

Mojave National Preserve



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Points of Interest

The Mojave National Preserve has a rich history and many interesting areas to see.



Along Interstate 15

Soda Springs

The springs served as a source of water for travelers on the Mojave Trail. It has been an Indian campsite, military outpost, wagon station, railroad siding, the headquarters of a radio evangelist, and a health resort. Today it is jointly managed by the National Park Service and the California State University system as a desert education and study center. An unstaffed orientation center is open. The site can be reached by taking the Zzyzx Road exit off of Interstate 15, southwest of Baker.

Clark Mountains

Clark Mountain, the highest peak in the Preserve (7,929 feet), was formed from a series of thrust faults. Mining began here in the early 1860s and continues today. The Mountains were named for an early miner, Senator William A. Clark, the "Copper King" of Montana. The Molycorp Mine at Mountain Pass, California, located in the Clark Mountains, is noted for its deposit of bastnasite which contains 14 rare earth elements. The deposit, found in 1950, is the largest ore body of its type in the world, with ore reserves estimated to last another 40 years. Some of the elements produced here are used in x-ray films, TV picture tubes, fluorescent lamps, sunglasses, and fiber optics.

Along Kelbaker Road

Cinder Cones

The more than 30 young volcanic cones clustered together on the surface of a series of older lava flows are probably the best example of recent volcanic activity (800-1,000 years ago) in the Mojave Desert. Aiken's Mine Road provides an interesting side trip through the heart of this region.

Kelso Depot

Kelso was developed in 1905 as a Los Angeles to Salt Lake railroad stop because water was easily obtainable for the steam engines. Later the line was sold to the Union

Pacific Railroad, which built a Spanish-style depot in 1924 to provide food and lodging for the railroad workers. The site at one time also contained a roundhouse and other maintenance facilities. Development of the diesel engine eliminated the need for water stops along the route, and the depot closed in 1985.

Kelso Dunes

This unique and isolated dune system rises more than 600 feet above the desert floor. The dunes were created by southeast winds blowing finely grained residual sand from the Mojave River sink, which lies to the northwest. Golden rose quartz particles are responsible for the dunes color. When the dry sand grains slide down the steep upper slopes, a booming sound is produced. In some years, the dunes offer a beautiful spring wildflower display. A hike to the top and back takes approximately two hours. The dunes are closed to vehicles.

Amboy Crater

(about 10 miles south of the preserve)
This 250-foot-high crater is about 6,000 years old and one of the best examples of a volcanic cinder cone in the Mojave Desert. A foot path leads to the top of the cone where there are great views of the surrounding area. The hike to the Crater and back can take 2-3 hours. Late January through March are good times to see the wildflowers.

Along Cima Road

Cima Dome

Seen from a distance, this almost perfect, rounded landform, which rises 1,500 feet above the surrounding desert, is a small batholith (a molten mass of rock that stopped rising well below the surface) about 75 square miles in size. Once covered by volcanic material, Cima Dome is now covered by a large, dense forest of Joshua trees. The Sunrise Rock area (approximately 6 miles north of Cima) is a good place for a

short exploration on foot. The trail to Teutonia Peak begins just north of Sunrise Rock and takes about two hours round trip.

Cima

By 1920, Cima consisted of a boarding house, cabins made of railroad ties, a store, and a post office. The town served as a railroad siding and a commercial center for ranchers and miners. In 1962, the original buildings were replaced by the store and post office you see today.

Along Cedar Canyon Road

Camp Rock Spring

Like many desert springs, Camp Rock Spring played an important role by providing water, first to the Indians, and later to other desert travelers across the Mojave Trail.

The U.S. Army established an outpost at Camp Rock Spring in December 1866, when mining in the region was coming to an end. The outpost was developed to protect travelers, but primarily provided escort riders for the U.S. Mail. Camp Rock Spring was one of the most isolated and comfortless Army posts that ever existed in the history of the West.

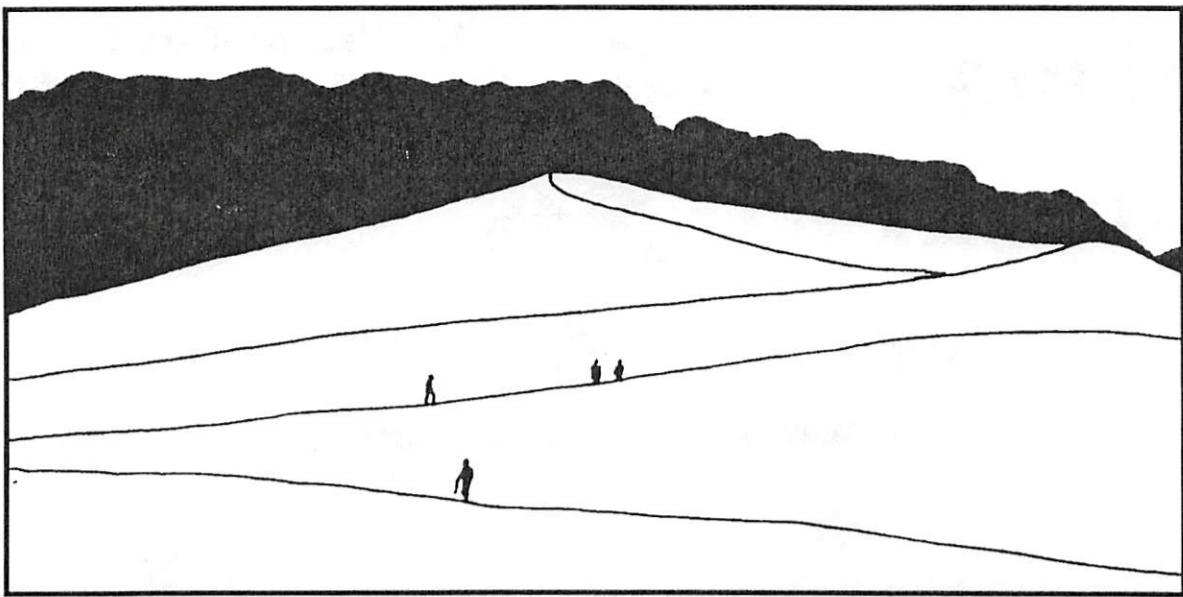
Near Camp Rock Spring you may notice a rock house. It was once Bert Smith's homestead. A World War I gas victim, he came to the desert only expecting to live a short time, but lived there until 1954.

Along Black Canyon/Essex Road

Hole-in-the-Wall

(4,500 foot elevation)

The volcanic rock formations in the area make this a popular recreation site. Favorite activities in the area include camping, picnicking, and hiking. Rock climbing on the volcanic rocks is not recommended because of their crumbly nature. Fall and spring are the most popular seasons for camping, with winter and summer providing variable weather conditions and temperatures.



There are two trails available at Hole-in-the-Wall. One leaves from the picnic area and travels west through the volcanic rock. This trail involves a descent using metal rings and scrambling around and over many boulders. The other trail is the 7 mile long Mid Hills to Hole-in-the-Wall trail which begins at Mid Hills campground and winds through Wild Horse Canyon. As you wander past cactus gardens and interesting rock formations, you will get a good look at the diverse desert landscape. Backcountry camping is available at several locations along the trail. During the summer, ground fires are not permitted.

Providence Mountains State Recreation Area (Mitchell Caverns)

This area is administered by the California Department of Parks and Recreation and is open for camping, rock climbing, picnicking, hiking, and cavern tours. The Visitor Center is located in the Providence Mountains 17 miles north of Interstate 40 on Essex Road.

The limestone caves known as Mitchell Caverns feature a wide variety of formations. Access to the caverns is guided by tours which last about 1.5 hours and require a 1.5 mile hike. The caverns are equipped with stairs, railings, and special lighting to facilitate viewing the caves amazing formations such as stalactites, stalagmites, cavern coral, and flowstone.

Tours are scheduled at 1:30 p.m. weekdays and at 10:00 a.m., 1:30 and 3:00 p.m. on weekends and state holidays from Labor Day through Memorial Day. Tours are offered on weekends at 1:30 only during the summer. Groups should make reservations at (805) 942-0662 at least two weeks in advance.

Along Ivanpah/Lanfair Road

Nipton

Started in 1905 as a railroad town and cattle loading station on the Los Angeles & Salt Lake line, the town consisted of a hotel, cafe and bar, general store, and a collection of small homes. Many of the buildings are still used today.

New York Mountains

Composed primarily of granite, the New York Mountains rise to over 7,500 feet. The erosion process has produced the spectacular scenery you see today. Several canyons along the southern edge of the range provide habitat for plants such as oak and white fir, which are not usually associated with the desert.

Castle Peaks

These jagged spires are found in the northern portion of the New York Mountains. The red-hued peaks are volcanic in origin and were formed by general uplifting of the area by faulting and later erosion.

Hart

In 1907, gold was discovered in this area, and soon the town of Hart had two two-story hotels, a general store, post office, barber shop, six saloons, 400 frame and tent dwellings, and 700 people. In 1910 much of the town was destroyed by fire. Mining continued until 1915, but the town was deserted by 1918. Today little remains of the town.

Ox Cattle Ranch

Located on the old town site of Maruba, the ranch was part of the original Rock Springs Land and Cattle Company operation. During the early 1900s this was the largest operation in the area and extended over most of the eastern Mojave Desert. Today the Ox Cattle Ranch is privately owned.

Lanfair Valley

Named for E.L. Lanfair, an organizer of the homesteaders who migrated to the valley in 1910, Lanfair Valley is a ranching and agricultural area. By 1917 there were 130 registered voters in the valley. They dry-farmed corn and beans, but the 8-10 inches of rainfall a year was not enough. Water rights were a constant conflict between the ranchers and the farmers. Water had to be hauled 10 miles or brought in by the railroad. In 1923 the railroad spur was abandoned, and the homesteaders left soon after. Much of the valley today is still privately owned.

Piute Gorge

Located on the eastern side of Lanfair Valley, Piute Gorge is not easily detected until you reach the edge. This colorful formation has been heavily eroded by water draining out of Lanfair Valley through the Piute Canyon fault zone. Today, this spectacular steep-sided gorge is nearly 200 feet deep. An unmaintained foot trail on the southwest side provides access to the bottom of the gorge.

Piute Creek/Fort Piute

A narrow ribbon of willows, cottonwoods, and rushes thrives along a half mile section of Piute Creek, one of the few free-flowing streams in the Mojave Desert. It was an important water source for Indians, early explorers, and animals. The site served as a base for a segment of the U.S. 9th Infantry from November 1867 to May 1868. Fort Piute is the best preserved of all the Old Mojave Road outposts built to protect early travelers. There are opportunities for hiking and bird watching along the stream. The area is closed to vehicles and hunting.

Goffs

Named after a railroad official, Goffs became an important railroad siding on the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad in 1883. A two-story station and turntable for the helper engines that pulled trains up the long grade from Needles were built. The population fluctuated during the mining and railroad eras, and today only a few homes remain.

Camp Ibis

Camp Ibis was one of eleven World War II military Desert Training Center camps in the Arizona-California Desert under the command of General George S. Patton. The camps were created in 1942 to train troops for combat in rough terrain and harsh climate. The camp consisted of several armored divisions, each numbering more than 20,000 men. A plaque located at the camp's entrance on US 95 is dedicated to the memory of the trainees.

Explore the camp on foot or by four-wheel drive vehicle, and *please leave remnants of the past in place.*