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Joshua Tree National Park implements new backpacking permit system

TWENTYNINE PALMS, CA — Backpackers can now obtain backpacking permits digitally at recreation.gov as of February 1, 2023, and the new system will be fully implemented on March 1, 2023. During the month of February as the system transitions, backpackers may continue to self-register at backcountry trailheads, and can book permits online for dates after March 1. After March 1, the self-registration, paper-based permits will be prohibited.

The new system will:

- Improve the visitor experience and more effectively communicate important safety information.
- Better protect cultural, natural, and wilderness values and improve the sustainable use of the backcountry.
- Provide park rangers with better data to inform future park planning and decision-making.

“With the increase in park visitation, we have observed a significant jump in backcountry use. This has resulted in overuse of sensitive areas as well as an impact to the wilderness experience that many park visitors expect,” said former park superintendent David Smith. “This new backcountry system will allow for a regulated flow of users to high-use areas and provide a way for campers to become more educated about Leave No Trace principles before they come to the park.”

The reservation fee is \$6 per wilderness backpacking permit and would allow for a group size of 1-12 people. A new component to reserving a backpacking permit is selecting a zone based on camping location. Details about zone designation is described on the park website.

Backpacking remains at-large except for the high-use zone Boy Scout Trail. Camping along the Boy Scout Trail requires backpackers to camp in a designated campsite reservable through recreation.gov. In all other zones, backpackers must camp at least one mile from any backcountry trailhead, at least ½ mile from any road, and at least 200 feet from any trail.

There is no limit to backpacking permits, but parking at backcountry trailheads is limited. Backpackers are encouraged to arrive early to find a parking spot. Backpacking permits are only required for overnight stays, not day hikes.

Online permits can be obtained at recreation.gov up 6 months in advance, up to the day of the trip until 2 pm. In-person permits are located at the Main Headquarters Office Building 100, 74485 National Park Dr, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277, and is open to the public between 8 am and 4 pm.

For more information about backpacking in Joshua Tree, please visit www.nps.gov/jotr/planyourvisit/backpacking.htm.

www.nps.gov

About Joshua Tree National Park: Two distinct desert ecosystems, the Mojave and the Colorado, come together in Joshua Tree National Park. Dark night skies, a rich cultural history, and surreal geologic features add to the wonder of this vast wilderness in southern California. Learn more at [nps.gov/jotr](https://www.nps.gov/jotr) and on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Youtube](#)

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