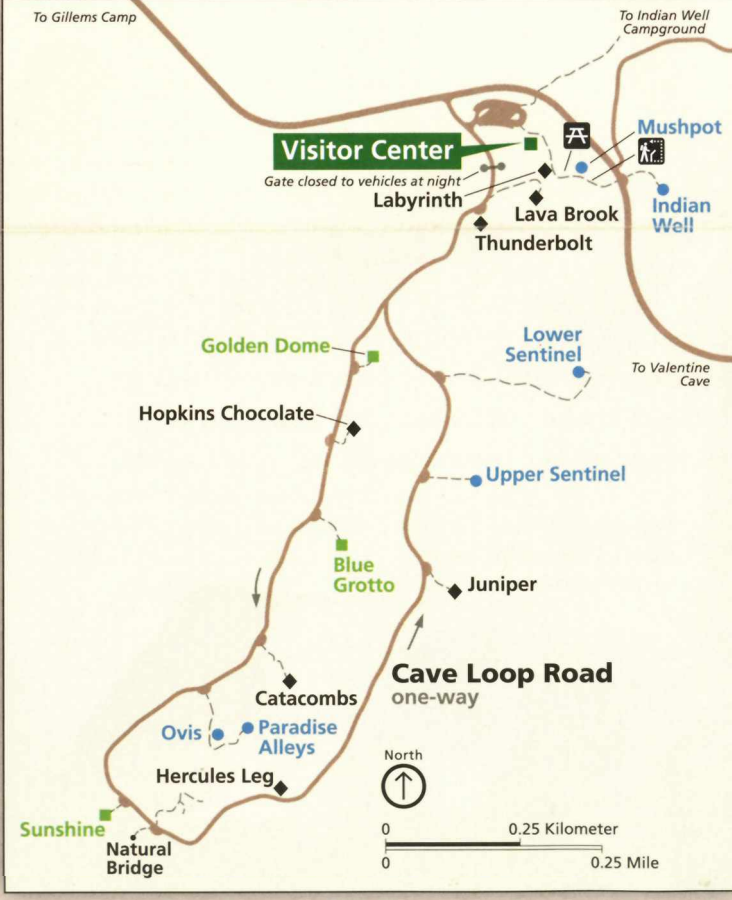
North

0 1 2 Kilometers
0 1 2 Miles

Least Challenging These caves have relatively high ceilings and smoother floors or trails. Safety gear is recommended.

Moderately Challenging These caves involve stooping through low sections and have rough floors. Additional safety gear is recommended.

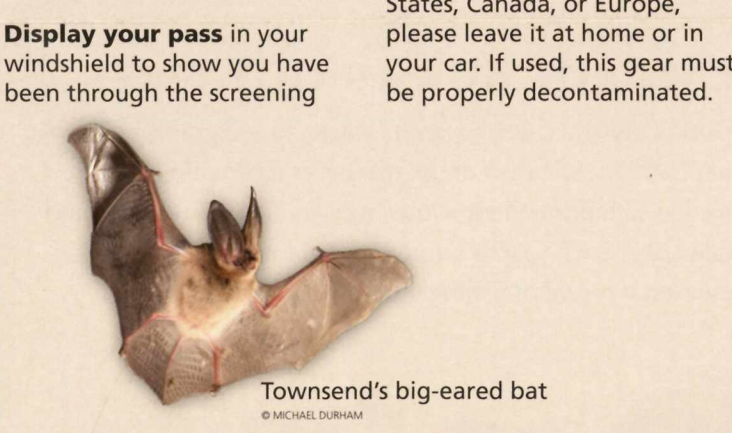
Most Challenging These caves have sections that require crawling. Using all recommended safety gear will help protect you from injury.



HELP PROTECT OUR BATS

Get a Permit If you plan to enter any cave in Lava Beds National Monument, stop first at the visitor center or fee booth to get a permit.

Display your pass in your windshield to show you have been through the screening process and are helping protect the bats that live here.



White-nose Syndrome Since 2006, bats in the United States and Canada have been dying in unprecedented numbers from white-nose syndrome, a fatal condition associated with exposure to fungus people can spread to caves, mines, and other bat roost sites. Please help us protect the bats and prevent the spread of this devastating disease.

