

Your desert riches

Off Highway Vehicle Recreation

In terms of OHV recreation, this scenic Chuckwalla DWMA and Meccacopia SRMA provides many miles of open routes. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) established the DWMA to protect the federally listed threatened desert tortoise and 38 special status plant and animal species.

Discover the Rewards of Responsible Recreation

OHV riding provides the opportunity to get away from the rush of everyday life and builds family traditions. Careless operation of your OHV can cause damage. By using common sense and courtesy, following the laws and posted signs helps ensure that what is available today will be here to enjoy tomorrow.

All BLM-managed public lands in California are designated in vehicle-use categories:

Limited Areas are open to OHV use, subject to posted restrictions. OHV travel is limited to designated open routes. No cross-country travel is permitted. The Chuckwalla DWMA is a limited area.

Closed Areas are closed to all motorized vehicle use, for example a wilderness areas. Wilderness areas, marked with signs, are open to hikers and horseback riders but prohibited to motor vehicles.

Open Areas are open to vehicle use anywhere within the posted boundaries. Travel off established routes (cross-country) is permitted. There are **NO** open riding areas in the DWMA, SRMA, or Riverside County. Open riding areas are located in San Bernardino and Imperial counties.

Open Routes are open to all motorized vehicle use, subject to posted restrictions such as driving only on designated routes. Examples are Red Cloud and Summit Rd.

Limited Routes are open to all motorized vehicle use except during a limited time period when it is closed. The only one in this DWMA is the Meccacopia Trail, closed from June 1 to Sept. 30 to protect wildlife access to critical water sources.

Open routes in limited areas are marked with this



What can you do?

- Drive only on designated routes and obey posted signs. Keep dogs on leash.
- Camp within 100 feet of route's centerline.
- Do not touch tortoises. Harassing/collecting them are violations of state and federal law.
- Pack out trash. Waste takes longer to decompose in the desert, and also increases raven populations.
- Park your vehicle or set up camp in previously used or disturbed areas.
- Watch for tortoises on a roads and trails, especially during and after it rains.
- Look under your car before diving away. Tortoises rest in the shade of parked cars.
- Watch tortoises from a distance. Getting closer than 10 feet can cause a defensive response of emptying the bladder, which can be fatal.

Ride Responsibly

The desert is a delicate ecosystem. It has evolved to survive sparse water and intense sun but not the effects of human activities. Illegal and inappropriate OHV use has resulted in soil compaction, habitat degradation, habitat fragmentation, and erosion. It can take the desert more than 100 years to heal from this damage.

Desert Safety Tips

Travel in the desert can be an adventure. It can also be a disaster if a breakdown or sudden change in weather catches you unprepared. Harsh weather conditions can turn a desert outing into a tragedy. Acquire knowledge of desert survival skills. Travel in pairs for safety in backcountry area. A gallon of water per person, per day is the absolute minimum.

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Endemic Plants In Chuckwalla & Meccacopia

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How to explore

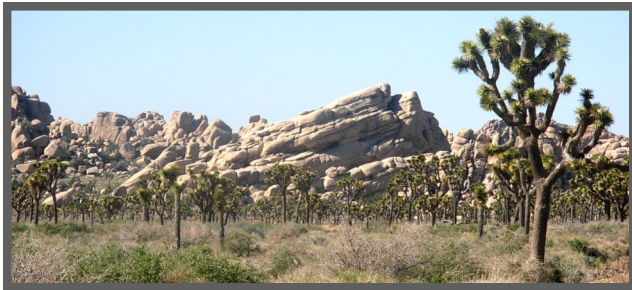
Meccacopia SRMA and Chuckwalla DWMA

OHV touring for recreation opportunities:

Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) must stay on approved routes of travel while touring within the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), the Chuckwalla Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA), and other public lands within the Palm Springs South Coast Field Office. There is no approved cross country travel or free play areas such as hill climbs and riding around within camps sites.

Very large OHV Open areas are available for unrestricted OHV use in nearby San Bernardino and Imperial Counties.

Recreation opportunities valued in the Meccacopia SMRA and Chuckwalla DWMA are destination riding, access to day hiking, photography, camping, nature study, picnicking, shooting, hunting, and scientific/education study.



Joshua trees are endemic to the Mojave Desert.

What is an Endemic Plant?

Some plants are found in only one small place in the world. These species are not widespread and are given the name of endemic plants. These are naturally restricted to a particular type of habitat. Unique combinations of soils, climates and other biological factors result in plants adapting over time to survive in these habitats. Endemic plants run a higher risk of extinction because of their geographic isolation. For example, the Joshua tree is endemic to the Mojave Desert. The Munz cholla, Orocopia sage, and Mecca aster are endemic plants of the Sonoran Desert.

Munz Cholla (*Opuntia munzii*)



Munz cholla is the largest cholla and like all cholla it should be looked at and not touched. The ground around the plant will often be covered with dead stems and living segments. These can attach themselves to you or animals with the slightest touch to help disperse the plant across the desert. Removing spines can be extremely painful.

Munz cholla is a shrub-like tree that grows between 6 - 13 feet tall and almost as wide. It has a few yellowish-green flowers in May which develop into a dry fruit. It can be found in dry, gravelly or sandy places within the creosote bush scrub community at elevations of 480 - 1,920 feet on the Chuckwalla Mountains. Look for it close to the Bradshaw Trail.

Orocopia Sage (*Salvia greatae*)



Orocopia sage is a rare species. Its range is limited to the mountainous high desert of southern Riverside and northern Imperial Counties, mainly in the Orocopia and Chocolate Mountains. The habitat of Orocopia sage is in gravelly or rocky soils on broad bajadas or alluvial fans and desert dry wash. It may occur on rocky benches above the flood plain of a wash, as the in Salt Creek Wash along the Bradshaw Trail. This shrub grows to 3' tall with sharp-pointed leaf edges and pinkish-purple flowers which bloom between March and April.

Photos: M. Masser, B. Wood

Mecca Aster (*Xylorhiza cognata*)



Mecca Aster is a perennial shrub that is endemic to California. Its range is limited to the Mecca and Indio Hills where it grows on the slopes and bottoms of canyons. Look for this flower on hikes in the Painted Canyon area. It has a lilac-tinted bloom that is similar to a daisy. Find it in full bloom between January to June.

How do your choices effect plant growth?

Illegal OHV travel and illegal dumping through Mecca aster and Orocopia sage habitat may kill or damage mature plants and reduce the establishment of new plants. Staying on designated routes, obeying posted signs, and putting trash where it belongs will help to protect this area and ensure the survival of Munz cholla, Mecca aster, Orocopia sage, and other plant and animal species.

Importance of Endemic Plants

These plants are important because they create unique habitats on which certain wildlife species depend on for survival. Some human activities, such as illegal cross-country travel by OHVs, are threats to natural areas and endemic plants. Trampling vegetation with OHVs jeopardizes mature plants and inhibits the establishment of new plants. Soil compaction prevents growth of vegetation, reduces water absorption, and destroys soil micro-organisms. Degradation and destruction of habitat are primary reasons for declines in plant and wildlife populations.