



**DESERT INSTITUTE**  
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL  
PARK ASSOCIATION

+1-760-819-4714  
desertinstitute@joshuatree.org  
55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,  
Yucca Valley, 92284

# CACTI OF JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

SEMINAR and FIELD CLASS / FALL 2023

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Get to know the cacti of Joshua Tree National Park and its surrounding desert environs. Students will learn all kinds of fascinating facts about cacti in this immersive two-day lecture and field course, and will be taught how to identify cacti species in the Mojave and Colorado deserts using common field identification techniques. Students will begin the course on Friday evening with a classroom lecture that will introduce the basics of cacti identification, the main types of cacti in this part of the California desert, and the individual species we will come across in the field the following day. Saturday's exploration will take students to various areas throughout Joshua Tree National Park with the intent of seeing every single species of cacti that grows within its boundaries. This course involves car caravanning and will finish in a different location in which it begins; students provide their own transportation, meals, and lodging.

## MEETING LOCATIONS

- **Classroom lecture:** [Rattlesnake room](#), 74485 National Park Drive, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277
- **Field outing:** [Joshua Tree Visitor Center](#), 6554 Park Blvd, Joshua Tree, CA 92252 (please note we will finish at [Cottonwood Entrance Station](#), approximately 60 miles from JT visitor center)

## DATES and TIMES

- **Classroom lecture:** Friday, October 27th, 5p to 8p
- **Field outing:** Saturday, October 28th, 8a - 3p

*Please arrive on time; we start classes promptly, and in the case of hikes or other classes on the go, we cannot wait for students who arrive late.*

## ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE (field outing)

Walking up to three miles on trails that could have uneven or sandy terrain. Elevation gains will be no more than 300 feet. Please contact us if you have questions about your ability to participate.

## EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

None

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Admission to Joshua Tree National Park (please download or print your park pass ahead of time, or you will have to pay fees at the gate!)
- First aid and emergency supplies for the group
- Hand lens
- Supplemental written materials/handouts from instructor

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation

## GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR: Melanie Davis

Melanie Davis lives in Joshua Tree and is a research field ecologist and botanist at UC Riverside's Center for Conservation Biology in Palm Desert. She has been working in the California deserts since 2017. Her field research brings her to remote corners of the Colorado, Mojave, and Sonoran deserts to study the effects of climate change and human disturbance on desert ecosystems, as well as the distribution of rare native plants. She is also an artist and has published illustrated field guides to several groups of native desert plants. Melanie holds a bachelor's from The Evergreen State College and the Desert Ecologist and Naturalist certifications from College of the Desert.

## PROGRAM AGENDA

### Day 1

We'll meet on Friday evening at 5p for a classroom lecture. Students will be introduced to local cacti species and the basic techniques of field identification. We will also review a list of the species that we will be seeing in the field on day 2.

## Day 2

We will meet in the Mojave desert (Joshua Tree) and make our way down to the Colorado desert (Cottonwood), making several stops along the way. We'll finish the class at Cottonwood Visitor Center (south end of park.) **Please note that this course ends in a different location than it begins.**

## SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

This class will be car caravanning to a few locations; students are responsible for their own transportation, meals, and lodging. Print or download your park pass ahead of time, and make sure you have a full tank of gas or full EV charge before the Saturday field course begins, as there will be no gas stops along the way. **All participants must complete the [health questionnaire and liability waiver](#) at least one day ahead of the program start date.**

## WHAT TO BRING

### The essentials for all field courses

- Water, between 3 and 4 litres per person for a full day outing
- Food and snacks, easily packed and eaten in the field, for the duration of your course
- Close-toed athletic shoes or hiking boots; no sandals, not even hiking sandals!
- Sun protection: hat, sunglasses, sunscreen; light-colored long-sleeved shirts are recommended and very effective on hot days
- Warm layers for cooler mornings/evenings (it can be surprisingly cold!)
- Backpack to carry food, water, and any personal items you need for the day
- Notebook and pencil are always good to have

### Required

- Full tank of gas or EV charge

### Recommended

- None

# FAQ

## WHO DO I CONTACT IF I AM RUNNING LATE?

Please call our main line: 760-819-4714 and if no one answers, please call the Desert Institute coordinator, Benny Lopez: 949-241-9693.

For classes meeting in the park, please take into consideration the time it will take to go through the entrance gate—on weekends after 9am, you may wait up to 45 minutes! (15-20 minutes is typical.) For afternoon activities, you will also want to allot time to park, as parking lots tend to be congested between 10am and 4p in the busy season. **There is no cell service in the park**, so please plan accordingly!

## WHAT IF I NEED TO CANCEL?

Desert Institute will provide a full refund if we are notified 14 days in advance. If we are notified less than 14 days in advance, we are unable to process refunds for any reason. (But we would like you to notify us if you are unable to attend.)

## DOES DESERT INSTITUTE CANCEL ACTIVITIES FOR WEATHER OR LOW ENROLLMENT?

Desert Institute runs classes rain or shine, with the exception of astrophotography classes, which require mostly clear skies in order to be successful. If we do not meet our minimum of 4 registered participants for any given activity, we will cancel the activity with 48+ hours notice. We recommend that you purchase travel insurance, as we are unable to reimburse for expenses you incur due to a canceled class, such as airfare and hotel.

## ARE THERE ANY THINGS I NEED TO DO TO PREPARE?

All participants must return the completed [health questionnaire and signed waiver](#) before the day of their activity. **Failure to do so will cancel your registration.** If your course enters Joshua Tree National Park, you must **download or print your park pass** ahead of the class, or you will pay the entrance fee at the gate, which is currently \$35 per vehicle.

## CAN I BRING MY KIDS? MY SPOUSE? PETS?

Only registered participants may attend Desert Institute activities unless noted in the activity description. If this is a kid-friendly activity, please make sure your child(ren) meets the age requirements. As much as we love our pets, we don't allow them in the field with any of our activities.