



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

+1-760-819-4714
desertinstitute@joshuatree.org
55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,
Yucca Valley, 92284

BACKPACKING: BEYOND THE BOY SCOUT TRAIL

FIELD EXPERIENCE / SPRING 2024 / INSTRUCTOR: JON NORRIS

FRIDAY, MARCH 22TH (9:00AM) - SUNDAY, MARCH 24TH (2:00 PM)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Backpacking in the desert? Yes, it's possible - and a lot of fun! Spend a few days out in the backcountry and learn how to plan your own desert backpacking trip while traveling on foot through the picturesque wilderness of Joshua Tree National Park. We'll trek 24 miles on this 3-day, 2-night trip that loops through the northwest corner of the park. With moderate elevation gain (approx, 2,300 feet over the 3 days), the pace of this trip will be steady at around 2 miles per hour. We will take regular breaks for snacks, and will adjust our pace to meet the needs of the group.

This outing is great for all levels of backpackers, but especially beginners who have a streak for adventure and aren't quite ready to go on their own. Participants are responsible for their own equipment and meals. Please note that this trip requires participants to be in excellent physical condition, with the ability to carry a pack that weighs 30-40 lbs for the entire duration of the trip.

Participants will not have access to public restrooms or shelter other than their tent, and will be exposed to a range of elements that may include extreme heat as well as below-freezing temperatures at night. Desert Institute will be doing pre-trip phone calls to make sure participants are well-prepared.

PROGRAM AGENDA

We will meet at the Joshua Tree Visitor Center at 6554 Park Blvd in downtown Joshua Tree. The first half of the morning we'll make sure everyone has all of the correct gear, going over safety information, and backcountry wilderness ethics. There will be time to re-pack your bags to make sure everything is distributed evenly for a comfortable first day. From here, we'll carpool to the Boy Scout Trail parking lot where we'll begin our hike, traveling along the western edge of the Wonderland of rocks towards our first night's camp, where we will have time to prepare a hot meal before the sun sets. The following day we'll pack up camp and hit our first water cache. This will be the longest day clocking in at 10 miles. On day three we'll set out early for a 7-mile day through lesser traveled terrain that will bring us back to our starting point. In total, we will walk almost 24 miles!

MEETING LOCATION: [Joshua Tree Visitor Center](#), 6554 Park Blvd, Joshua Tree, CA 92252

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.

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Waiver: All participants must complete the [participation waiver](#) at least 24 hours before a class begins. Failure to do so may forfeit your right to participate.

Park Pass (\$30 per vehicle): For classes inside Joshua Tree National Park, participants are now required to purchase a [park pass](#). You can purchase a park pass [online](#), or pay at a park entrance. If you have an existing pass you may use that at the entrance!

ACTIVITY LEVEL

EXTREME

24 miles over rough terrain with 30-40 lb packs, 2 overnights in the backcountry. Participants must be in excellent physical condition for this strenuous overnight backpacking trip. It is recommended that if you have not been backpacking before (or recently), that you train by walking/hiking with a weighted pack 3-4x a week leading up to the hike. Start with 15-20 lb in the pack, and gradually increase the weight by 5 lb every week until you reach 40 lb. Aim to hike for 3-5 miles each time you go out, and gradually increase the distances you hike until you feel comfortable carrying a pack for 8-10 miles a day at its full weight. Please contact us if you have questions about your ability to participate.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- First aid and emergency supplies for the group

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Admission to Joshua Tree National Park
- Backpacking equipment (tents, sleeping bags, backpacks, etc)
- Meals
- Transportation
- We have a limited number of backpacks, tents, and sleeping systems to loan out upon request. Please inquire if you need to rent equipment.

WHAT TO BRING

Equipment

- Backpack (55L or larger overnight backpacking pack)
- Knife or multi-tool
- LED headlamp (or small flashlight plus extra batteries)
- Sunglasses
- Trekking poles
- Waterproof stuff sack(s) for your sleeping bag and clothes
- Whistle
- Water bladder and/or water bottles (you must have capacity to carry at least 4L of water with you)

Hygiene / Medical

- Hand sanitizer
- Lip balm (SPF rated)
- Personal medications
- Personal wipes
- Plastic zip-top bags (for garbage/waste)
- Sanitation trowel
- Sunscreen
- Toilet paper
- Toothbrush with cover and biodegradable toothpaste
- WAG bags (go anywhere toilet kit)

Food

- 2 camp lightweight breakfasts
- 3 trail lunches
- 2 camp lightweight dinners
- Any snacks and other food items you need between meals. Nuts, trail mix, jerkies, chocolate, salty things with calories are best!
- Electrolyte/hydration drink powder sachets e.g. Liquid IV (50% of your water intake during the trip should contain electrolytes)

Clothing

- Bandana or Buff
- Base layer (short-sleeved or long-sleeved moisture wicking shirt)
- Base layer bottoms (moisture wicking)
- Beanie
- Fleece, lightweight down, or warm insulating jacket

- Hiking boots (or appropriate athletic shoes for long days of walking with weight on the back)
- Hiking pants - 1 pair (preferably not cotton, moisture wicking or quick-dry materials recommended)
- Hiking socks - 2 pairs (synthetic or wool - NOT cotton)
- Light-colored hiking shirt or sun hoody (to protect arms from sun if it is warm)
- Mid-weight top layer
- Outer shell layer (this can be a wind jacket or rain jacket – check forecast, as rain is a possibility)
- Rain pants (if rain looks possible)
- Sun-shielding hat
- Underwear - 2 to 3 pairs as you see fit (moisture wicking or quick-dry materials recommended)
- Warm gloves

At Camp

- Camp chair
- Camp shoes (nice to wear something other than hiking boots when in camp)
- Cookset, dishes, bowls, utensils, cups (measuring/drinking)
- Quick-drying towel
- Sleeping bag (recommended that if you sleep cold, bring a 20°F bag or warmer)
- Sleeping pad (this is for warmth from the cold ground, not comfort. It is essential!)
- Stove, fuel, and lighter (to make hot beverages and food)
- Tent with guy lines and repair sleeve
- Tent footprint (to protect tent fabric from damage from sharp rocks, vegetation)

Optional (not necessary but you might like to hike with these)

- Camera and memory cards
- Cell phone
- Charging block & charging cables (for phone/camera)
- Compass
- Digital map such as AllTrails or Gaia GPS (download maps of the hike area ahead of time as no signal in JTNP)
- First-aid kit (DI will carry two first aid kits)
- GPS / satellite communicator (e.g. Garmin inReach)
- Paper topographical map

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Jon Norris is a professional landscape photographer and hiking/backpacking guide, a JTNPA business member, and a Desert Institute volunteer. Jon offers one-to-one and small group workshops, plus photographic adventure hikes and backpacking tours, in Joshua Tree National Park.

He started taking photos at the age of 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.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

There is no cell service in the park! Please allow ample time to arrive at the meeting location; park entrances may be very busy on weekends (see FAQs).

Please make sure you check weather conditions and dress accordingly.



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

+1-760-819-4714
desertinstitute@joshuatree.org
55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,
Yucca Valley, 92284

FAQ+

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I AM RUNNING LATE?

Desert Institute Manager Benny Erdahl: **949-241-9693**
or Education Director Dr. Justin Lenzi: **760-819-4714**

For classes meeting inside the park, it can take up to 45 minutes to go through an entrance gate on weekends after 9am (though 15-20 minutes is typical). Please 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,*** please plan accordingly.

WHAT IF I NEED TO CANCEL?

Desert Institute will provide a full refund if we are notified more than 14 days in advance. We are unable to process refunds for *any* cancellations less than 14 days in advance.

DOES DESERT INSTITUTE CANCEL ACTIVITIES FOR WEATHER OR LOW ENROLLMENT?

If we do not meet our minimum of 6 registered participants for any given activity, we will likely cancel the activity with at least 48+ hours notice.

Desert Institute runs classes rain or shine, with the exception of astrophotography classes, which require mostly clear skies in order to be successful.

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.

WHAT IF I FORGOT SOMETHING I NEED?

Our visitor centers and park stores are stocked with amazing essentials for your adventure. Preview or purchase items from our [online shop](#); we carry [hats](#), [shirts](#), bandanas, water bottles, notebooks, [maps](#), [books](#). And more!

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) are registered and meet the age requirements.

As much as we love pets, we don't allow them in the field with any of our activities.