



DESERT INSTITUTE
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PARK ASSOCIATION

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FAMILY CAMP-OUT!

FAMILY RETREAT / FALL 2023

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

We know how important it is to get out for some fresh air and let the kids run around! And we also know how important it is to share the beauty and wonders found in nature, and grow the next generation of stewards who will protect special places like Joshua Tree and other national parks. That's why we created Family Camp-out! Join Joshua Tree National Park Association for a fun, easy-going weekend designed for families with young children. We'll have educational activities, storytelling, star-gazing, and lots of time around the campfire while we're tucked away in the awe-inspiring and serene setting of Lost Horse Valley in Joshua Tree National Park. The weekend includes all meals, park entrance fee, and campsites. We're so happy to share the place we love the most, and know that it'll tug at your heartstrings too. Families new to camping are welcome!

MEETING LOCATION

[Lost Horse Campground](#), in Joshua Tree National Park approximately "8.6" miles from the west entrance in Joshua Tree. *Please use the map and turn-by-turn directions, provided upon registration.*

DATES and TIMES

Check-in is from 3-4p on Friday, October 20th, and check-out is immediately following breakfast on Sunday, October 22nd (all participants must be packed up and out by 11:30a.)

ACTIVITY LEVEL: EASY

There will be optional nature hikes (approx 1 mile with less than 100 feet elevation gain/loss). All campsites are dirt ground/primitive, and the areas around the campground may have uneven terrain. Please contact us if you have questions about accommodations or your ability to participate.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

None; please note this retreat is for families with children ages 3 and up. Please contact us if you have children under the age of 3 and would like to bring them.

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
- Meals from Friday dinner through Sunday breakfast
- Primitive campsites at the seclude, private Lost Horse Campground
- Materials for planned activities

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Transportation
- Snacks or beverages you may need for the weekend
- Camping equipment (see packing list for suggestions)

CAMPSITE INFORMATION

Each campsite can accommodate one car and one large tent. RVs and campers are not allowed unless prior arrangements have been made with Desert Institute. Campsites have picnic tables and are in close proximity to one another. The bathroom has a vault toilet only. **There is no running water in the park.** This means no flush toilets, showers, or sinks. **All drinking water must be brought in by each family.** There is no cell service in the park, and the nearest store is a 25 minute drive into town, so please come prepared for the weekend with all supplies you anticipate needing. There is one fire pit; Desert Institute will provide wood for group campfires if conditions allow. Individual campfires are prohibited.

GET TO KNOW YOUR LEADERS: **Christine Grimes, Benny Lopez, Sarah Witt**

This weekend is facilitated by the team at Desert Institute and our parent organization, JTNPA! We are so excited to welcome you to our home park, and hope you'll leave the weekend feeling energized and more connected to your family and nature. Christine is a born-and-raised desert dweller and heads the JTNPA Development department, and loves facilitating magical desert experiences for kids AND adults. Benny Lopez is the Desert Institute Coordinator and is mom to six kids, so she's very happy to be part of our new family-friendly programs. Sarah Witt is the Program Director at Desert Institute, and as a former chef, she's stoked to cook for everyone, and share the desert night sky with everyone around the campfire.

PROGRAM AGENDA

DAY 1: Friday, Oct 20th

Check-in will start at 3p, and we'll help all families settle into their campsites and get comfy. From 4 to 5 we'll have a brief orientation and welcome activity so families can get to know one another, and dinner will be served at the picnic tables near the campfire at 5p. There will be a little down time to explore the boulders at Lost Horse or to change into warmer layers before an evening star-gazing program. The evening will end by 8p, with the option for families to enjoy the campfire and night skies until lights out at 10p.

DAY 2: Saturday, Oct 21st

Saturday is our big day! We'll start early with breakfast at 7:30am, and divide into activity groups for the first activity session from 9a to 11a. One group will head to Hidden Valley for a nature hike, and the other will stay back at the campground for a scavenger hunt to learn about animals that live in the park. Lunch will be served back at the campground from noon to 1p, and groups will switch for the afternoon activity session from 2p to 4p. We'll meet back at the picnic area again at 5p for swearing in of Junior Rangers, and will have a hearty dinner before storytelling around the campfire. We'll finish the night with s'mores and a moonlight walk.

DAY 3: Sunday, Oct 22nd

Time to go home! We'll enjoy a warm breakfast at 8am before families pack up and head home. All campsites must be vacated by 11:30a.

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.
- All activities over the weekend are optional. Please inform your leaders if you are opting out of a particular session or would like some time to explore the park on your own.
- **Please submit the accommodations and [meal preference form](#) by October 6th;** we will do our best to accommodate dietary needs, but cannot guarantee if you have a highly specialized diet. Please make sure you bring extra snacks or meals if your family will need food outside the scheduled meals.
- **All participants must provide their own drinking water** for the weekend; there is no potable water once you enter the park! We suggest 2 gallons per adult per day for drinking and washing hands. There are no flush toilets, running water, or showers in the park.

- Participants must **complete the [health questionnaire and liability waiver](#) ahead of the program start date.** Waivers must be received for all participants, including children. Desert Institute will reach out to all registered families to make sure everyone is prepared to have an enjoyable, relaxing weekend.

WHAT TO BRING

Required supplies and equipment

- **Tent or camping equipment** that can accommodate your family; please note that we can fit no more than two small tents or one large tent per campsite; RVs or campers are not allowed without prior permission from Desert Institute
- **Sleeping system:** please include a **sleeping pad or other form of insulation** if sleeping on the ground in your tent, which is not for comfort but to keep you and your little ones warm! If using **sleeping bags**, please make sure they are rated for 30F or lower, as it gets very cold at night in the desert. **Pillows** if you need them.
- Headlamps or flashlights for each adult (at a minimum)
- Sturdy athletic shoes or hiking boots, and comfortable shoes for the evenings and walking around camp
- Personal first aid and medications, as needed
- Snacks to supplement meals, as needed
- Water, 2 gallons per adult per day (for drinking and handwashing, cleaning up spills, etc)
- Toiletries and personal care items (wipes come in handy in lieu of a shower)
- Backpack to carry food, water, and any personal items you need for Hidden Valley nature walk (away from camp for 2-3 hours)
- Sun protection: sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, long-sleeved light colored shirts in warm weather, neck gaiters, etc
- Warm insulated jackets and layered clothing (see suggested clothing list)

Suggested clothing

Layers! In the desert, we have wide swings in temperature between day and night. Please be prepared for hot, sunny days and very cold, windy nights. Here is what we bring for one adult on a trip like this:

- 2 pairs wool socks (smart wools are great)
- 2 pairs underwear
- 1 pair shorts
- 1 pair long pants

- 1 set of rain pants and rain coat (if there is even a 1% chance of precipitation)
- 1 medium weight base layer or lightweight fleece
- 1 insulating layer, such as a down jacket or synthetic puffer
- 1 outer shell to protect from wind, to wear over insulating layer
- Gloves (you will use them)
- Beanie or hat if your insulating layer does not have a hood
- 1-2 lightweight long-sleeved shirt for sunny days
- Neck gaiter or scarf
- 1 set of sleeping clothes that are warm

Recommended additional items

- Camp chairs to gather around the campfire—there is no seating adjacent to the firepit
- Blankets to wear while sitting around campfire
- Reusable dining ware (cups, utensils, bowls, plates) for your family; we will provide disposable but we are encouraging sustainable behaviors. There will be a dishwashing station provided by Desert Institute for families to use
- Cooler and ice, if you are bringing perishable foods
- Activities for your children to do outside of planned activity time
- Charging bank for phones and other devices

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.