



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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HIKING MY FEELINGS: TENDING TO YOUR INNER WILDERNESS

WELLNESS RETREAT / FALL 2023

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

How can we draw inspiration from the natural world to better manage our stress, emotions, and practice mindfulness? What is possible when we get intentional about our time spent in the desert and equate the outer wilderness with our inner wilderness?

Join Sydney and Barry Williams (Hiking My Feelings) for a weekend of wellness in the wilderness at Joshua Tree National Park. Through a combination of hiking, mindfulness activities, self-reflection practices, and community connection, participants can look forward to unearthing a connection to themselves, each other, and the world around them. Our proven framework for tapping into the healing power of nature will empower you to build resilience, self-trust, compassion, and empathy. Integrating the skills learned in the park into your daily life back at home will help reduce stress, improve your mindset, and help you feel connected to something bigger than yourself.

MEETING LOCATION

[Joshua Tree Visitor Center](#) parking lot, 6554 Park Blvd, Joshua Tree CA 92252

DATE and TIME

We'll meet Friday, November 17th at 3p and conclude Sunday, November 19th at 2pm

ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE/CHALLENGING

Participants can expect to walk 6 miles on day one, and 3 miles on day two. Both days participants will walk on mostly flat terrain, but will encounter sections of sandy washes and uneven terrain, with elevation gains of no more than 100 feet. Please contact us if you have questions about accommodations or 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
- Primitive campsite at the seclude, private Lost Horse Campground

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Transportation
- Meals
- Camping equipment

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 the participant.** 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: Sydney and Barry Williams

SYDNEY WILLIAMS: When former collegiate athlete and competitive skydiver, Sydney Williams, unexpectedly found herself on the receiving end of a Type 2 diabetes diagnosis, while grappling with decades of unresolved trauma, she set out on a mission: turn her pain into power. After two hikes on the Trans-Catalina Trail, she founded Hiking My Feelings® to help others tap into the mind-body connection and healing power of nature that helped kick her self-limiting beliefs and disease into remission. Five years and 400+ events later, Sydney's work has helped thousands of people find wellness in the wilderness.

BARRY WILLIAMS: Hailing from New Hampshire, Barry grew up in the outdoors and has hiked most of the White Mountains and Presidential range, in addition to various walkabouts around the US. Before Hiking My Feelings, Barry was a professional skydiver for more than 16 years. Combining a degree in psychology from the University of New Hampshire, his experience as an educator, and his training as a Wilderness EMT, Barry is uniquely equipped to lead hikes, facilitate educational programming, and ensure everyone's safety in the outdoors at our events.

PROGRAM AGENDA

DAY 1: Friday, Nov 17th

Everyone will meet at the Joshua Tree Visitor Center at 3p and then caravan into the park as a group. You'll have about an hour to set-up your camp and settle in before a welcome ceremony and dinner. We'll finish the evening with stories around the campfire.

DAY 2: Saturday, Nov 18th

We'll start early at 8a with a pre-hike briefing and intention-setting for the day. At 9a we'll head out for a long hike and return to camp around 2p. Lunch is out on the trail. We'll do some post-hike stretches and group reflections, followed by wilderness wellness journaling, a group gratitude circle, and guided self-discovery. We'll have an hour long dinner break before we settle in around the campfire for storytelling at 7p.

DAY 3: Sunday, Nov 19th

We'll start early again at 8a to set intentions and get ready for our last hike as a group. We'll leave at 9a and have lunch on the trail, and return to camp by 1p. Everyone will do some final stretches and sharing before we break down and head out. All campsites must be vacated by 3p.

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, especially if coming from LA or another heavily populated area.
- 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.
- All **participants must provide their own drinking water and meals** for the weekend; there is no potable water once you enter the park! We suggest 2 gallons per adult per day for drinking, cooking, 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.**

WHAT TO BRING

Required supplies and equipment

- **Tent or camping equipment;** 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 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
- Sturdy athletic shoes or hiking boots, and comfortable shoes for the evenings and walking around camp
- Personal first aid and medications, as needed
- Food: you will need all meals for the duration of the course (dinner Friday through lunch Sunday); if you need help planning camp meals or have questions about what kinds of foods to bring, please contact us
- Snacks and non-alcoholic beverages for campfire on Friday + Saturday night
- Cooking and eating utensils
- Water, 2 gallons per adult per day (for drinking, cooking, handwashing, 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 the hike outings (away from camp for 5-6 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)
- Notebook or journal and something to write with

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
- Cooler and ice, if you are bringing perishable foods
- Charging bank for phones and other devices
- Hiking poles
- Suggested reading *Hiking My Feelings: Stepping into the Healing Power of Nature*

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.