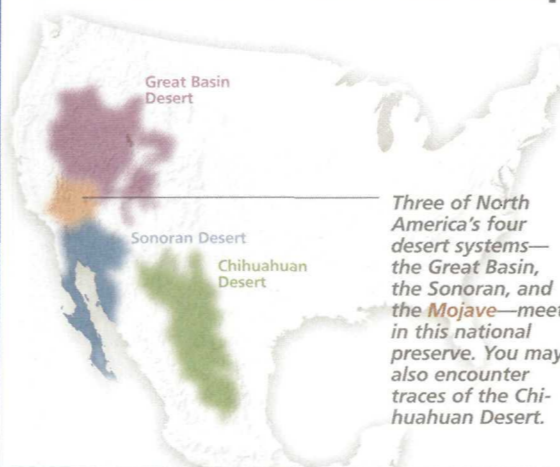


A Mosaic of Desert Landscapes: Mojave National Preserve



Three of North America's four desert systems—the Great Basin, the Sonoran, and the Mojave—meet in this national preserve. You may also encounter traces of the Chihuahuan Desert.

Rippled sand dunes sing an eerie chorus. Cactus flowers bloom after a spring rain, jewels against buff-colored earth. Saltbush borders a dry lakebed, and countless Joshua tree limbs reach toward the sky as if in prayer. Mojave is all these scenes and more—a bounty for the senses.

Mojave National Preserve was established in 1994 as part of the California Desert Protection Act. The 1.6-million-acre park encompasses much of the Mojave Desert, as well as transitional elements of the Great

Basin and Sonoran deserts. About half of the park is congressionally designated wilderness. Wilderness areas, marked by signs, are open to hikers and horseback riders but off limits to motor vehicles.

Summer temperatures often exceed 100°F; yearly rainfall ranges four to 14 inches. Elevations range from 800 feet near Baker to 7,929 feet atop Clark Mountain. A spine of mountains bisects the park north to south. Cinder cones, lava beds, sand dunes, the Soda Dry Lake, and Cima

Dome attest to the geological forces at work through the ages.

Many variables—elevation, moisture, soil composition, exposure to the sun, shelter from the wind, and the effects of human habitation—create at least 30 identifiable habitats for plants and animals. Habitats, of course, do not have hard boundaries and

often overlap; they are grouped below into general categories, and their locations are noted on the map on the other side. You will encounter different habitats within a short distance of each other.

Keep in mind that Mojave lacks many of the visitor facilities you might expect in a national park. This creates both inconveniences and opportunities. Nearby communities offer lodging and other services, so plan ahead. Come prepared to observe, explore, discover, reflect.



A view across Kelso dunes shows an evening primrose in bloom—and at least four of the many habitats found in Mojave National Preserve.



Goldenbush © Jon Mark Stewart
Great Basin sagebrush © Robin Mitchell
Indian paintbrush © Robin Mitchell
Prickly pear © Stephen Ingram



© Jeff Gnass

Pinyon-Juniper Woodland

At higher elevations, particularly on north-facing slopes, pinyon and juniper trees cling to shallow, rocky soil. Look for this habitat in the Clark, Granite, New York, and Providence mountains. You can camp among these trees at Mid Hills campground.

Pinyon nuts and juniper berries have long provided food for humans and wild animals.

Ranchers built fences from junipers; you can still see remnants at abandoned homesteads.

This habitat includes sagebrush, goldenbush, wildflowers such as Indian paintbrush, and the Mojave prickly pear—one of several species of prickly pear found in the park. Also look for scrub jays—blue but not crested—and antelope ground squirrels.



© Jeff Gnass

Joshua Tree Woodland

Joshua trees tell you you're truly in Mojave country. Though they can grow 50 feet tall, they are not really trees but a species of yucca. They prefer flat areas or gradual inclines. The world's largest concentration of Joshua trees grows on the slope of Cima Dome near Teutonia Peak.

grow up to five feet tall and have long blue-green, curved spines. Mojave yuccas can reach 20 feet in height and branch above ground level.

One of Mojave's many lizard species, the desert night lizard,



Desert night lizard © John S. Reid

Compare them with other yuccas that grow nearby. Banana yuccas



Banana yucca © Jeff Gnass
Threadleaf groundsel © Jeff Gnass
Mormon tea © R.J. Erwin
Mojave mound cactus © Jon Mark Stewart



© Tom Bean

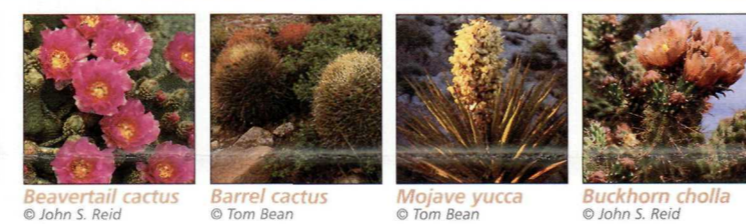
Cactus-Yucca Scrub

Cactus, or mixed-desert, scrub includes the spiny succulents that fulfill the popular notion of "desert." Barrel cacti are prominent on south-facing slopes, such as along the road to Mitchell Caverns. They germinate only in years with favorable rainfall, so barrel cacti growing near one another are usually of the same age. If you visit Mojave in spring you may witness the desert in brilliant bloom.

The greenish gray Mojave rattlesnake blends in easily with this habitat. Aggressive and highly venomous, it is one of the few



Mojave rattlesnake © Richard Ferris



Beavertail cactus © John S. Reid
Barrel cactus © Tom Bean
Mojave yucca © Tom Bean
Buckhorn cholla © John S. Reid



© Dan Suzio

Desert Dunes

Prevailing winds carry sand from Soda Dry Lake, the Mojave River Sink, and the Devil's Playground to the base of the Granite Mountains, creating dunes up to 700 feet high. At first the Kelso

Dunes appear barren, but look closely. Evening primrose (cover photo), blazing star, and other plants find sufficient moisture. In favorable conditions dunes may be covered by Indian ricegrass.



Colorado Desert sidewinder © Michael Cartwell



Indian ricegrass © Jim Steinberg
Blazing star © John S. Reid
Desert chicory © Jim Steinberg
Hairy sand verbena © Jim Steinberg



© Tom Bean

Creosote Bush Scrub

Strong-scented creosote bush and bursage dominate much of the park. Low-lying expanses are covered by these widely spaced shrubs. Creosote bushes are said to be the world's oldest living things; some colonies in the Mojave Desert are 11,500 years old. Other plants in this zone include desert mallow, brittlebush, and hedgehog cactus. There are several types of cholla; the diamond (pencil) cholla is most abundant.

Roadrunners nest in this type of scrub. You may spot one as it darts between areas of cover at up to 15 miles per hour. They can fly but seem to prefer running.

This is the home of the desert tortoise, which uses sharp claws to dig nests in the sandy soil. Designated a threatened species, desert tortoises and their habitat are protected by federal law.



Roadrunner © Frank Balthis



© Stephen Ingram

Desert Wash

Washes generally flow intermittently after heavy rains, a feast or famine of water that creates specific plant communities. Roadside water runoff can also create a miniature habitat of its own. The sacred datura, also called jimson weed or thorn apple, thrives in this water runoff, making it stand out along roads.

washes is lush and deep-rooted. Plants range from shrubs such as the catclaw acacia, cheesebush, four-wing saltbush, and bush senecio (left) to taller trees such as desert willow and cottonwood.

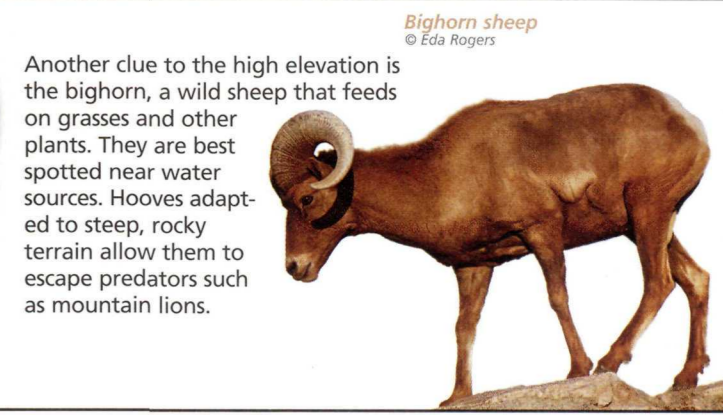
Look on the branches of the shrubby catclaw acacia for clumps of desert mistletoe, a parasitic plant. Mistletoe attracts the phainopepla, a small, tufted black bird that eats—and disperses—its



Catclaw acacia © Ken Lucas
Desert willow © Walt Anderson
Sacred datura © John S. Reid
Honey mesquite © Ernest H. Rogers



Blacktail jackrabbit © Tom Bean
Female phainopepla © A. Morris



Bighorn sheep © Eda Rogers

Another clue to the high elevation is the bighorn, a wild sheep that feeds on grasses and other plants. They are best spotted near water sources. Hooves adapted to steep, rocky terrain allow them to escape predators such as mountain lions.

lives in decaying plant matter such as downed Joshua trees. Despite its name, this tiny lizard is diurnal but may be active after nightfall hunting termites.

Insects, often attracted by flowers of the Mojave mound cactus and threadleaf groundsel, become food for birds. Joshua tree woodlands support species such as Scott's oriole and the American kestrel, a bird of prey.



American kestrel © John S. Reid

dangerous animals in the park. This snake is most active at night and in early morning but be careful where you place your hands and feet at all times.

Early morning is also a good time to spot a Gambel's quail feeding on cactus seeds and berries. These birds nest in abandoned nests of roadrunners, thrashers, and cactus wrens.



Gambel's quail © Roy David Ferris

Perhaps you will see a Mojave fringe-toed lizard skitter across the dunes. Look also for tracks, especially those of kangaroo rats and their main predators, kit foxes. Kit foxes are most often seen at dusk in open desert. They are about the size of a house cat, with agility to match. Fur-covered toes give them traction in sand. Also look for the tracks of the sidewinder, which glides along with a rapid, two-part motion, barely touching the sand.



Kit fox © Frank Balthis

Drive carefully and check under parked vehicles for tortoises. Watch for them along park roads early in the morning and after rainstorms, especially in spring and summer. Observe them from a distance, but don't touch or bother them. Tortoises are susceptible to diseases that can be transmitted through human contact.



Desert tortoise © Frank Balthis

berries. Water attracts many other birds, including migratory finches, orioles, and tanagers, as well as animals such as the red-spotted toad.

The blacktail jackrabbit, recognized by large, black-tipped ears and a black-topped tail, is generally nocturnal. As fast as jackrabbits are, they may not be able to outrun a coyote, one of their few natural predators in this region.



Coyote © John S. Reid

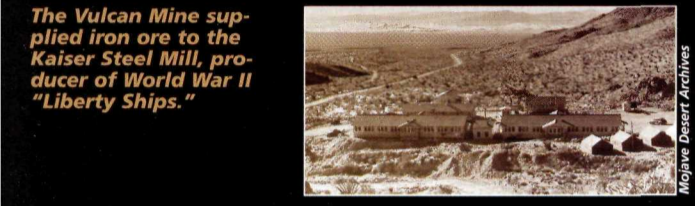
The Mojave Road

Skirting mountains and other natural barriers, the Mojave Road follows the most natural travel corridor through the desert. It runs east-west from the Colorado River to Camp Cady, near Barstow, roughly bisecting the park. The trail is still visible, especially where it intersects with modern roads, and is popular with hikers and four-wheel-drive enthusiasts.

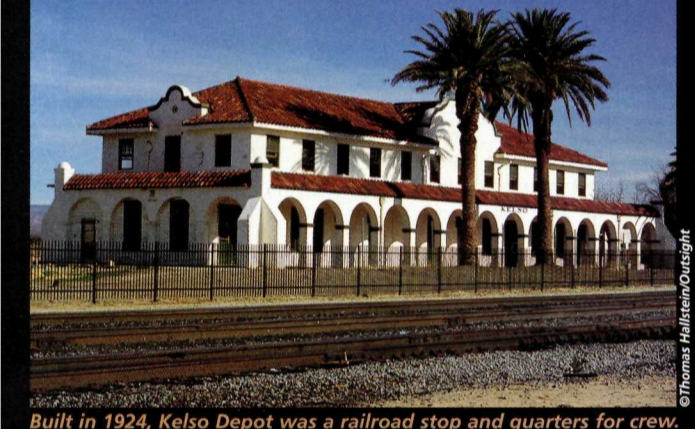
American Indians such as the Paiute, Mojave, and Chemehuevi used the corridor for travel and trade. Indians guided Spanish explorers along the trail in the 1770s. With increasing westward exploration and settlement in the 19th century, the U.S. Army improved the road in the 1860s and established outposts for the safety of supply wagons, mail, and travelers. Fort Piute, built to protect Piute Spring, dates from the 1860s. Not everyone passed through; some found ways to make a living from the desert's natural resources. The coming of the railroad in the 1890s made mining and ranching profitable for a time—and immediately replaced the Mojave Road as the preferred method of travel through the desert.



Cowboys from Rock Springs Land and Cattle Company, the oldest ranching operation in the East Mojave.



The Vulcan Mine supplied iron ore to the Kaiser Steel Mill, producer of World War II "Liberty Ships."

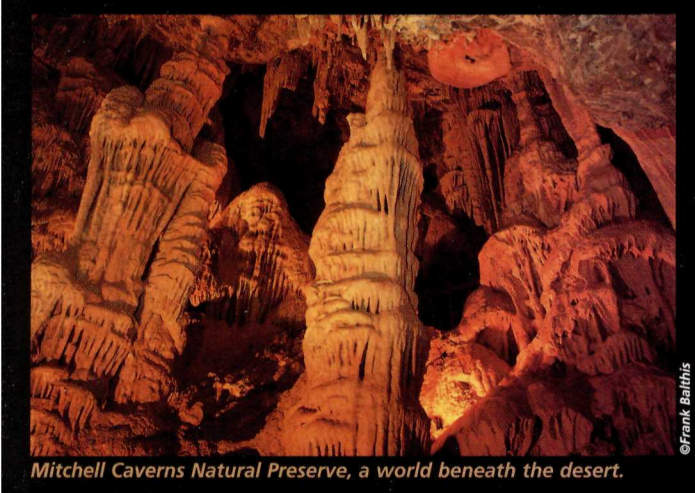


Built in 1924, Kelso Depot was a railroad stop and quarters for crew.

Planning Your Visit

Mojave National Preserve is located in southeastern California between I-15 and I-40. The nearest large cities are Las Vegas, Nev., and Barstow, Cal. To make the most of your visit, stop first at one of the park information centers located in Needles and Baker, Cal., and at Hole-in-the-Wall inside the park.

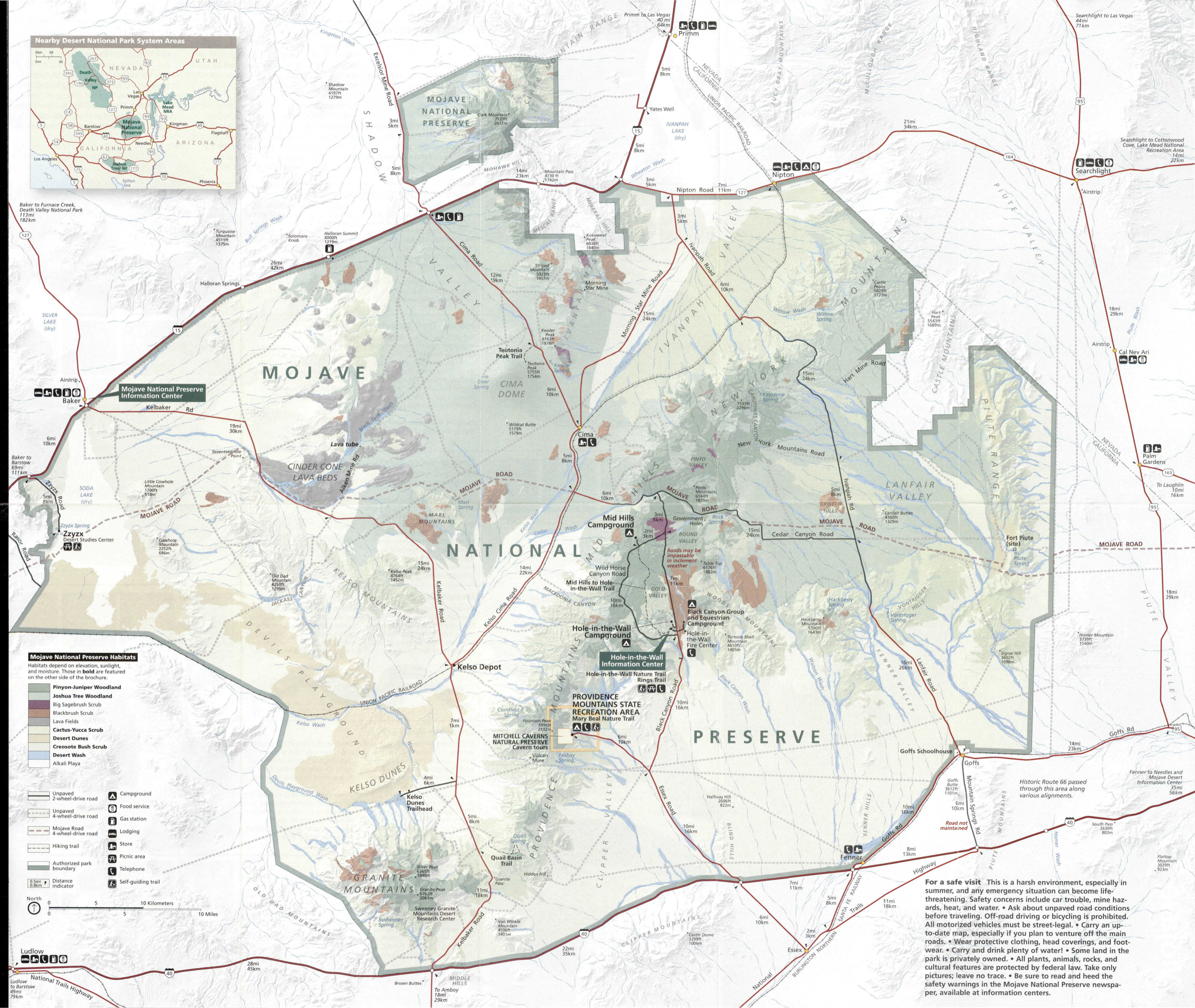
Camping Two campgrounds, Hole-in-the-Wall (35 sites) and Mid Hills (26 sites) are open year-round on a first-come, first-served basis (fee). Both have vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, trash cans, and drinking water on a limited basis. The road to Mid Hills campground is unpaved and not recommended for trailers. Group camping is available by reservation; call 760-326-6322. Backcountry camping is permitted, as is road-side camping in areas that have been previously used.



Mitchell Caverns Natural Preserve, a world beneath the desert.

Wilderness Nearly half of the park land is designated as wilderness. Please respect all wilderness boundary markers. Motorized and mechanized vehicles are prohibited in these areas, but we encourage you to explore on foot and horseback. The park has trails of all varieties. Before you set out, read and heed "For a Safe Visit" at far right.

More Information Mojave National Preserve is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities. Mojave National Preserve 222 E. Main Street, Suite 202 Barstow, CA 92311 760-255-8801 www.nps.gov/moja



- Mojave National Preserve Habitats**
Habitats depend on elevation, sunlight, and moisture. Those in bold are featured on the other side of the brochure.
- Pinyon-Juniper Woodland**
 - Joshua Tree Woodland**
 - Big Sagebrush Scrub
 - Blackbrush Scrub
 - Lava Fields
 - Cactus-Yucca Scrub**
 - Desert Dunes**
 - Creosote Bush Scrub**
 - Desert Wash**
 - Alkali Playa

- Unpaved 2-wheel-drive road
- Unpaved 4-wheel-drive road
- Mojave Road 4-wheel-drive road
- Hiking trail
- Authorized park boundary
- Distance indicator
- Campground
- Food service
- Gas station
- Lodging
- Store
- Picnic area
- Telephone
- Self-guiding trail

For a safe visit This is a harsh environment, especially in summer, and any emergency situation can become life-threatening. Safety concerns include car trouble, mine hazards, heat, and water. • Ask about unpaved road conditions before traveling. Off-road driving or bicycling is prohibited. All motorized vehicles must be street-legal. • Carry an up-to-date map, especially if you plan to venture off the main roads. • Wear protective clothing, head coverings, and footwear. • Carry and drink plenty of water! • Some land in the park is privately owned. • All plants, animals, rocks, and cultural features are protected by federal law. Take only pictures; leave no trace. • Be sure to read and heed the safety warnings in the Mojave National Preserve newspaper, available at information centers.