In Bloom

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

The more than 1,000,000 people visiting Joshua Tree National Park annually to discover its majestic beauty and enjoy the blooms of its many wildflowers have Minerva Hoyt to thank. Upon marrying Dr. Sherman Hoyt, this southern belle was transplanted to Pasadena where she became involved in Southern California society, organized charity events and developed a passion for gardening. Minerva was captivated with the fragile desert flora that flourished against all odds amidst the area's harsh climate. She also became frustrated by those who dug up or burned the plants, cacti and Joshua trees that she found so beautiful.

Minerva worked tirelessly on behalf of desert plant life, holding exhibits and founding conservation societies. Ultimately, she felt the best way to truly preserve desert plants was through a large park. In 1936, with the help of President Roosevelt, a presidential proclamation established the grand desert park now known as Joshua Tree National Park.

WILDFLOWERS

Joshua Tree is a dichotomy of the most brutal and yet fragile terrain. The park, famous for its wildflowers, is an immense 800,000 acres and encompasses some of the most breathtaking geological displays in all of the California deserts. Among the park's twisted rocks and desert landscape you'll find the colorful sand verbena, canterbury bells, brown-eyed primrose and the yucca brevifolia, or the Joshua tree. There are more than 700 species of vascular plants (plants with conducting tissues circulating water and nutrients internally) in Joshua Tree, which is renowned for its plant diversity.

Wildflower season typically begins in late February with the cream colored blooms of the Joshua trees, and by April, the cacti begin to bloom, producing brightly colored waxy flowers. Do note, however, the fall and winter precipitation greatly determines the spring blooming period and the wildflower blooms may vary greatly from one year to the next.

GETTING THERE

Luckily for residents of the Coachella Valley, Joshua Tree is a local treasure and only about an hour drive. Although there are three entrances to Joshua Tree National Park, the closest entrance for Valley residents is the south entrance at Cottonwood Spring, just 25 miles east of Indio (traveling east on Interstate 10, take the Cottonwood Road/Box Canyon Road exit, turn left and follow the signs). The other two entrances are located off of Highway 62 in Joshua Tree and in Twentynine Palms.

WHEN TO VISIT

Joshua Tree National Park is always open and can be visited year round.

VISITOR CENTER

Joshua Tree National Park Visitor Center
74485 National Park Drive
Twentynine Palms, California 92277
Open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. • Visitor Information: 760-367-5500

There is also the Oasis Visitor Center, located at the junction of Utah Trail and National Park Drive, open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cottonwood Visitor Center is located eight miles north of Interstate 10 at Cottonwood Spring and is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Web site: www.nps.gov/jotr
A $15 parking fee admits passengers of a single, non-commercial vehicle to the park for the day and is valid for the next six days.

Healthy Living is a publication of Eisenhower Medical Center · © Copyright 2014 All Rights Reserved · www.emc.org