



**DESERT INSTITUTE**  
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL  
PARK ASSOCIATION

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## HOW TO NAVIGATE WITH MAP & COMPASS

FIELD CLASS / FALL 2023

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Do you want the confidence to explore the desert without getting lost, even when you leave the trail? Join us for this two-day field class that will teach you the essentials of traditional navigation. Participants will learn the basics of topography, map reading, using a compass, and the history of navigation during classroom and field exercises. The course will culminate with a ½ day route-finding adventure in Joshua Tree National Park, where you'll visit stunning geological sites and locate caches. Although GPS is common these days, map and compass skills are indispensable, life-saving skills for anyone who wants to venture into backcountry settings. No previous experience with compass or topo maps is needed. Participants will need to provide their own compass, and are responsible for their own transportation, lodging, and meals.

NOTE: GPS will not be taught in this class, although we will be briefly working with online apps like All Trails or Gaia GPS on phones.

### MEETING LOCATION, DATES, and TIMES

- **Saturday, Nov 4th, 8a to 4p:** [Black Rock Nature Center](#), 9800 Black Rock Canyon Road, Yucca Valley, CA 92284
- **Sunday, Nov 5th (field outing), 8a to 1:30p:** TBD, will notify students November 4th

*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

The walking is mostly on maintained trails, but there will be some uneven areas. There may be short stretches of rock scrambling, which requires coordination and balance. Participants should expect to walk up to 5 miles over the weekend with less than 100

feet of elevation gain/loss. 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
- USGS 7.5' topo maps
- UTM reader

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation
- Compass (please see packing list for suggested style and specs)

## GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR: Misha Askren

Misha Askren has been a wilderness educator for a number of years, focusing mostly on teaching navigation with map and compass. During that time he has led many trips in California, especially in the Sierras and Joshua Tree. Misha has traveled around the world, hiking and exploring.

## PROGRAM AGENDA

### Day 1

We'll focus on the fundamentals of navigation through a classroom-based day with some hands-on practice in the field. You'll learn the anatomy of a compass, how to read topo maps and take bearings, and how to use triangulation.

### Day 2

We'll finish the course with a route-finding field exercise in the Hidden Valley or Indian Cove areas of the park—both dramatic geologic sites! We'll set out to find specified

locations, and a few surprises along the way. Participants will be provided JTNP park passes, but they are responsible for their own transportation to the site.

## 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—extra time if you are meeting on a weekend morning (see FAQ notes about late arrivals.) Please make sure you check the weather ahead of time and dress accordingly. **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 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!
- 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

- Compass with sighting mirror and declination setting (The Suunto MC-2 compass or a Silva Ranger compass are acceptable for this class)
- Ruler (not metal)
- pencil

### 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.