

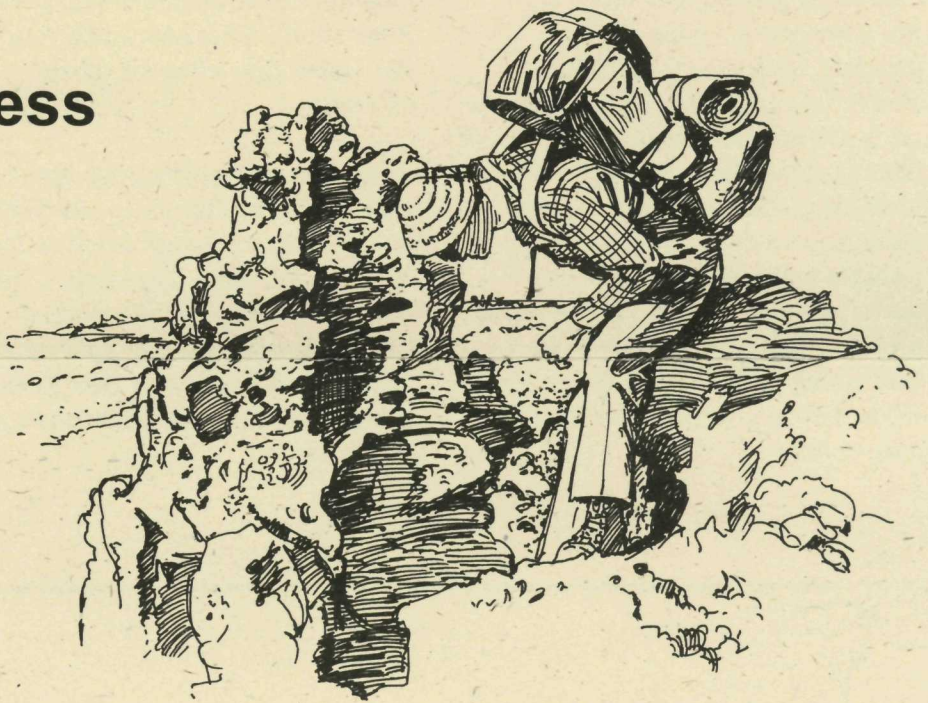
## Using the Wilderness

Most visitors to Craters of the Moon see the monument from their car and the short hiking trails along the Loop Drive. Doing so acquaints them with only 15% of the monument. The remaining 43,243 acres are seldom visited, yet there are few places in America where wilderness is so easily accessible.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defined wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." The Act recognized that wilderness

provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and a primitive type of recreation. Craters of the Moon contains wilderness in the truest sense of this definition. It is a vast plain of lava flows dotted with spatter cones,

fissures, lava tubes, and cinder cones. You will have the sense of being truly alone as you explore the seemingly endless volcanic terrain along the Great Rift.



## Along the Trail

The wilderness trail leads four miles from the Tree Molds parking lot to the Sentinel. The Lava Trees and Echo Crater both make good day hike destinations. Most backpackers spend the night at Echo Crater, three miles from the trailhead, but there are also camping opportunities at the Sentinel and beyond.

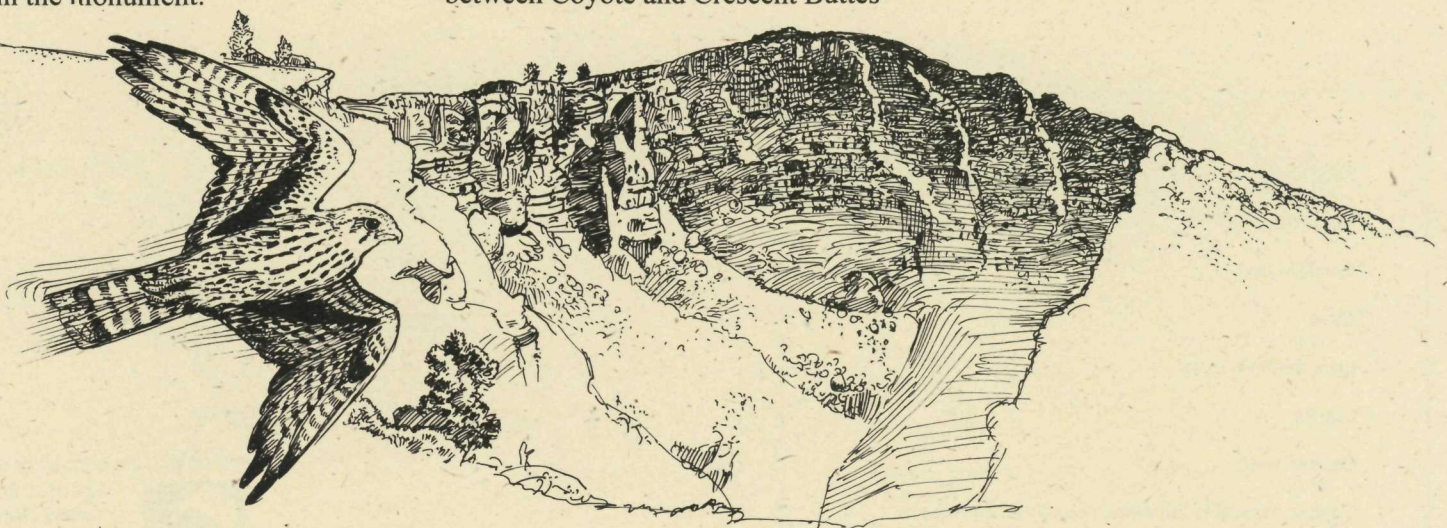
Begin at the Tree Molds parking lot. Walk back along the road approximately 75 yards to a trail on the right. You will hike over Broken Top cinder cone, passing through stands of antelope bitterbrush and rubber rabbitbrush. The trail then enters the cool shade of a limber pine grove before descending onto the most recent lava flow in the monument.

At this point you may detour cross-country to Buffalo Caves. Approximately 50 yards beyond where the trail hits the lava flow at the base of Broken Top, watch for a large pile of rocks (cairn) on the right of the trail. Follow the cairns along the base of Broken Top for 100 yards to reach the cave entrance. In the cave wear a helmet or hat to protect your head and carry a flashlight. It is not wise to enter caves alone. Backtrack to return to the wilderness trail.

The trail continues past Big Cinder Butte, which rises 800 feet above you. A half mile beyond Big Cinder, look for a series of lava trees and fissures west of the trail. The trail winds between Coyote and Crescent Buttes

to Echo Crater. Be sure to climb to the rim for a spectacular view of the row of cinder cones that mark the Great Rift. From the top, it is an easy walk down the south side of the cone. You can go into the crater and find protection from the sun and wind under the limber pines.

The hiking trail becomes less distinct beyond Echo Crater, but can be followed as far as the Sentinel, where it disappears altogether. You can travel cross-country beyond that point; however, dense shrubs and uneven lava make the going slow and sometimes unpleasant. Wear long pants for bushwhacking or your legs will get shredded!



## Minimum Impact Camping

In order to restrict human impact to a limited area, please camp at Echo Crater if at all possible. If you do select other campsites, use them for only one night and then move on. Strive to leave no trace of your presence. Pack out all trash. Bury human waste six inches deep in cinder areas. Do not move large rocks, logs or other objects at your campsite. If you clear the ground to create a smooth sleeping surface, return it as closely as possible to its original condition. Try not to trample plants at your campsite or when hiking cross-country. Using care during your visit will leave the wilderness in pristine condition for the next visitors.

## Safety

There are dangers inherent in the volcanic terrain. The lava is uneven and sharp. Cuts and abrasions from falling on the lava are the most common injuries at Craters of the Moon. Wear sturdy shoes and watch your step, especially when travelling off-trail.

Summer weather is hot, dry, and windy. Temperatures may reach the high 90s and afternoon winds of 15 to 30 miles per hour are common. There is no surface water in the wilderness. Carry at least a gallon of water per person per day. There is little shade along the trail, so sunscreen and a hat are a necessity.

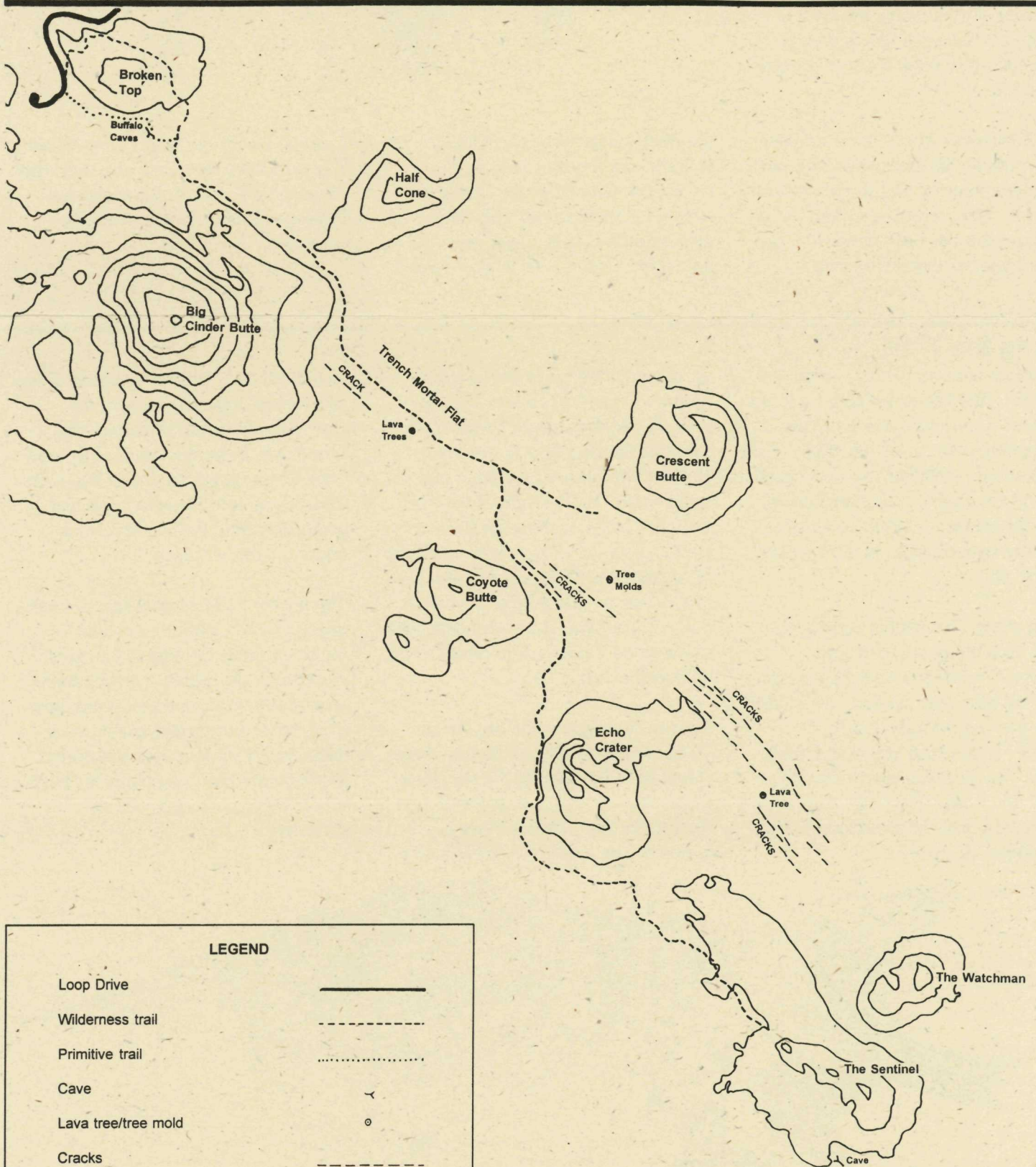
## Regulations

- A free permit is required for overnight trips into the backcountry and can be obtained at the visitor center. This enables the National Park Service to monitor how many people are using the wilderness, to inform them of regulations, and to make sure that they return safely.

- Pets are not permitted in the wilderness.

- No wood fires. Use backpacking stoves for cooking.

- Bicycles and other mechanized equipment are not allowed.



### LEGEND

Loop Drive	—————
Wilderness trail	- - - - -
Primitive trail	.....
Cave	Y
Lava tree/tree mold	o
Cracks	- - - - -
Contour line	—————

Contour interval is 20 feet. One inch is .29 miles.

