



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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THE NIGHT SKY & HOW TO OBSERVE IT

FIELD CLASS / FALL 2023

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The class is designed for people who are interested in observing the Joshua Tree night sky. We'll start the evening in a classroom where participants will receive a basic introduction to tools used to view the night sky, such as binoculars and telescopes. While we're in the classroom, we'll start to navigate the night sky and learn what exists up there, and how to find some of the interesting objects in the winter sky. The classroom presentation will be followed by a night observation session at Sky's the Limit Observatory where the attendees can see first-hand how to set up a telescope and look at interesting objects. The instructor will provide a telescope for the group, but participants may bring their personal telescopes and/or binoculars, and the instructor will help you with their use. Participants are responsible for transporting themselves from the classroom to the observatory, approximately 3.5 miles by car.

MEETING LOCATION

[Rattlesnake room](#), 74485 National Park Drive, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277

DATE and TIME

Thursday, Oct 12th, 5:30p to 9:30p

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: LEISURLEY

Requires a short walk to the telescope pad from the parking area, approximately 100-200 foot walk on gravel. 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
- Telescope to be shared by group for viewing night sky

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR

John is a Physics PhD who, upon graduating, joined NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory to work on Voyager 1 and 2. That was the beginning of 30+ years working in aerospace. Some of the exciting things he's done are flying on the NASA Zero-Gravity plane, working on NIF (the world's largest fusion research laser—google it!), and conducting experiments on materials cooled to near absolute zero. Currently a happy resident of Joshua Tree, John teaches physics and astronomy at Copper Mountain College and enjoys observing the beautiful night sky from his backyard.

PROGRAM AGENDA

We will start in the classroom for a lecture/discussion on telescope use and navigating the night sky using constellations as landmarks. Around 7p, we will caravan by car to Sky's the Limit for observing using an instructor-provided telescope and any personal telescopes.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Please make sure you check the weather ahead of time and dress accordingly—it may be chilly at the observatory! **All participants must complete the [health questionnaire and liability waiver](#) at least one day ahead of the program start date.**

WHAT TO BRING

Required equipment

- Red flashlight (found on many modern headlamps and flashlights)

Recommended

- Folding chair for field observation
- binoculars (or telescope if you have one)

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

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.