

# JOSHUA TREE

## WHERE THE DESERT BECOMES ART



### A DESERT LIKE NO OTHER

Part national park, part artist colony, part spiritual escape—Joshua Tree is all about contrast. Stark yet beautiful. Quiet, yet full of life. Rugged, yet inspiring.

Here, ancient rock formations meet otherworldly Joshua trees. The silence is real, the stars are bright, and time slows down.

Whether you come to hike, climb, photograph, meditate or simply breathe, Joshua Tree leaves its mark long after you go.

By Jennifer Collins  
LCCN Travel Correspondent



“  
*Joshua Tree isn't something you visit. It's something you experience.*  
”

Sunrise over Jumbo Rocks. Morning light transforms the desert into a living, breathing masterpiece.



**SKULL ROCK**  
Wind and rain carved this natural wonder over thousands of years.



**CHOLLA CACTUS GARDEN**  
At sunrise and sunset, the cholla come alive, glowing like fields of gold.



**KEYS VIEW**  
A stunning panoramic overlook of the Coachella Valley and surrounding ranges.



**DARK SKY PARADISE**  
An International Dark Sky Park, Joshua Tree offers some of SoCal's best stargazing.

### THE GUIDE



**BEST SUNRISE SPOT**  
Keys View  
Watch the sun rise over the valley and light up the desert.



**BEST SUNSET SPOT**  
Hidden Valley  
Golden hour here is pure magic.



**BEST EASY HIKE**  
Hidden Valley Nature Trail  
A 1-mile loop with incredible rock formations and views.



**BEST STARGAZING AREA**  
Black Rock Campground  
Wide open skies and zero light pollution.



**BEST LOCAL EATS**  
Crossroads Cafe  
Local, fresh and full of flavor. A perfect post-hike stop.

### DON'T MISS

- Cholla Cactus Garden
- Barker Dam
- Ryan Mountain Trail
- Skull Rock
- Arch Rock



At first glance, Joshua Tree National Park looks harsh and unforgiving. Massive boulders rise from the desert floor. Knotted trees seem frozen in time. The sun beats down on a landscape that appears almost lifeless.

Spend a few hours there, however, and a different picture emerges.

Joshua Tree is a place of contrasts. It is rugged yet peaceful, barren yet full of life, isolated yet visited by millions of people from around the world each year. Artists, photographers, hikers, rock climbers, campers and stargazers all come searching for something different. Most leave with the same feeling: they have experienced one of California's most remarkable landscapes.

Located about two hours east of Los Angeles, Joshua Tree National Park covers nearly 800,000 acres where the Mojave and Colorado deserts meet. The park takes its name from the iconic Joshua tree, a member of the yucca family whose unusual shape has become a symbol of the American Southwest.

Early Mormon settlers reportedly believed the tree's outstretched branches resembled the biblical Joshua reaching toward the heavens, giving the species its now-famous name.

The trees are only part of the attraction. Throughout the park, enormous granite rock formations create a landscape distinct from anywhere else in Southern California. Millions of years of earth processes pushed the rocks upward before wind and water sculpted them into the dramatic formations visitors see today.

Among the most popular destinations is Skull Rock, a natural formation formed across centuries of erosion. Nearby, Hidden Valley offers one of the park's most accessible hiking experiences. Surrounded amid towering rock walls, the area was once rumored to be used by cattle rustlers

hiding stolen livestock.

For people seeking panoramic views, Keys View provides one of the most spectacular overlooks in the region. From an elevation of more than 5,000 feet, visitors can see the Coachella Valley, the San Andreas Fault and, on exceptionally clear days, even Mexico.

Visitors should also plan ahead. Temperatures can exceed 100 degrees for much of the year, and services inside the park are limited. Travelers often drive dozens of miles between destinations, making water, sunscreen and a full tank of gas essential. Park officials recommend carrying more water than you think you'll need and staying hydrated throughout your visit.

The beauty of Joshua Tree changes dramatically throughout the day.

Sunrise colors the landscape in tones of gold and orange, while sunset creates extended shadows that transform familiar scenes into something entirely new. Photographers often arrive before dawn and remain long after sunset to capture the park's changing moods.

When darkness falls, another attraction emerges.

Joshua Tree is internationally recognized for its exceptionally dark skies. Far from the bright lights of major cities, the park offers some of the finest stargazing opportunities in California. On clear nights, the Milky Way stretches across the heavens in breathtaking detail. Meteor showers, planets and remote galaxies become visible to the naked eye.

The night skies have helped make Joshua Tree a favorite destination for astronomers, photographers and anyone looking for a signal of just how vast the universe can be.

Wildlife also flourishes in the seemingly adverse environment.

Desert cottontails, jackrabbits, coyotes and roadrunners are common sights. Bighorn sheep navigate rocky slopes with

ease, while dozens of reptile species have adapted to the desert climate. Spring often brings colorful wildflower blooms that briefly change the landscape.

The park's unique atmosphere has also attracted generations of artists and musicians.

The nearby town of Joshua Tree, along with neighboring communities such as Twentynine Palms and Yucca Valley, has become known for its creative culture. Art galleries, music venues and diverse shops draw visitors looking for inspiration beyond the park's boundaries.

For many people, however, the greatest attraction is the silence.

In a region dominated by freeways, crowds and constant activity, Joshua Tree offers something increasingly rare: space to slow down. The vast open landscape encourages visitors to disconnect from their phones, leave behind daily distractions and simply observe the world around them.

Whether climbing among giant boulders, hiking desert trails, watching the sunset from a rocky overlook or gazing at stars on a moonless night, visitors often discover that Joshua Tree is more than a national park.

It is an experience.

The desert does not reveal itself all at once. Instead, it unfolds slowly, rewarding those willing to pause, look closer and appreciate the beauty concealed within its rough terrain.

That may be why so many people return again and again.

In Joshua Tree, the landscape is not simply something to see. It is something to feel. The peace, the light, the rocks and the stars combine to create a place that remains in memory well after visitors have returned home. For countless travelers, that lasting impression is what makes Joshua Tree one of California's true natural treasures.

# THE DESERT AFTER DARK

Where the stars put on a show like no other.

When the sun sets and the desert cools, Joshua Tree reveals its most dazzling treasure—the night sky. Far from city lights and pollution, the park is a designated International Dark Sky Park, offering some of the clearest, most breathtaking stargazing in the world.

On a clear night, the Milky Way stretches from horizon to horizon. Planets shine bright enough to see, meteors streak across the sky, and distant galaxies are visible to the naked eye.

Look up. Breathe deep.  
You're part of something infinite.

### EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC

#### BEST STARGAZING SPOTS

Black Rock Campground, Keys View, Jumbo Rocks, Quail Springs.

#### NEW MOON NIGHTS

The darkest skies for the brightest stars. Check the lunar calendar before you go.

#### BRING A RED LIGHT

It helps preserve your night vision and keeps the stars bright.

#### DRESS IN LAYERS

Desert nights can get chilly, even after warm days.

#### BE PRESENT

No Wi-Fi. No rush. Just you, the desert, and the universe.

“  
*In the desert, the stars are always closer than you think.*  
”



800,000 ACRES  
of protected desert wilderness.



EST. 1994  
Joshua Tree became a national park on October 31, 1994.



International Dark Sky Park  
Gold tier designation for exceptional night skies



Elevation range 1,015 - 5,816 ft.  
From the Cottonwood Springs Oasis to Keys View