Joshua Tree

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Joshua Tree National Park
California

Get the JTree Inside Scoop!

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Hello and Welcome to the Joshua Tree Inside Scoop!

My name is David Smith, Superintendent of Joshua Tree National Park. Welcome to the high desert! Over the past five decades, I have seen dramatic changes in how the park is used and enjoyed by its visitors. With more and more visitors coming to Joshua Tree each year, the park and its resources face new challenges that have not been seen before. I need your help to protect this beautiful, unique and special place—I feel confident that you will do your part to love and care for this amazing landscape!

Ranger David's Pro Tips

- You are on vacation – have fun! As you are enjoying the park, protect the critters, plants, and the artifacts of the people who came before us.
- Advocate for park protection—learn about park happenings and regulations from Inside Scoop.
- Use QR codes – they are the new URL! Check out the links in Inside Scoop to easily connect you up with great intel about trails, camping, getting a wedding permit, plants and animals you will see in the park, and more!
- Check out the information inside on the wildlife inside the park and ways that you can enjoy the park and do it responsibly.
- Use the Trip Planning at the end as an easy check list in order to have each aspect of your park experience organized ahead of time. Trip Planning is your friend in the desert—unpredictable weather, potential for getting lost when you go off trail, spiny plants, and chompy animals are all good reasons to plan ahead.

I am personally grateful for the love and respect our visitors have for Joshua Tree and look forward to continuing the National Park Service responsibility of providing for unique recreation experiences, while protecting natural, cultural, and wilderness resources. Once again, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to Joshua Tree and the surrounding area. I hope that this information contributes to an unforgettably positive park experience!

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Welcome to the Joshua Tree National Park "Inside Scoop"! This collection of park related materials is meant to provide you with plenty of information to inform your time at the park. It is our mission to protect our unique resources, while providing optimal visitor experiences! If you are seeking additional information not provided within, please visit one of our visitor centers.

Joshua Tree Quick Links

Joshua Tree National Park Home Page
https://tinyurl.com/e9y9rin3

Places to Be
https://tinyurl.com/hvjuvve9

Drive Times to Cool Spots!
https://tinyurl.com/4b5ex8my

Staying Safe Out There
https://tinyurl.com/9sbv569s

Learn More About the Park
https://tinyurl.com/h6r8364d

Reservations (rec.gov)
https://tinyurl.com/3ew7dfk4

Fun Facts and Info
https://tinyurl.com/984be7eu

Park Photos (flickr)
https://tinyurl.com/3xcv75xw

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Check Us Out On Social Media!

Instagram
https://tinyurl.com/y7rpkbvd

Facebook
https://tinyurl.com/ymfhsrdc

Twitter
https://tinyurl.com/3pkmbsx4

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https://tinyurl.com/49d2cyxz

Trail and Campground Maps

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Busy Day Survival Guide

1. Enter Through Twentynine Palms, CA

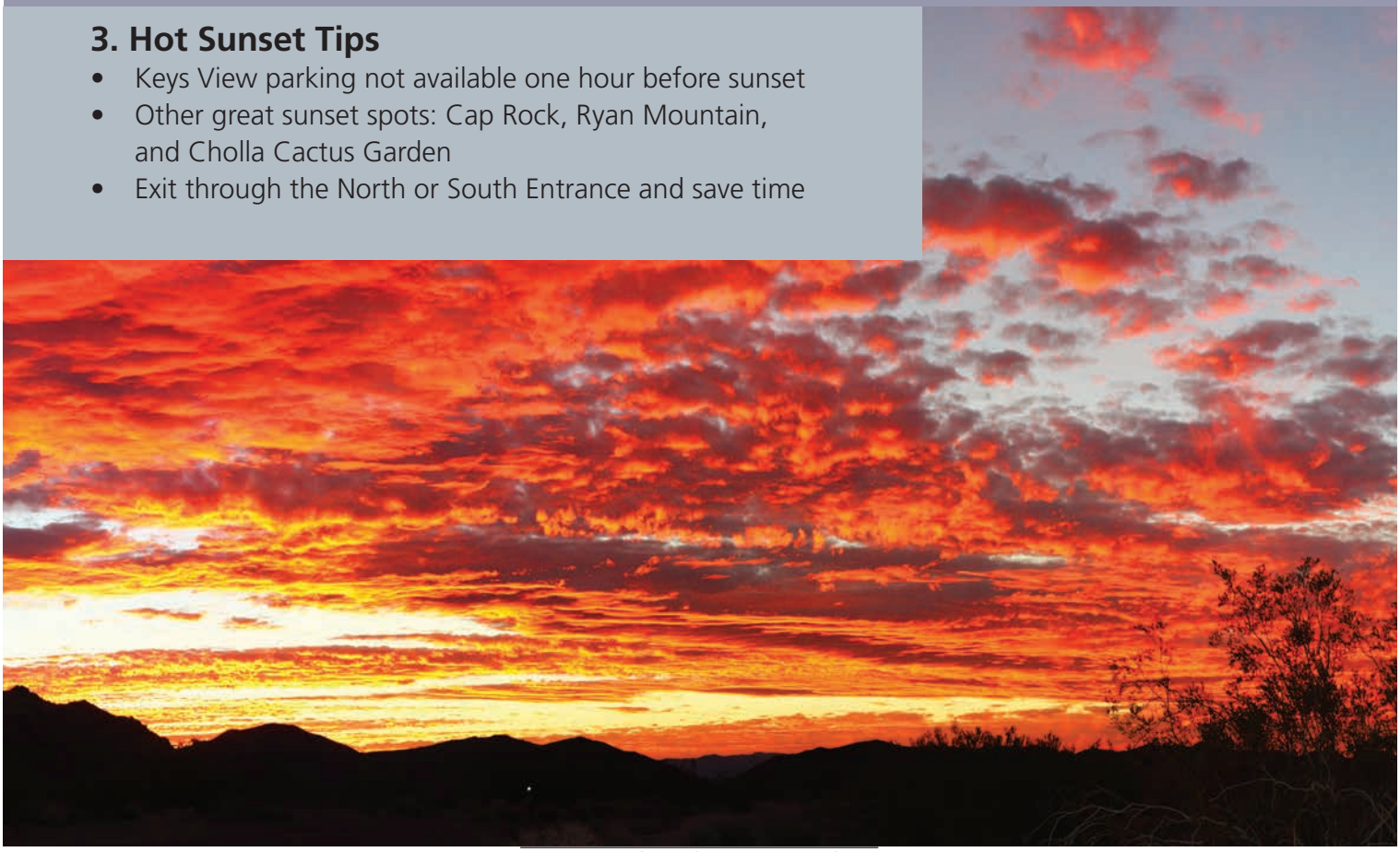
- Drive 25 miles (40 km) east
- Park in paved or boulder-lined parking spots
- Discover Jumbo Rocks, Cholla Cactus Garden, and Ryan Mountain—FASTER!

2. Reserve Your Campsite

- Reservation only: Black Rock, Indian Cove, Jumbo Rocks, Cottonwood, and Ryan campgrounds
- Find available campsites on recreation.gov; limited phone reception in the park
- Private campgrounds in the town of Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms, Yucca Valley, Desert Hot Springs, and Chiriaco Summit

3. Hot Sunset Tips

- Keys View parking not available one hour before sunset
- Other great sunset spots: Cap Rock, Ryan Mountain, and Cholla Cactus Garden
- Exit through the North or South Entrance and save time



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Hike Safely

Remember to tell a friend where you are going, and watch out for rattlesnakes, bees, tortoises, and bighorn sheep. To stay safe:

Winter

- Hike during the warmest part of the day.
- Prepare for short days and be back to the trailhead by 4 pm.
- Drink water/electrolyte drinks.
- Eat salty snacks/carbohydrates.
- Always carry extra layers.
- Use sun protection.
- Bring a flashlight or headlamp.

Summer

- Hike before 10 am and after 4 pm— expect ***extreme heat*** over 100°F/ 38°C daily.
- Drink water/electrolyte drinks.
- Eat salty snacks/carbohydrates.
- Go slowly, rest, and seek shade.
- Wear appropriate clothes— hat, long sleeves and pants.
- Use sun protection.

Keep yourself and search and rescue teams safe.

Two types of heat illness:

Heat Exhaustion


Dizziness


Headache


Sweaty skin


Fast heart beat


Nausea, vomiting


Weakness

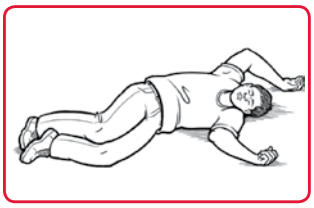

Cramps

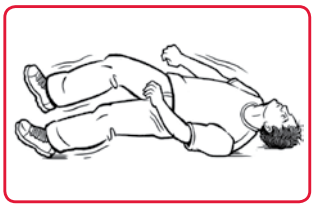
Heat Stroke

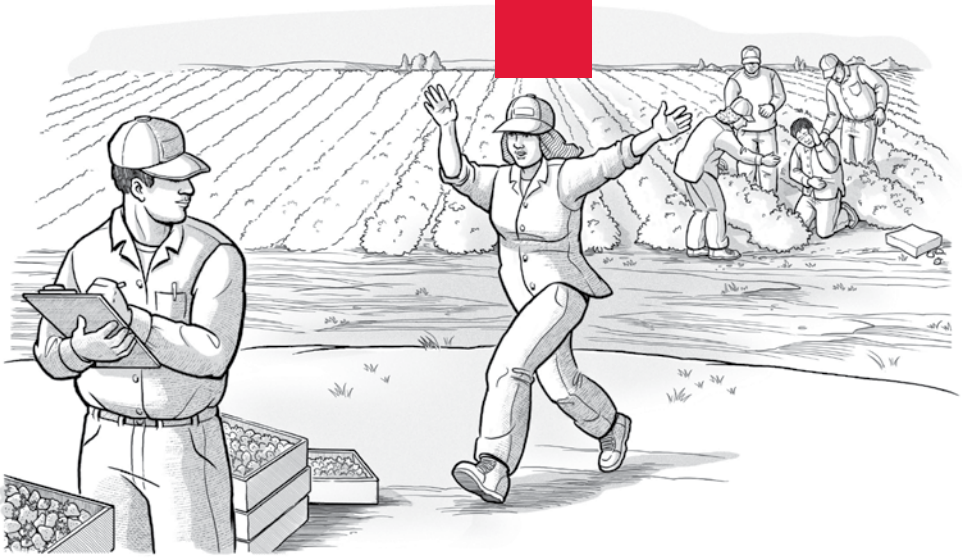

Red, hot, dry skin


High temperature


Confusion


Fainting


Convulsions



Heat kills – get help right away!

Leave No Trace

People who visit wild areas should not leave any signs that they were there. This allows the plants and animals to live naturally. It also lets other visitors experience what a wild place is like.

Directions:
Each of the visitors below is leaving an impact. Write what each person can do differently to **LEAVE NO TRACE** of their visit.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2.5 MILLION VISITORS TO JOSHUA TREE IN 2016

IMPROPERLY STORED FOOD & TRASH

RAVENS ARE DRAWN TO HUMAN FOOD

RAVEN NUMBERS GROW UNNATURALLY HIGH

ADDITIONAL RAVENS NEED MORE FOOD

RAVENS PREY ON BABY TORTOISES
(and other native species)

Help protect tortoises, keep your camp crumb clean.

Photo © Kevin Powell

Stash Your Food & Trash

When not in your campsite, properly
store all food in your vehicle and dispose of any trash.

Leaving food unattended is illegal and punishable by a fine up to $100.

Learn About our Desert Tortoise Friends!

What are we?

A land-dwelling turtle, not built for swimming. Good thing we live in the Desert!

Where do we live?

Mojave and Colorado Desert! We like the Joshua Trees and Mojave Yuccas!

Drinking habits?

We aren't picky…mostly water from plants, but the occasional puddle works too!

Work schedule?

Active from Mar-May and Sep-Oct! Nap time is Oct-Feb… also try to avoid the summer heat like humans.

Our Enemies?

Vehicles, some humans, disease, habitat fragmentation, birds, snakes, coyotes, dogs.

Birth Certificate?

Class: *Reptilia*

Genus: *Gopherus*

Species: *agassizii*

Contact a Park Ranger if one of us appears to be sick or injured: (760) 367-5562

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Sick Bighorn Sheep

Disease Presence in Joshua Tree National Park

There have been sightings of bighorn sheep in this area. Individuals in the park have been confirmed to be infected with a pneumonia that ***cannot be spread to humans***.

Identifying Sick Animals

Sick sheep may exhibit symptoms such as coughing, sneezing or runny noses.
Please do not touch dead animals.

Keeping the Herd Healthy

Identifying and reporting sick animals is an important service to the park. Doing so helps biologists take actions to limit the spread of the disease and keep the park herds healthy.

Please report any observations of bighorn sheep, healthy or sick to a park ranger. You can also report observations by phone at (760) 367-5522 or online at jotr_info@nps.gov.

Thank you for your help!

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This is mountain lion habitat—a desert wilderness where these large predators thrive on mule deer and other mammals. Mountain lions are wild and unpredictable; you should stay alert. Report any sightings to a park ranger as soon as possible.

For your safety:

Watch children closely and never let them run ahead or lag behind.

Don't hike or jog alone.

Never approach a mountain lion; give it room to escape

If you encounter a mountain lion:

Do not run; you may resemble prey.

Try to look large. Wave your arms. Throw rocks or sticks at it.

If attacked, fight back.

Mountain Lion Encounters

Joshua Tree

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Don’t Get Cozy with a Begging Coyote

Coyotes don’t need human food.

If fed, they are more likely to:

- hang out near roads and become roadkill.
- lose their fear of people and become aggressive.
- become sick and die. Our food is unhealthy for them.

Feeding wildlife is illegal—punishable by a fine up to $250.

Tarantulas of Joshua Tree National Park

Joshua Tree Tarantula ~ *Aphonopelma joshua*: from California, is small (only about an inch across) and lives at a relatively high altitude (over 3000 ft). It is named after Joshua Tree National Park! Breeds during summer and is active at night.

Mojave Desert Dwarf Tarantula ~ *Aphonopelma mojave*: is incredibly small for a tarantula (smaller than *A.joshua*) , but its range is huge. It can be found all across the Mojave Desert, from southwest Utah to interior southern California.

Mojave Blond Tarantula ~ *Aphonopelma iodius/-ium*: is common in California, Nevada and Utah. It's the largest of our tarantulas at about 2.5" across. Identifying mark, other than size is the dark triangle surrounding the eyes on the carapace (back).

Males leave their burrows during mating season, sometimes en masse, seeking out willing females. The mating season varies from spring to fall and is dependent on environmental factors like weather, monsoons and temperatures.

Most of our tarantulas are highly active during October and November. This is when you will see them crossing the roads. Please exercise caution while driving during this time.

How dangerous are they?

Tarantulas, like all spiders, are not aggressive - they're defensive. As a general rule, they will try other methods of defending themselves prior to biting if harassed (such as running away or flicking hairs).

Tarantulas in North America have three lines of self-defense:

~ *Retreat*.

~ *Toss "urticating" hairs* (barbed, fiberglass-like). Tarantulas use their legs to flick these hairs off their abdomens when disturbed. Due to having barbed tips, the hairs lodge in the eyes and mucous membranes of would-be attackers (such as coyotes, bobcats and inquisitive humans) causing great discomfort and irritation.

~ *Biting:* They have fangs and therefore *can* inflict a bite. The venom released in this bite is about equivalent to being stung by a bee. The venom has no lasting ill-effects other than mild to moderate pain and swelling at the site of the bite.

Tarantula FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)

Will they go in my tent?

No. Tarantulas stay in their burrows and rarely venture out except in the fall when males start moving around. This is when they have only one thing in mind – to reproduce. They walk until they pick up on the pheromones of a female and follow the scent to her burrow. If they happen to wander into your tent, it's only by mistake. Keep your tent zipped closed anyway as you never know what other creatures may venture in!

Will they bite me?

These shy giants are reluctant to attack humans and their venom is usually no worse than a bee sting. If you encounter a tarantula, use this unique opportunity to observe its behavior, but **do not touch it** (or any wildlife for that matter).

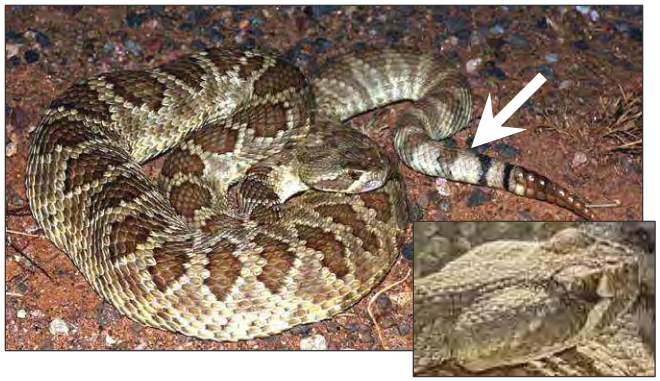
Will they jump on me?

No. Tarantulas are really quite fragile and therefore a fall from any great distance can be fatal. Tarantulas don't jump up in distance as much as they do across and down. Most of the time they jump down to another surface.

Fun Facts

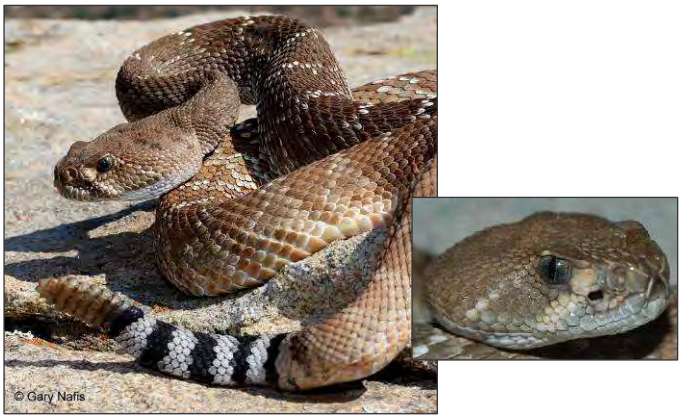
- A male tarantula can travel up to **50 miles**!
- There are just over 900 species of tarantulas in the world.
- For most of the year they are nocturnal (active only at night). However, during the fall the males will also venture out during the day, as this significantly increases their chances of finding a mate.
- The quest for a mate does not end well for the male as the female will try to kill the male for sustenance (food), even if he is a suitable mate. With the female producing between 500 and 1000 young at each mating she needs the nutrients provided by the male's body in order to produce all those baby tarantulas!
- The principal predator of the tarantula is the tarantula hawk wasp. This insect will sting and paralyze the tarantula, drag it back to its burrow and lay eggs on the tarantula's abdomen. The hatchlings will then eat the paralyzed and still-alive tarantula!
- Even though they have eight eyes, they have poor eyesight. They do not rely on their eyes for hunting, but instead rely on the sensitive hairs, or "setae," on their body which pick up vibrations.
- They live in burrows reinforced with silk produced by their own bodies.
- The venom injected from its fangs will liquefy the insides of the prey. The tarantula will then ingest its meal utilizing a sucking technique. A tarantula will attack literally anything that it can subdue by speed or ambush: beetles, grasshoppers, locusts, other spider, small lizards and mice.
- Females can live for 20-35 years; males usually live for 5-10 years. This number varies with species.
- Joshua Tree National Park has one species, *Aphonopelma joshua*, that is almost entirely endemic (only occurs in a specific area worldwide) to the park. It has a very limited range outside of JTNP. Unlike the other park species, males migrate in summer, not fall, so you tend to see it during the monsoon season.
- Typically, in the southwestern United States, tarantulas live in solitude. They occupy various kinds of nests, with many species taking up residence in burrows or crevices, which may be located in the ground, along cliff faces, among rocks, under tree bark, or between tree roots.
- Researchers have found that some of the properties of tarantula venom may hold uses in treating such human medical conditions as heart arrhythmia, Parkinson's and Alzheimer disease as well as have agricultural uses in pesticide applications.

THE RATTLESNAKES OF JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

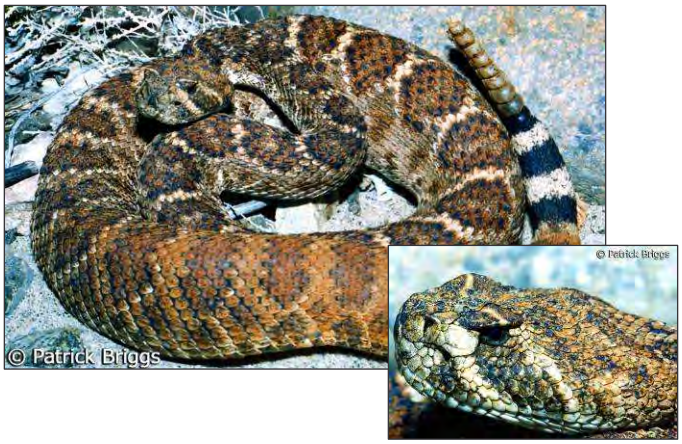


Mojave (*Crotalus scutulatus*) - 24-51” long light scales surround brown diamonds on back, **white rings on tail are larger than the black rings**. Narrow white stripe behind eye runs to the back of the jaw. Greenish tinge.

Southern Pacific (*Crotalus oreganos helleri*) 22-40”, varies widely, may be black, brown or greenish, usually broad light stripe behind eye, Can be very similar to Mojave green but has **more black in tail banding**.



Red Diamond (*Crotalus ruber*) – 30-65” long stout, tan to brick red, diamonds may be indistinct. Faint white stripe behind eye runs to corner of mouth.



Western Diamondback (*Crotalus atrox*) – our largest rattlesnake, 30-90” long. White stripe behind eye runs to corner of mouth.

Speckled (*Crotalus mitchellii*) – 23-52”, pattern and color vary greatly, usually indistinct bands and speckles that blend with its environment.

Mojave & Colorado Desert Sidewinders (*Crotalus cerastes*) – 17-33” long, horns above eyes, found in sandy areas, moves sideways.

Jane Cipra, Joshua Tree Resource Management, November 2009

Rattlesnakes are important members of the natural community. They will not attack, but if disturbed or cornered, they will defend themselves. Reasonable watchfulness should be sufficient to avoid snakebite. Give them distance and respect.

In the unlikely event you are bitten, the most important thing is to remain calm.

- **Wash the bite with clean water and soap.**
- **Immobilize the bitten area and keep it lower than the heart.**
- **If the bite is on the hand or arm remove any rings, watches or tight clothing.**
- **Get medical help immediately.**
- **Identification of the snake is important, take pictures** – Mojave green rattlesnakes produce both a hemotoxin and a neurotoxin and require special treatment. Proper identification can be critical.

The American Red Cross, **cautiously** recommends two other measures:

- If a victim is unable to reach medical care within 30 minutes, a bandage, wrapped two to four inches above the bite, may help slow venom. The bandage should not cut off blood flow from a vein or artery. A good rule of thumb is to make the band loose enough that a finger can slip under it.
- A suction device may be placed over the bite to help draw venom out of the wound without making cuts. Suction instruments often are included in commercial snakebite kits**.**

<u>How NOT to treat a snakebite</u>
Medical experts may disagree on what to do, but everyone agrees on **WHAT NOT TO DO.**

- **NO ice** or any other type of cooling on the bite. Research has shown this to be potentially harmful.
- **NO tourniquets**. This cuts blood flow completely and may result in loss of the affected limb.
- **NO electric shock**. This method will cause burns, pain and resentment from the patient.
- **NO incisions in the wound**. Cuts are more likely to cause further injury.

- Approximately 8,000 people a year receive venomous snakebites in the U.S., 9-15 victims die.
- 25% of adult rattlesnake bites are dry, with no venom injected.
- Rattlesnakes can only strike a distance equal to 1/2 their own length.
- Baby snakes are the most dangerous; they produce both hemo and neurotoxins, and are more likely to use all their venom.
- 40% of snakebite victims have a blood alcohol level greater then 0.1%.

- **<u>DO NOT</u> BRING THE SNAKE OR THE SNAKE HEAD TO THE HOSPITAL**. Chances are someone else will get bit. A decapitated snake head can still reflexively bite for several hours. Take a photo or make a note of the markings.

Call 911 or San Bernardino Dispatch 909-383-5651 emergency line for assistance (909-383-5652 for non-emergencies)
or a Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222

Dr. Luckie Study Center

Mission Statement

The Dr. James Buckner Luckie Study Center (the Center) of Joshua Tree National Park provides a logistical and operational base for professional scientists conducting applied research in the Colorado and Mojave Deserts. The core mission of the Center is to provide students, faculty, and professional researchers facilities that support scientific research in Joshua Tree National Park. The Center supports and facilitates applied research used to directly inform park management on critical decisions relating to resource conditions.

Vision Statement

The Center fosters and promotes the principles and achievements of Susan Luckie Riley and her father, Dr. James Buckner Luckie by nurturing innovative and cutting edge scientific research. Center scientists will reflect the spirit of the Luckie family by pioneering new research to effectively deal with the challenges facing the park today. The Center is known as a hub for high quality applied research and learning through partnerships with academic, non-profit, and professional organizations. Science based results generated from Center-sponsored activities inform park management on critical issues and benefit local scientific and residential communities.

Core Values: QUALITY

The center provides researchers with high quality facilities that support high quality scientific research and ensure that partnering researchers have a high quality experience.

Questions	We are committed to answering relevant questions in the face of changing conditions
Understand	We strive to understand complex landscapes and human interactions
Arid	Research and stewardship focuses on adaptation and resilience in arid environments
Laboratory	The park is a unique laboratory which the Center serves
Integrity	Scientific integrity and scholarly pursuits drive the spirit of the Center
Truth	Work at the Center pursues truth in an objective, transparent, unbiased manner
Yucca brevifolia	The Joshua tree, our namesake

Examples of Supported Activities

- **Geoscientists in Parks Program**
  Hosting diverse internship positions focused on geology, paleontology, and bio-physical resources issues, data needs, and stewardship actions.
- **Visiting Scholars**
  The Center is a place where individuals from academia can take refuge to complete publications, studies, and similar focused activities. Scholars become a part of the local park management team, providing observations and feedback during their tenure.
- **Permitted Research**
  Scientists with park research permits may request lodging and support at the Center.
- **Fellowships**
- **International Researchers and Students**

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Joshua Tree National Park

Volunteer This Break!

Looking for a fun and impactful experience? Joshua Tree National Park hosts groups of 5–15 students during college break for education and engagement in valuable service projects. Volunteers receive hands-on training from park rangers. Learn to be leaders in environmental stewardship and have an enjoyable and unique experience!

Past groups have collected climate change data on Joshua trees, repaired damaged park resources, planted desert species, removed invasive plants, and heard lectures from park scientists. There is no cost and free camping is provided.

"I learned so much more about the park through volunteering than I would have if I had been a regular tourist. This extra knowledge and interaction gave me a lot more appreciation and respect for the park than I would have otherwise."

~University of Virginia student,
Alternative Spring Break 2019

Information: go.nps.gov/JTvolunteer or jotr_volunteers@nps.gov

NPS Trip Planning Guide

February 2018

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

North Cascades National Park. NPS Photo.

Going out for an adventure?

Make your fun adventure a safe one too! No one plans on getting hurt while out exploring in a National Park. However, nature is unpredictable, structures are historical, and your equipment can unexpectedly fail. Planning ahead can be the key to a fun and safe adventure. Remember, safety starts with you!

Know before you go. You and your group should be informed about the national park you are visiting and the activity you are participating in. Be prepared to fully enjoy your time.

Use this guide and checklist to help plan your trip. The first part of this guide provides a detailed description of each of the four phases of your trip. At the end you will find a checklist that sums up the guide.

PLAN

Get information about the park at www.nps.gov

SEEK

Ask a Ranger at a Visitor Center or Ranger Station when you arrive

ADJUST

Be prepared to adjust your plans if things change

Before the Trip

"Know Before You Go"

What you need to know and consider before going out to a park

Arrival at Park

"Ask a Ranger"

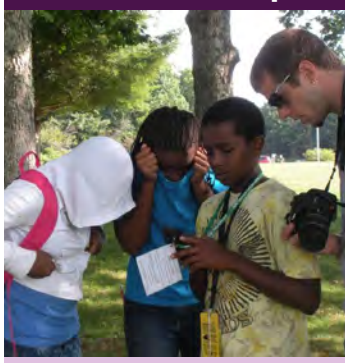
Get up-to-date information on park requirements and safety information

During the Trip

"Assess and Adjust"

Actions to consider while you and your group are enjoying the activity

After the Trip



"Share the Experience"

What you can do to be better prepared for your next park adventure

Follow the principles outlined in this guide to help you avoid the most common mistakes people make.

Photos on this page from left to right : Brochures from Yellowstone National Park. NPS photo; The park rangers that help visitors at visitor centers (Fishing Bridge Visitor Center shown here), museums, and other places throughout the park are part of our operations team. Photo by Jim Peaco; Visitors exploring Timpanogos Cave. NPS photo; Kids from northern Virginia experienced a special outdoor adventure known as Camp S.E.E.D. at Shenandoah National Park. NPS photo.

Before the Trip

Know Before You Go

1. **If you are part of a group, identify a Trip Leader and for larger groups, an Assistant Trip Leader**

   Ensure that the Trip Leader has the right level of skill and experience to serve in a leadership role.

2. **Know your limits and the limits of your group memebrs. Assess the elements listed below:**

SKILL — Determine the skill level needed to safely enjoy the activity you picked. Do you and you group members have the right skill level for the activity?

EXPERIENCE — Determine if you and your group members have any outdoor experience. Is this your or their first time? Have you done this activity before?

FITNESS LEVEL — Identify how physically fit you and you group members are. Are you prepared to take a short hike on a paved trail or can you go on a long hike up a mountain?

REQUIRED MEDICATION — Determine if you or any group members have a medical considerations. Will you need to bring medications with you on the trip (e.g. inhalers)?

HEALTH CONDITIONS*

Find out if you or any group members have health conditions which may limit the kind of activity you can participate in? Do you have any mental or physical disabilities that should be considered? Do you have a medical conditions that could be worsened by certain activities or changes in altitude (asthma, heart condition)?

** Consult a physician if you have any questions on fitness levels, health conditions, or medications required*

3. **Pick the national park you want to visit**

   Visit www.nps.gov to find a park in your area. If planning a group trip, try to visit the park prior to the trip.

4. **Pick the right activity for you or your group from the list of allowed activities at the park**

   Available activities can be found under "Plan Your Trip" on each park's website at www.nps.gov. Consider participating in Ranger-guided and Junior Ranger programs offered by many parks. In choosing your activity, be sure to "Know Your Limits" and those of your group members and consider these factors:

   - **Time of year** - During what season will you be doing your activity?
   - **Setting** - Does the activity take place at the beach, on a trail, in a cave, or at a historical site?
   - **Duration** - Will your trip and activity last a few hours or all day?
   - **Difficulty level** - Will you be going a short distance at a slow pace on flat terrain or a long distance at a faster pace on difficult terrain?
   - **Skill level** - Do you need special skills (e.g. rock climbing) to safely enjoy the activity?

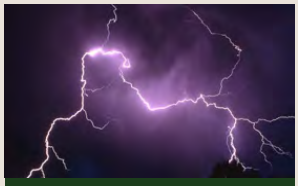
The Junior Ranger Program is an activity based program where youth complete a series of activities during a park visit, and receive an official Junior Ranger patch and certificate.

Photo on this page: Fort Monroe National Monument celebrating National Junior Ranger Day. NPS Photo

5. Learn about the environment and hazards of the park and be prepared for them

Every park in unique. Environments and hazards can even vary *within* a park. Research the park's website or call the park to find out what risks and hazards are associated with your activity (e.g. wildlife, swift water, uneven steps) so you can prepare for them before you go on your adventure.

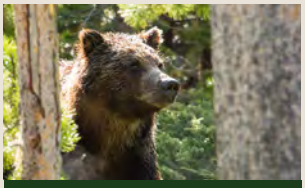
Potential Hazards



INCLEMENT WEATHER

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

POISONOUS PLANTS



WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER

6. Identify park requirements and regulations for your activity

Requirements for each park can be found under the "Plan your Trip" menu on every park's website at www.nps.gov. Review requirements for:

- Permits
- Group size restrictions
- Open fires regulations
- Food storage & disposal requirements

Check for available drinking water sources. If none, you will need to bring enough water for you and your group to meet your needs.

7. Plan water, food, and equipment needs; test equipment before you go

Testing and practicing with your equipment are important steps in planning for a safe trip. You or the group's Trip Leader should:

- **Make a packing list** - research the activity you selected and make sure that you and group members have the required gear (e.g. hiking boots, life jackets) including the 10 Essentials.
- **Do a test run** - learn how to use your equipment properly. Make sure it works and that items like hiking boots, backpacks, and life jackets fit correctly.
- **Decide who is going to carry the equipment.**
- **Practice** - practice packing and carrying your backpack, and pitching a tent if you are planning a long trip.

Always Pack the 10 Essentials

1. NAVIGATION
Map, compass, and GPS system

2. SUN PROTECTION
Sunglasses, sunscreen, and hat

3. INSULATION
Jacket, hat, gloves, and rain shell,

4. ILLUMINATION
Flashlight, lanterns, and headlamp

5. FIRST-AID SUPPLIES
First Aid Kit

6. FIRE
Matches, lighter & fire starters

7. REPAIR KIT & TOOLS
Duct tape, knife, & scissors

8. NUTRITION
Extra food

9. HYDRATION
Water and water treatment supplies

10. EMERGENCY SHELTER
Tent and tarp

Photos on this page from left to right : Grizzly bear photographed from a car near Mammoth Hot Springs. Photo by Neal Herbert; Lightening storm over Mt. Everts. Photo by J. Schmidt; Step House at Mesa Verde National Park. NPS photo.; Watch out for poisonous plants! NPS photo.; Ten essential items that all visitors should carry with them. NPS photo

Reenactors preparing for a performance at Castillo de San Marcos National Monument. NPS Photo.

8. Develop a "Plan B"

Have a back-up plan in case something comes up and keeps you or your group from doing your planned activity. It can be an alternative activity or you can reschedule the trip for another date.

9. Identify a "Safety Leader"

A Safety Leader(s) is someone, or a couple of people, in your group responsible for safety. If you are traveling alone, *you* are the Safety Leader! Your job includes:

- Checking all equipment before and during the trip
- Monitoring your or group members' health and energy levels
- Being aware of changes in the environment (e.g. weather) and physical conditions and communication them to the Trip Leader
- Looking out for hazards during the activity

It is always a good idea for you or at least one person in your group to be trained in CPR and First Aid.

10. Complete a Trip Plan

A Trip Plan includes information such as destination, list of group members, and expected return time. This information helps Search and Rescue authorities respond if an emergency occurs or if you don't return from your trip on time. Leave the plan with your emergency contact, a reliable person who is **NOT** going on the trip. **Do not leave your trip plan with the park**. Find a Trip Plan template at the end of this guide.

11. Develop and practice an Emergency Plan

An emergency plan will help you know what to do if someone becomes lost or injured. **Do not count on your cell phone reception.** Practice your plan before you go so everyone knows what to do. Read the section on emergency plans at the end of this guide.

Top 3 Causes of Visitor Fatalities 2007 - 2013

Drowning

To reduce the risk of drowning[1]:

- Wear a life jacket
- Learn to swim
- Swim in Lifeguard Areas
- Assign a Water Watcher
- Follow park regulations

Motor Vehicle Crashes (MVC)

To reduce the risk of an MVC:

- Buckle up every time
- Obey posted speed limits
- Keep your eyes on the road
- Watch for animals on the road
- Do not drink and drive

Fall

To reduce the risk of a fall:

- Wear the right footwear
- Stay on the trail
- Stay within designated areas
- Use the right equipment
- Stay hydrated to prevent dizziness

[1] https://www.nps.gov/articles/watersafety.htm

Pre-Departure

This is your group's last chance to check that everyone is prepared before going on the trip and that you have all the necessary equipment and documents.

Trip Leader(s):

- Check in with your emergency contact - a person NOT on the trip - and leave your Trip Plan with them
- Pack your permits and any other important paperwork
- Assign chaperones and a buddy system

Safety Leader(s):

Double-check equipment and supply list, travel route, weather forecast, and other conditions at the park.

Your Cell Phone is ...

NOT a flash light

NOT a map

NOT a survival kit

NOT always going to have reception

Arrival at Park

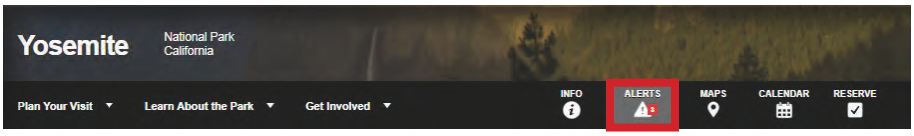
Ask a Ranger

Visitors checking in with a Park Ranger at Denali National Park. NPS Photo/ J. Elhard

1. **Ask a Park Ranger and check** park alerts

   When you arrive at the park, locate the Visitor Center or Ranger Station and ask a Park Ranger about:

   - **Closures or Postings** - Are there any trails, campsites, or other areas closed or posted due to hazardous conditions that may change your planned itinerary?
   - **Hazards** - Is there any fire or animal activity, high water from recent rain events, rock fall, or icy trails and routes? Are you visiting a historic structure with uneven steps, unleveled paths, or no barriers to protect you from falls?
   - **Weather Changes** - Is there rain, wind, snow, or extreme temperatures (high or low) forecasted for the duration of your trip?



2. **Get necessary permits and pay any required fees**

   If a permit is required for your group or your activity, get the permit, pay permit fees, and read all regulations printed or stamped on it.

3. **Check your own and your group members' health & energy levels**

   Check in with group members to find out if they are in good health and have the energy to do the planned activity.

4. **Check your water, food, and equipment before heading out**

   Check everyone's water and food supplies and that you brought all the necessary equipment for your activity.

5. **Put "Plan B" into action if necessary**

   Use Plan B if park conditions have changed, a group member's health or fitness level is not optimal, or equipment is missing.

During the Trip — Assess and Adjust

Visitors at Mather Point, Grand Canyon National Park. NPS Photo / K. Katz

1. **Sign the logbook**

   Some trails have log books at the trailhead. If available, sign the book and note your return time.

2. **Stick to your intended route**

   Unless you encounter a safety hazard, stick to your intended route during your activity. If you change your route, your emergency contact will not know where you are and it will be difficult for Search & Rescue authorities to find you. If something impacts your activity, you may be better off turning around.

3. **Stay on trail and within designated areas**

   Reduce your risk of a serious injury by staying on trail and avoiding shortcuts. Many serious outdoor accidents happen when people go off the designated trail or walkway.

4. **Stay together**

   If traveling as a group, stay together. Separating from the main group could lead to a lost or injured group member.

5. **Follow the principles of "Leave No Trace"**

   These principles reduce your risk of injury and minimize your impact on the environment. Learn more at lnt.org

6. **Check your physical well-being and keep an eye on changes in the environment**

   Check to see that everyone is feeling well and not experiencing conditions such as tiredness, dehydration, heat illness, etc. Also keep an eye out for environmental hazards (e.g. weather changes, wildlife). Determine whether you should keep going, take a break, or turn around. If traveling in a group, the Safety Leader(s) should watch for changes in group members' health and for environmental hazards.

After the Trip — Share Your Experience

1. **Check in with your emergency contact**

   Sign out in the log book and let your emergency contact know you completed the trip safely.

2. **Assess the outcome of the trip and any "lessons learned"**

   Review what went right and what can be improved next time.

3. **Share your experience**

   This will allow others to have an adventure similar to yours and learn from your lessons learned!

Trip Planning Checklist

February 2018

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

This checklist can help you plan for a fun and safe adventure to a national park. It may need to be adjusted to meet your needs or those of your group depending on the park you are visiting, the time of year you are visiting, if you extend your trip for more than one day, or any other local considerations. For park specific information, go to the park's home page at www.nps.gov and click on "Plan Your Visit". Following the principles below can help you avoid some of the most common mistakes people make. **Remember, safety starts with you!**

1 Before the Trip

- ☐ Identify the Trip Leader(s)
- ☐ Identify group members and assess their skill, experience, fitness level, required medication and health conditions
- ☐ Pick the park you want to visit
- ☐ Pick the right activity for you or your group from the list of allowed activities at the park
- ☐ Learn about the environment and hazards* of your park
- ☐ Identify park requirements and regulations for your activity
- ☐ Plan water, food, and equipment needs; test your equipment before your trip
- ☐ Develop a "Plan B"
- ☐ Identify a Safety Leader(s)
- ☐ Complete a Trip Plan and leave it with a person that is NOT going on the trip with you
- ☐ Develop and practice an Emergency Plan

2 Pre-Departure

- ☐ Leave Trip Plan with a person not on the trip
- ☐ Make sure you have permits
- ☐ Assign chaperones and a buddy system
- ☐ Check your equipment and supplies
- ☐ Check park alerts, weather conditions, travel route, & road conditions

Arrival at Park

- ☐ Ask a ranger about park alerts and conditions
- ☐ Get necessary permits and pay any required fees
- ☐ Check your own & your group members' health & energy levels
- ☐ Check your water, food, and equipment before heading out
- ☐ Put "Plan B" in action if necessary

3 During the Trip

- ☐ Sign logbook at the trailhead
- ☐ Stick to your intended route
- ☐ Stay on the trail and within designated areas
- ☐ Stay together
- ☐ Follow the principles of "Leave No Trace"
- ☐ Check your physical well-being and keep an eye on changes in the environment

4 After the Trip

- ☐ Check-in with your emergency contact
- ☐ Assess the outcome of the trip and any "lessons learned"
- ☐ Share your experience

The Ten Essentials

*Every park has inherent risks and environmental conditions associated with outdoor recreation, such as wildlife, swift water, precipitous terrain, icy trails, rapidly changing weather conditions, and other local considerations.

Sample Trip Plan

February 2018

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

This is a sample template that you can use to help you prepare a trip plan. It is **NOT** a substitute for any permits required for your activity. The type of information outlined in this sample template can help Search and Rescue authorities during an emergency response. **A trip plan is not required to visit a national park or to seek help from authorities during an emergency.** **Leave your trip plan with a reliable person who is NOT going on the trip with you.** **Do not leave it with the park.**

Personal or Group Information

Your Name (or name of Trip Leader if traveling in a group) _____

Number of people traveling with the group _____

Number of children ages 0-17 traveling with the group _____

Travel Details

Destination/Route/Trail _____

Visitor Center/Ranger Station phone # _____

Arrival (Date/Time) _____

Return (Date/Time) _____

Method of Travel/Distance _____

Vehicle(s) & Parking Location (make/model/color/license) _____

What types of activities will you be engaging in? (e.g hiking) _____

Where will the activity take place? (e.g. name of trail) _____

Name and phone # of Guide/ Outfitter (if applicable) _____

Equipment

Tent(s) - make/model/color: _____

Vessel(s) - make/model/color/ license or ID: _____

Other: _____

Contact Information

What kind of communication device will you carry with you? Type/Number [e.g. Cellphone and carrier (e.g. Sprint), VHF]

What kind of distress alerting device will you carry with you? (e.g. Spot, PLB, inReach)

REMEMBER TO LEAVE YOUR PLAN WITH YOUR EMERGENCY CONTACT, A PERSON WHO IS NOT GOING ON THE TRIP WITH YOU. INSTRUCT THEM TO ALERT THE AUTHORITIES AND PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION IF YOU ARE NOT BACK BY THE EXPECTED TIME.

Emergency Plan

February 2018

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

An emergency plan will help you and your group know what to do if someone becomes lost or injured. Create and practice your plan before you go. **Modify this plan to fit your specific trip and activity.**

DO NOT GET LOST

Review the route your taking with all group members. Point out landmarks and tricky turns which can be used as a reference point before you go. Consider carrying and giving each group member a whistle that can be used to locate them. Share and use the following principles:

- **"Stay Together"** - Stay with the group, pay attention, and don't wander off the trail
- **"Be a Buddy"** - Make sure everyone has a buddy and stays with them at all times
- **"Stay Put"** - Unless there is an immediate threat to life, the lost person should **always** stay put and not wander. If they become lost, instruct them to:
  - ◊ Stay put
  - ◊ Stay Calm
  - ◊ Blow their whistle often

DO NOT GET INJURED

- Stay on the trail and within designated areas
- Consider First Aid and CPR training for the Trip Leader(s).
- Pack a First Aid kit. Inventory the kit and replace any expired medication. Remember to pack any special medications required for the group members.

ACTION PLAN

If someone in your group becomes lost or injured, the Trip Leader and the Safety Leader need to stop the activity and gather the group together. Review the plan of action with everyone and begin delegating tasks. Remind the group members to stay together and be calm.

Lost Person	Injured Person
• Call 911 and tell them: ◊ The last known location the lost person was seen, including GPS coordinates if you have them ◊ Types and colors of clothing they are wearing and what equipment the lost person was carrying ◊ Any medical conditions they may have • If you don't have a cell phone or cell signal, flag down hikers in the area who are returning to the starting point and ask them to alert Park Rangers of the situation. • If you don't see any hikers, Trip Leaders may need to split the group up and send some people to the ranger station or visitor center to find help. Remember to stay together and "Be a Buddy".	• Assess the nature of the injury to decide if you should call 911. • When dealing with minor injuries (e.g. scrapes and abrasions), use the First Aid kit to clean and cover the affected area. In the event of major injuries be sure to: ◊ Control bleeding by applying pressure to the wound ◊ Make sure the person is breathing ◊ Minimize movement • In case of evacuation, if the injured person is able to walk, evacuation might be as simple as helping the person walk out. If the person is not able to walk, call 911 or alert Park Rangers (see Lost Person). • Make sure someone waits with the injured person until Search and Rescue arrives.