



DEVIL POSTPILE

NATIONAL MONUMENT

CALIFORNIA

Devil Postpile National Monument

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Harold L. Ickes, Secretary



National Park Service
Newton B. Drury, Director



(Open approximately from July to October)

In a magnificent forest and lake country southeast of Yosemite National Park lies Devil Postpile National Monument. The central feature of this monument is an extraordinary formation of symmetrical blue-gray basaltic columns which rise as high as 60 feet, fitting closely together like the pipes of a great organ. Of similar formations found in other parts of the world, the Giant's Causeway in Ireland is perhaps the best known.

The monument, located at an elevation of 7,600 feet above sea level, is reached by a 4½-mile drive on a paved road from U. S. Highway 395 west toward Mammoth Lakes, thence 13 miles on a dirt and gravel road via Earthquake Fault, Minaret Summit, and a narrow winding grade with sharp turns to the valley floor and the Postpile. It is not advisable to take house trailers over this narrow road; some of the curves are very sharp.

Accommodations

Near the ranger station in the northern end of the monument is a free public campground maintained by the National Park Service. Camp tables with benches attached are provided; water is taken from the river for camp use, and dead and down wood is available for campfires.

Outside the monument boundaries, about 2 miles from the campground, are Reds Meadows Lodge and store, where groceries, gasoline and oil, meals, and cabins are available.

The Soda Springs Campground



How the Postpile was Formed

The Devil Postpile is a remnant of a basaltic lava flow that originated in Mammoth Pass and extended down the canyon of the Middle Fork approximately 6 miles to a point just beyond Rainbow Fall. This outpouring took place during the interglacial epoch that preceded the last glaciation in the Sierra Nevada, presumably between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago.

When the Middle Fork glacier re-advanced for the last time, it found this mass of basalt obstructing its path. Since the glacial ice was about 1,000 feet thick, it easily overrode the obstruction. The basalt, cracked into columns when it had contracted while cooling, was readily quarried away, column by column, by the glacier. During the thousands of years that the ice held sway, the bulk of this basaltic flow was removed, with only the more obdurate parts left standing. Of these, the largest is the Devil Postpile, about 300 yards long and 200 feet high.

One side of the Postpile was quarried away by the glacier, leaving exposed a sheer wall of columns 40 to 60 feet high. Many of these columns have

broken away from the face of the formation and lie in fragments in the talus slope below. While most of the columns are vertical, some are slanting, some curved, and some radiate from a common center.

The top of the formation presents an unusual condition. Here the cross section of the four-, five-, and six-sided columns has been worn smooth by the grinding action of the glacier, and the exposed surface has the appearance of a mosaic or a tile inlay. An easy trail leads to the top where the glacial polish may be seen.

Among the other interesting geologic features of the area is the pumice which is found in the northern part of the monument. This material, an exceedingly porous lava, is so light in weight that it will float in water. It is believed to have been deposited after the Ice Age by the now extinct Mammoth Mountain and other old volcanic craters in the region. Several bubbling hot springs, one of which is at Reds Meadows, are other evidences of recent volcanic activity. It is thought that most of their heat comes from contact with gases from molten lavas which are in the process of crystallization.

Broken columns lie at the base of the Postpile





Rainbow Fall

Rainbow Fall

Two miles down the river trail from the Postpile, the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin makes a sheer drop of 140 feet into a deep green pool. The dark basaltic cliffs contrast strikingly with the white water, and during the middle of the day many rainbows add to the beauty of the scene. The visitor should exercise care when watching the fall from the edge of the gorge, because pumice and flaky stone make the footing dangerous. A short steep trail leads to the bottom of the waterfall where willows, alders, mountain white pines, and mountain hemlocks, as well as numerous flowers and grasses, form an enchanting garden. Cars may be driven within three-fourths of a mile of the fall via the road to Reds Meadows.

General Information for Visitors

Devil Postpile is one of the key points on the John Muir Trail which runs from Yosemite National Park to Sequoia National Park.

Telephone, store, and mail services are available at Reds Meadows; mail may be addressed to Mammoth Lakes, California, care of Reds Meadows.

Saddle and pack horses are obtainable for trips to such beautiful spots as

Shadow Lake, Thousand Island Lake, Mount Banner, and Mount Ritter.

Fishing is reasonably good in nearby lakes and streams; hunting is forbidden in the monument, and boundaries are posted with green and white signs. Swimming is permitted in the river below the ranger's tent.

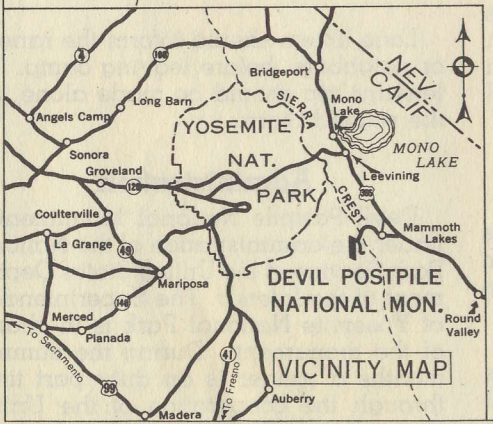
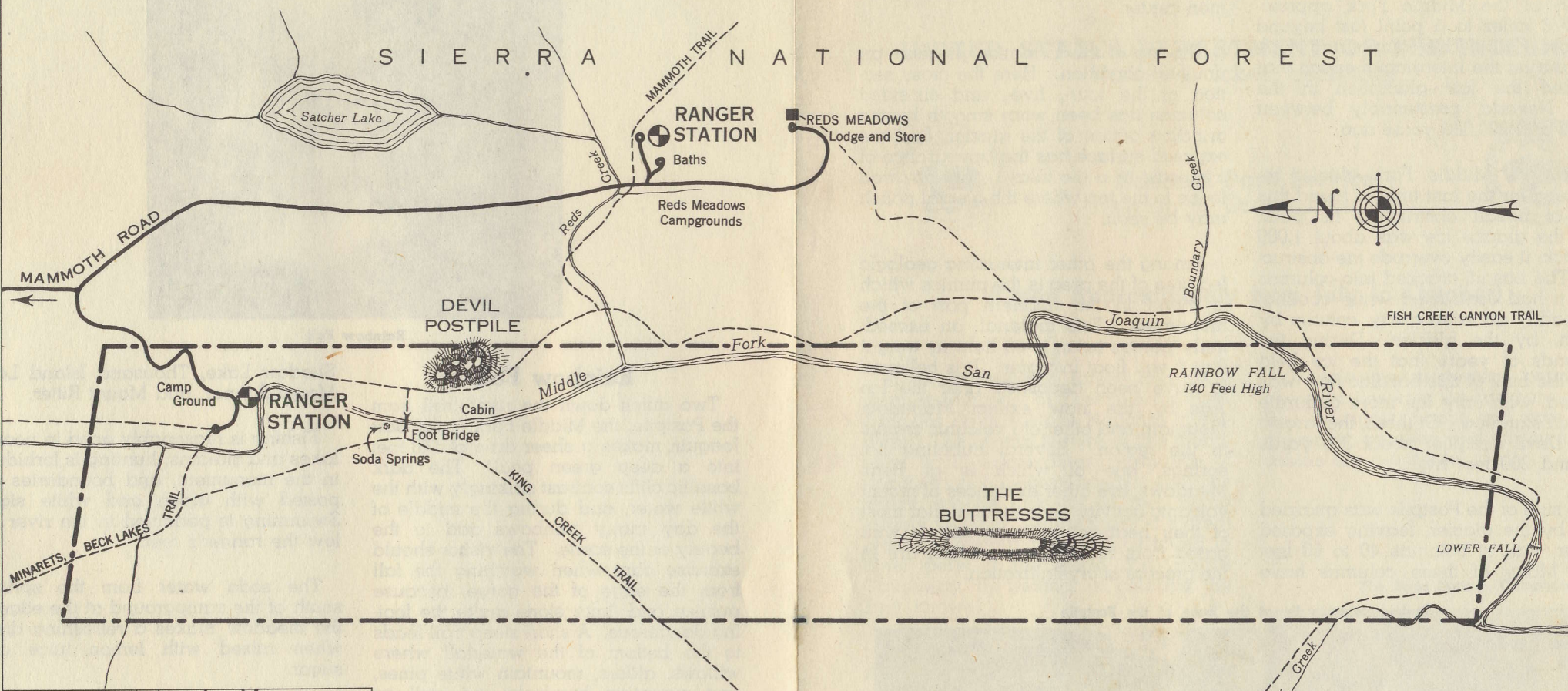
The soda water from the springs south of the campground at the edge of the meadow makes a refreshing drink when mixed with lemon juice and sugar.

Lone hikers should inform the ranger, or neighbors, before leaving camp. No lengthy trip should be made alone into the rugged Sierra.

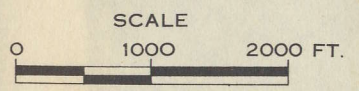
Administration

Devil Postpile National Monument is under the administration of the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The Superintendent of Yosemite National Park is in charge of the monument. During the summer months a ranger is on duty part time, through the cooperation of the United States Forest Service, to administer the campground, patrol the area for protection against fire and vandalism, and to give information and other assistance to visitors.

SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST



DEVIL POSTPILE NATIONAL MONUMENT AND VICINITY



Area 798.46

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