

Devils Postpile

NATIONAL MONUMENT • CALIFORNIA

Out of a great heap of broken stone, extraordinarily symmetrical columns of gray lava rise up like the pipes of a great organ. To the minds of 19th-century shepherders, they seemed like a pile of the devil's fenceposts.

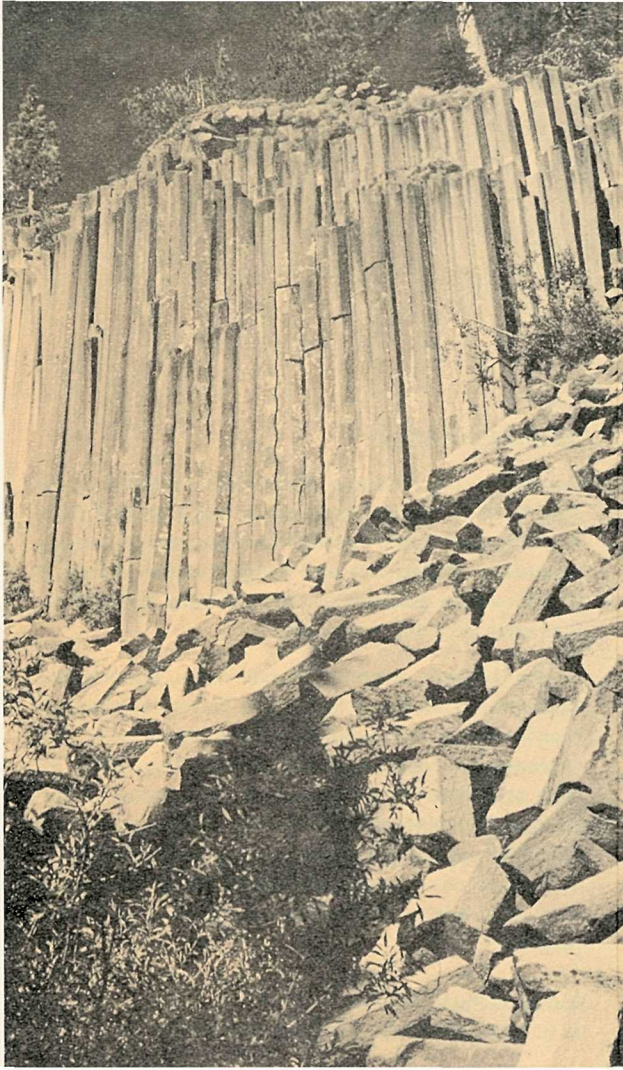
The columns are remnants of lava that poured through Mammoth Pass, now at the southern edge of Mammoth Mountain, and flowed down into the canyon of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River, filling the area from Pumice Flat to 3 miles below Rainbow Falls. This outpouring took place about 900,000 years ago. The lava cracked as it cooled, each subsequent crack crossing others until the columns were formed.

Later, glaciers flowed down the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River. Because the ice was more than 1,000 feet thick at its maximum, it easily overrode the solidified lava and quarried the fractured mass, leaving only the more resistant parts. Of these, the largest is Devils Postpile.

One side of the postpile was quarried away by the glaciers, exposing a sheer wall of columns 40 to 60 feet high. Many of these columns have since broken away from the face of the formation and lie fragmented on the talus slope below.

Most of the columns are vertical, but some slant, some curve, some radiate from a common center.

The top surface of the postpile strikingly illustrates the characteristic shape of the columns. Here the columns have been worn level and polished by the grinding action of the glacier, and the exposed cross



sections of the three- to seven-sided columns have the appearance of mosaic or tile inlay. A marked trail leads to a view of the polished surfaces.

Though Devils Postpile is unusual, it is not unique. Similar formations in other parts of the world are the Giant's Causeways in Ireland and Scotland, and Fingal's Cave in Scotland.

Another interesting geologic feature of the area is the pumice found in the northern part of the park. This material is an exceedingly porous volcanic rock so light that it will float.

After the glacial period, the lava erupted from volcanoes east and north of the postpile, at Mono and Inyo Craters, and Mammoth Mountain. Bubbling hot springs, one of which is at Reds Meadow, are evidence that molten lava may still exist underground. A small, cool soda spring in the monument has a similar origin. Its gas content comes from lavas that are in the process of crystallizing.

RAINBOW FALLS

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 a rainbow adds to the beauty of the scene. **Be careful when watching the falls 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 waterfalls where willows, alders, western

white pines, mountain hemlocks, and numerous flowers and grasses form an enchanting garden. Cars may be driven within 1¼ miles of the falls via the road to Reds Meadow.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Camping. Near the park ranger station a campground is maintained from about June 15 to October 1, depending upon the weather.

Accommodations and services. About 2 miles from the campground are Reds Meadow Lodge and store, where gasoline, oil, groceries, meals, cabins, mail service, and saddle and pack horses are available.

Fishing is permitted in the monument, but hunting is forbidden. A California angling license is required for persons 16 years of age or over.

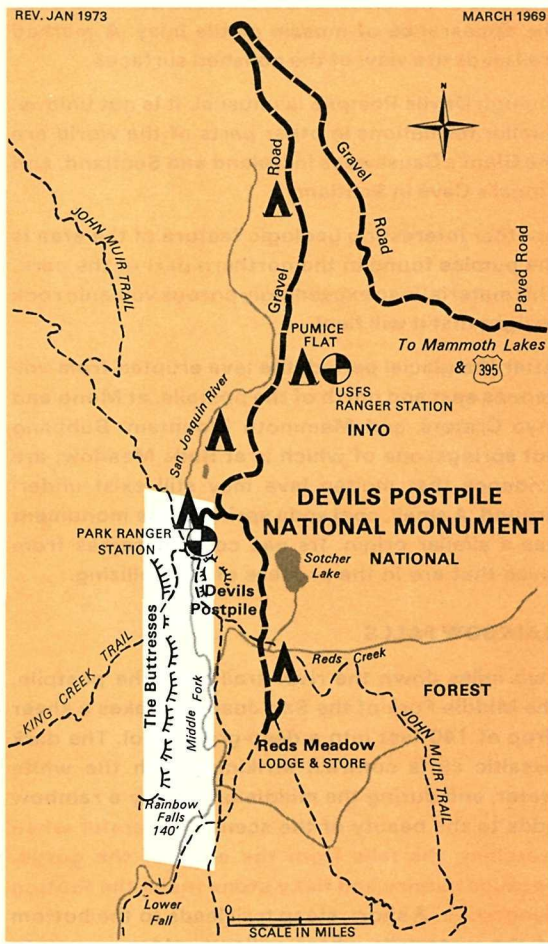
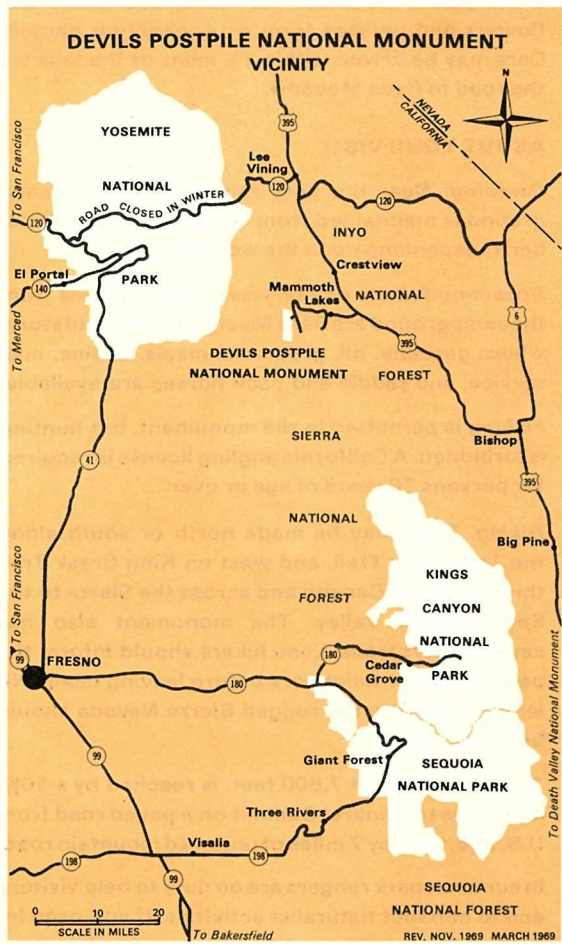
Hiking. Trips may be made north or south along the John Muir Trail, and west on King Creek Trail through Snow Canyon and across the Sierra to the San Joaquin Valley. The monument also has several short trails. Lone hikers should inform the park ranger or neighbors before leaving camp. No lengthy trip into the rugged Sierra Nevada should be made alone.

The monument, at 7,600 feet, is reached by a 10½-mile drive to Minaret Summit on a paved road from U.S. 395, then by 7 miles of unpaved mountain road.

In summer, park rangers are on duty to help visitors and to conduct naturalist activities. If you need information or are in any difficulty, see a park ranger.

Devils Postpile

NATIONAL MONUMENT • CALIFORNIA



ADMINISTRATION

Devils Postpile National Monument established on July 6, 1911, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, whose address is Three Rivers, CA 93271, is in charge of the monument.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

**National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**