



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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DARK SKY PHOTOGRAPHY

FIELD CLASS / FALL 2023

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Enjoy the spectacular night skies of Joshua Tree National Park during this evening workshop, and develop new skills while learning from and shooting alongside an experienced landscape photographer. You'll learn how to scout and plan interesting astrophotography images, shoot a timelapse to capture star trails, and how to capture the Milky Way best. This dark sky workshop will follow a series of practical lessons but will be a relaxed environment in which you can set your own pace to ensure you get the guidance and encouragement you're looking for. Participants must provide their own photography equipment.

MEETING LOCATION

[Cap Rock Parking Lot](#) at Joshua Tree National Park, approximately 10.5 miles from the West Entrance Station in Joshua Tree

DATE and TIME

Friday, Sept 15th, 5:30p-11:30p

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: EASY

Slow-paced walking on maintained dirt trails and pathways with your camera gear, up to 2 miles. Don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have questions about your ability to participate.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Participants must have some experience working with their DSLR or mirrorless camera in manual exposure mode and be familiar with their camera's controls and options settings. You must know at least the basic functions of your camera.

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

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation
- Photography equipment

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR: Jon Norris

Jon Norris is a professional landscape photographer and workshop guide, a JTNPA business member, and a Desert Institute volunteer. Jon offers one-to-one and small group workshops, plus photographic adventure tours, in Joshua Tree National Park. He started taking photos at 14 with his trusty Zenit 10, teaching himself the fundamentals of photography via countless rolls of poorly exposed 35 mm film. Born in the UK, Jon spent 25 years working in aerospace engineering (15 years while living in France and Germany). As a recovering engineer, he now divides his time between marketing and photography and lives in Lake Forest, OC.

PROGRAM AGENDA

We'll start with a quick workshop orientation session to review camera gear and settings, go over the itinerary, and answer any questions. Then we'll spend the early evening/sunset scouting for compositions before taking a quick in-field snack break. As it gets dark, we'll start our dark sky, star trails, and milky way photography training, when you'll have plenty of time to ask questions and practice your new learning.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

There is no cell service in the park! Print or download your park pass ahead of time, and please allow ample travel time to arrive at the meeting location (see FAQ notes about late arrivals on page 4.) Please make sure you check the weather ahead of time and dress accordingly. Students must bring their own photography equipment (see "what to bring" on page 3.) All participants are required to submit a [health questionnaire and liability waiver](#) ahead of time.

WHAT TO BRING

The essentials for all field courses

- Water, between 3 and 4 liters 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!
- Warm layers for cooler mornings/evenings (it can be surprisingly cold!)
- Backpack to carry food, water, and any personal items you need for the class
- Notebook and pencil are always good to have

Required photography equipment

- Digital camera (DSLR or Mirrorless)
- Wide-angle fast lens with manual focus ability. An f/2.8 (or faster) 14-24mm full frame equivalent focal length is essential for nighttime photography.
- Sturdy tripod
- Remote shutter release intervalometer
- Extra camera batteries (charged)
- Spare memory cards
- Camera/lens cleaning supplies
- Your camera manual. You must know at least the basic functions of your camera. We'll go through what else you need to know during the workshop.
- Small backpack or camera bag
- Headlamp or flashlight (with a red filter if possible)

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.