

Organ Pipe Cactus

NATIONAL MONUMENT
ARIZONA

This park, named for a species of cactus rare in the United States, protects and preserves desert plants, animals, and natural features in a segment of the Sonoran Desert landscape that stretches from northwestern Mexico to southeastern California. Stark mountains, sweeping outwash plains, rocky canyons, creosotebush flats, and dry washes typify this beautiful but harsh land.

This is the meetingplace of plant-defined extensions of three deserts: the central gulf coast phase of the Sonoran Desert from the south, the California microphyll desert from the west, and the upland Arizona succulent desert from the east.

The park is also rich in human history. In 1540, Melchior Diaz passed through here enroute to the Colorado River. Father Kino founded Mission San Marcelo near Sonoyta, Sonora, in 1701, and opened a route to the Pacific, later called *Camino del Diablo*. Juan Bautista de Anza followed this route from Tubac to found the colony of San Francisco in 1776, and 49'ers used it to reach the California gold fields. The spring at Quitobaquito marked one of the most important stops on the Camino. Ranchers and miners of three races occupied this area in the 19th and 20th centuries. All that remains of this history is preserved in the park today.

SUNSHINE AND SUMMER STORMS

Winter days here are usually sunny and warm, with infrequent gentle rains, but occasional sub-freezing nighttime temperatures and chilly winds occur during December, January, and February. Clear skies and progressively hotter days are the rule during April, May, and June. From July through September, humid air from the Gulf of Mexico occasionally brings violent thunderstorms that account for about one-half of the 9½ inches of annual rainfall. Temperatures from about 95° to 105° F. are common in summer. Although winds may be expected any time of the year, sandstorms are unknown.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND FACILITIES

There is a campground 1½ miles south of the visitor center. A motel, trailer parks, campgrounds, post office, grocery store, cafe and service station are in Lukeville, 5 miles south. Similar facilities are found at Why and Ajo to the north, and Sonoyta, Mexico, to the south.



After attaining speed on four legs, the collared lizard sometimes runs upright on its powerful hind legs.

REGULATIONS

Here are some things you can do to help preserve this magnificent outdoor museum:

Leave all rocks, minerals, plants, wood, and Indian artifacts just as you find them.

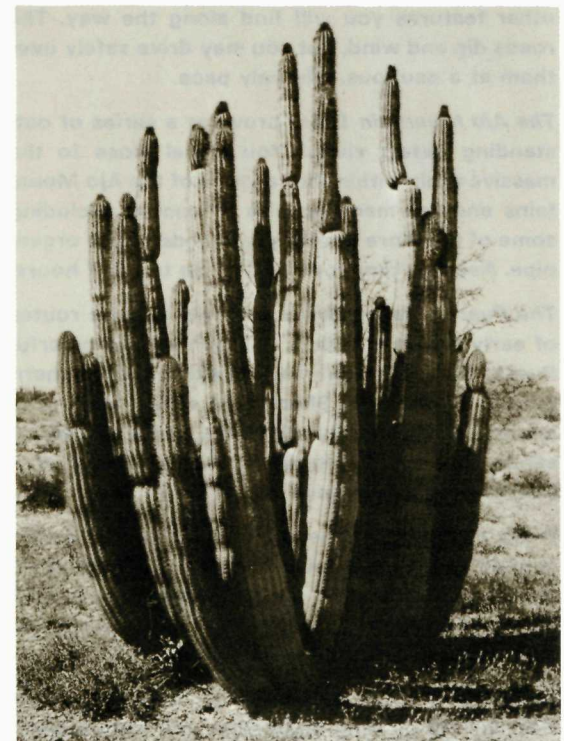
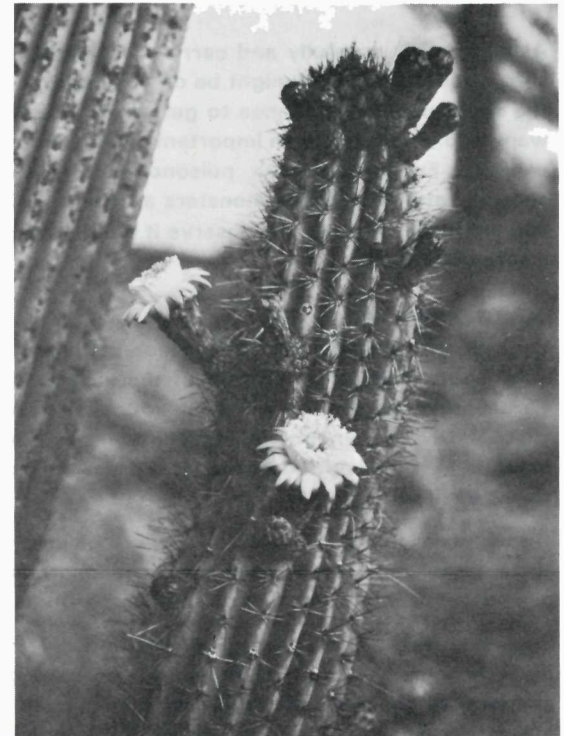
Refrain from molesting the wildlife, and observe them from a safe distance.

Camp only in the designated campground.

Drive only on established roads and turnouts.

Place all your trash in litter cans.

The organpipe cactus produces its small blossoms in May.



Some huge organpipe cactuses grow as tight clumps with many green stems that vary from 5 to 20 feet high.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument lies on the border of the United States and Mexico, 140 miles south of Phoenix via U.S. 80 and Ariz. 85, and 142 miles west of Tucson via Ariz. 86 and Ariz. 85.

ADMINISTRATION

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, established on April 13, 1937, and containing 516 square miles, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 38, Ajo, AZ 85321, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, park and recreation areas, and for the wise use of all those resources. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

SAFETY

Your enjoyment of the desert will remain unspoiled if you take these precautions:

Be sure your car is serviced and tuned. Check tire pressure—the spare too. Hot, dry weather can deplete your battery water, so check it frequently. If you drive up to a flowing wash, do not try to drive through it. Wait until the water goes down, usually about an hour. When driving at night, be alert for wildlife on the roads.

Beware of the cactus! The spines of these plants and many other trees and shrubs give them natural protection; but they can cause you painful injury.

Carry fresh drinking water. Wear a hat for sun protection, stout walking shoes and tough clothing for hiking.

At night, walk carefully and carry a flashlight to spot a rattlesnake that might be on your path. All the snake needs is a chance to get away, and we want it to. Snakes play an important role in desert ecology. Encounters with poisonous creatures such as rattlers and Gila monsters are rare, so if you are lucky and see one, observe it quietly from a safe distance.

HOW TO SEE THE PARK

Your first stop should be the visitor center, 17 miles south of the park entrance, where National Park Service personnel will help you plan your visit. Here you can obtain literature and study exhibits that explain the desert and describe the forms of life it supports.

On winter evenings, illustrated talks are given on the natural history of the area; times and locations are posted in the visitor center and campground.

Scenic drives. Two graded scenic loop drives lead through the more remote and interesting sections of the park. Both drives begin at the visitor center, where you can obtain guide booklets that will introduce the unusual plants and other features you will find along the way. The roads dip and wind, but you may drive safely over them at a cautious, leisurely pace.

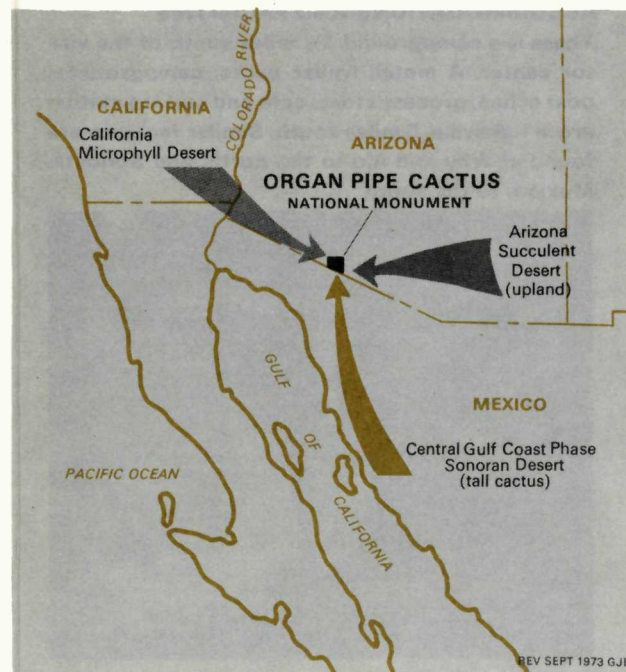
The Ajo Mountain Drive provides a series of outstanding desert views. You travel close to the massive walls within the canyons of the Ajo Mountains and see many species of cactus, including some of the more impressive stands of the organ pipe. Average time for this 21-mile trip is 2 hours.

The Puerto Blanco Drive parallels historic routes of early desert travelers as it circles the colorful Puerto Blanco Mountains and skirts the northern border of Mexico. Short side roads lead to a manmade oasis at Quitobaquito, and a display of senita cactus in Senita Basin. Allow at least one-half day for this 51-mile trip.

Trails and hiking. The trail encircling the campground provides a leisurely and pleasant after-dinner walk of about 1 mile. For those who want a longer walk, there is the 1½-mile trail between the campground and the visitor center.

Self-guiding trails with leaflets. The Desert View Nature Trail (1 mile) leads from the campground to a nearby ridge overlooking the surrounding

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desert of the Sonoyta Valley. The Bull Pasture Trail (3.4 miles round trip) leads into an area rich in plantlife and frontier history. You can return the way you came, or take the Estes Canyon Trail (¼-mile longer) back to the picnic area.

The sparse, open nature of the desert vegetation makes cross-country hiking possible almost anywhere within the park. A park ranger can suggest trips based on his knowledge of the area and your interests. Always consult with him before attempting climbs or long hikes, and check in with him when you return.

TRAVELING IN MEXICO

There is free access into Sonoyta and westward on Mexico Route 2. However, if you continue into the interior or go to Rocky Point, you must have a tourist permit and a car entry permit, both of which may be obtained at the border. It may also be advisable to purchase Mexican car insurance at the border. To get a tourist permit, you must have proof of citizenship (birth certificate), and to get a car permit, your automobile registration.