

Organ Pipe Cactus

National Monument

How to Survive Your Visit

Wildlife

Desert animals are wild and some are dangerous. View animals from a safe distance, watch where you put your hands and feet, and carry a flashlight at night. Remember all animals, including poisonous snakes and scorpions, are protected here. If you see a rattlesnake near the campground or visitor center, report it to a ranger. It will be captured and taken to a more remote part of the monument. **For your safety, do not feed the wildlife.**



Hiking and Backpacking

Always carry plenty of water when hiking. There is no potable water in the monument outside the Visitor Center/ Campground area. Loose volcanic rock makes hiking and climbing hazardous. Stay alert and watch where you step. During hot weather, protect yourself by wearing a hat, sunglasses, a long-sleeved shirt, and sunscreen lotion.



Plant Life

Don't get too close to the cacti, especially the cholla. Cholla joints are easily dislodged and become attached to clothing and skin on the slightest contact. If you become impaled with a cholla joint, do not try to remove it with your fingers: use a comb or stick to flick the joint off. After removing the spines, you might want to treat the wound with an antiseptic to prevent infection. Many other desert plants have spines or thorns too, so give them all a wide berth.



Driving

Monument roads were not designed for high speed driving. For your own safety and for the safety of wildlife, drive slowly. Trailers and large motorhomes are not recommended on the dirt roads. Portions of the unmaintained roads are very rough and sandy; inquire about their condition before using them. Flash floods can occur suddenly. Don't drive into a flooded roadway; wait for the water to subside. Carry drinking water in your vehicle when driving in the desert during hot weather.



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Backcountry Information for Hikers and Backpackers

There are many backpacking and hiking opportunities in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Although there are few maintained trails in the monument, cross-country hiking is permitted and can be very enjoyable for the experienced desert hiker. Topographic maps are sold at the Visitor Center, or can be purchased by mail. To ensure that your experience is safe and enjoyable, carefully consider the information below.

Safety

1. Drink plenty of water; a minimum of 1 gallon per person per day in summer, 2-3 quarts per person per day in winter. There is no safe or reliable drinking water in the backcountry.
2. Do not camp in washes; there is a danger of flash floods at **any** time of year.
3. Be alert for rattlesnakes and scorpions. Be careful where you put your hands and feet. Select campsites away from piles of rock and heavy vegetation where snakes and insects might be found. Rattlesnakes and scorpions are nocturnal, so use a flashlight after dark.
4. Be properly equipped. Wear sturdy hiking boots and protect yourself with a hat, sun screen lotion and lightweight, light-colored, full-length clothing. Carry a topographic map when hiking cross-country.
5. Exercise caution around the cacti, especially cholla. Don't try to remove a cholla joint with your fingers; use needlenose pliers, a comb, or a forked stick to flick it away. Tweezers are handy for removing finer cactus spines and splinters.
6. Use caution when hiking on loose rock. The rugged, steep terrain and loose volcanic rock make footing hazardous. The risk of falling or slipping can be minimized by just watching your step.
7. If you are day hiking, let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. You are required to let a ranger know (by getting a backcountry permit) if you plan an overnight hike.

Backcountry Regulations

1. A backcountry permit is required for overnight backpacking. It can be obtained free of charge at the Visitor Center. Place the permit on the dash of your car, so the number on the back can be read through the windshield.
2. Backcountry camping is limited to 14 days in any 90 day period. No more than 2 consecutive nights may be spent at the same campsite.
3. Camping within 1/2 mile of any road, historic site or water source is prohibited.
4. Fires are not permitted; use a backpacking stove or canned heat.
5. Pets are not allowed in the backcountry.
6. All types of weapons are prohibited in the backcountry.
7. Driving or parking off the designated roads is prohibited. When leaving your vehicle for a backcountry day hike, park only in well-defined pullouts or other parking areas. Backpackers should park in the pullout or parking area specified on their backcountry permit.
8. Plants, wildlife, historical objects and archaeological artifacts are protected and may not be disturbed or collected.
9. Leave a clean campsite; carry out all of your trash and bury human waste using a "cat hole", a six-inch deep hole, covered after use.
10. Your permit must be returned to one of the following: (a) Visitor Center, (b) Alamo Campground drop box, (c) north boundary drop box on Highway 85 or (d) drop box on Bates Well road at the north boundary.