



DISCOVER THE DESERTS

Vast, varied, and beautiful, California's Desert Region offers countless places to explore, relax, and play. Escape to dramatic parklands with classic desert vistas of sand dunes, wind-swept valleys, and epic sunsets.

In Greater Palm Springs, escape to exclusive hideaways or family-friendly resorts. Play golf and tennis, shop, dine, see striking architecture and art, spot A-list celebrities at music and film festivals, and relax under the desert stars.

EASY ACCESS

Flights from hundreds of cities worldwide access the region via Palm Springs International Airport (PSP) or other major gateways such as San Diego, Los Angeles and Las Vegas that lead to Death Valley National Park (largest national park outside Alaska), Joshua Tree National Park, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

For adventurous exploring, rent a 4-wheel-drive vehicle to follow backcountry roads in these and other parks, including some of the country's newest national monuments.

LODGINGS, EVENTS, DEALS

Lodgings range from campsites and budget-friendly motels to romantic B&Bs and splurge-worthy resorts. Winter and spring tend to be busiest, with mega-events like the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival attracting crowds and the blooming of desert wildflowers at their peak in Anza-Borrego. Summer temperatures climb, but what used to be a quiet time has morphed into a secret find, with new events and great deals well into fall.



GOLDEN CANYON, MOJAVE DESERT



RESOURCES
Chambers of Commerce & Visitors Bureaus

Anza Valley	anzavalleychamberofcommerce.org
Barstow	barstowchamber.com
Blythe	blythechamberofcommerce.com
Borrego Springs	visitborrego.com
Brawley Chamber	brawleychamber.com
Calexico	calexico.ca.gov
California City	californiacitychamber.com
Death Valley	deathvalley.com
El Centro	ivregionalchamber.com
Greater Palm Springs	visitgreaterpalmsprings.com
Holtville	holtvillechamber.org
Imperial	ivregionalchamber.com
Joshua Tree Gateway Communities	visitjtc.com
Lone Pine Chamber	lonepinechamber.org
Mojave	visitmojave.com
Morongo Valley	movalchamber.org
Needles	needleschamber.com
Palm Springs	visitpalmsprings.com
Parker Area Chamber	parkeraz.org
Ridgecrest	goridgecrest.com
Twentynine Palms	visit29.org
Westmorland	cityofwestmorland.net
Yucca Valley	yuccavalley.org

SOUTHERN DESERT



ANZA-BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK

With borders touching Mexico to the south and Arizona to the east, this is a land built for adventure. The east side holds **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**, with lush palm oases, colorful slot canyons, ancient pictographs, and abundant wildlife, including desert bighorn sheep. (In fact, "borrego" is the Spanish word for sheep.) Keep your eyes peeled and you might spy these agile mammals, with fur the color of desert stone, roaming the rocky slopes or drinking at a spring.

The town of Borrego Springs is a relaxed haven for artists and other desert dwellers. Enjoy galleries, shops, lodging, and dining ranging from casual to luxurious. East of Borrego Springs lies the Salton Sea, a saline inland lake with camping, trails, and wildlife, particularly birds—more than 375 species have been recorded in the Salton Sea and surrounding Imperial Valley.

MUST-SEES

- **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**
Get oriented at this huge park (biggest state park in California) at the visitor center in Borrego Springs. Get tips on easy rambles or all-day gubusters, as well as wildlife hot spots, Native American sites and, in late winter through spring, beautiful wildflowers.
- **Galleta Meadows**
See the towering dragons, prehistoric elephants, and other fanciful works created by self-taught metal sculptor Ricardo Breceda. Find a self-guided driving tour at the Borrego Springs Visitor Center.
- **Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge**
Named in honor of the late performer (and former Palm Springs mayor), this refuge protects habitat for clouds of migratory waterfowl in spring and fall.

HIDDEN GEMS

- **BMW Performance Center West**
Improve your driving skills using high-performance BMWs at The Thermal Club, an exclusive racetrack and training facility south of Indio.
- **International Banana Museum**
Undeniably wacky, this goofy site in the tiny town of Mecca is home to 20,000 banana-themed items.
- **Off-Road Explorations**
If dune buggies, dirt bikes, and bigwheeled trucks are your thing, you'll love exploring Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Area and Algodones Dunes (Glamis) of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area.
- **Painted Canyon & Ladder Canyon, Mecca**
Enjoy hiking through a colorful high-walled, narrow gorge; ladders are placed along a slot canyon for scaling dry waterfalls.
- **Salvation Mountain, Niland**
Explore this colorful adobe and straw-constructed mountain painted with brightly hued Biblical messages.

RESOURCES

- **Salton Sea State Recreation Area**
The Visitor Center is open Wednesday-Sunday.
100-225 State Park Road, Mecca, CA 92254 (North Shore)
| 760-393-3810 | parks.ca.gov/saltonsea

NORTHERN DESERT

Rich in natural treasures and Old West history, this massive area stretches from just north of Twentynine Palms to the northern border of **Death Valley National Park**. This is quintessential desert, with huge expanses of untouched wilderness, where temperatures soar high and rainfall barely dampens the sandy floor.

But desolate? Hardly. Hundreds of species have adapted to this seemingly barren place. While visitors often beeline to the best-known destinations, savvy travelers know to add extra time for desert serendipity, with new parklands and other hidden gems luring you to linger and explore.

WEATHER

Winter temperatures average:
44°-70°F/6.5°-21°C.
Temperatures soar in summer:
76°-108°F/24.5°-41°C.

Annual rainfall hovers around 2 in./5 cm.

SMART DESERT TRAVEL

Pack extra water and snacks, fill the gas tank, and let others know your planned route—cellular reception is often spotty or nonexistent in remote areas.

TRONA PINNACLES

MUST-SEES

- **Death Valley National Park:** Catch the sunrise at Zabriskie Point, explore Badwater Basin and Artist's Drive, tour Amargosa Opera House, dine at the Oasis of Death Valley, and on and on: this massive park could fill an entire vacation.
- **Mojave National Preserve:** Discover cinder cones, Joshua tree forests, dunes that "sing," and a tiny town that ran out of proper vowels (it's Zzyzx, pronounced "Zye-zix"). Spring brings carpets of wildflowers.
- **Route 66:** Retrace the route of this iconic highway from the Arizona border at Needles west to Barstow, home of the Route 66 Mother Road Museum.
- **Trona Pinnacles:** Featuring otherworldly spires and rocky pinnacles, this national natural landmark has been the backdrop for many movies, including *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, *Pitch Black*, and the 2001 remake of *Planet of the Apes*.

HIDDEN GEMS

- **Amboy Crater/Mojave Trails National Monument:** Fiery eruptions some 80,000 years ago created this eye-catching cinder cone, a designated national natural landmark.
- **Keane Wonder Mine:** See one of the best examples of historical gold mining in Death Valley National Park. The mine's aerial tramway from the early 1900s, used to lower 70 tons of gold ore per day down the steep Funeral Mountains, still has ore buckets hanging from cables.
- **Mitchell Caverns:** The only limestone caves in the California State Park system (and only one of two you can enter), this natural attraction offers fascinating stalactite and stalagmite formations going back to the Pleistocene epoch.
- **Mojave Air & Space Port:** Take a self-guided tour of this sprawling aerospace facility. See supersonic aircraft and the home of Virgin Galactic, a big player in the race to launch commercial suborbit space travel.
- **Red Rock Canyon State Park:** This area is reminiscent of Utah with its scenic desert cliffs, buttes, fossils, and spectacular rock formations with canyons painted in vivid colors.
- **Randsburg Ghost Town:** At the General Store, enjoy a malt, phosphate soda, or one of the biggest banana splits you've ever seen. Don't miss the unique "bottle trees" scattered around town.

RESOURCES

- **California Welcome Center, Barstow**
2796 Tanger Way, Suite 100, Barstow, CA 92311 | 760-253-4782 | visitcalifornia.com/attraction/california-welcome-center-barstow
- **California Welcome Center, Ridgecrest**
880 N. China Lake Blvd., Ridgecrest, CA 93555 | 760-375-8202 | visitcalifornia.com/experience/california-welcome-center-ridgecrest

Packed with natural and manmade treasures, this region buzzes with activity year-round. To the north lies Joshua Tree National Park and the artsy town of Joshua Tree. To the west is Cabazon, with countless outlet stores. Desert communities, collectively known as Greater Palm Springs, stretch south along the eastern base of the San Jacinto Mountains.

The region's original inhabitants were the Cahuilla Indians, whose history here spans thousands of years. In 1774, Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza visited, and, by the late 1880s, a town had sprung up, thanks to a huge underground aquifer. In the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, Hollywood stars and filmmakers came to relax at posh resorts in between shooting movies in Hollywood. The likes of Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra stayed in lavish midcentury modern homes in the city of Palm Springs; today, visitors can see these modern marvels for themselves during a guided architectural tour.

CENTRAL DESERT



JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK



JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK, DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, AND ANZA-BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK ARE DESIGNATED INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARKS.

MUST-SEES

- **Joshua Tree National Park:** Native Joshua trees give the park its name, and unique plants and animals abound. Bulbous rock formations are popular with rock climbers (lessons available), plus there are day hikes, camping and historic sites.
- **Indian Canyons:** On Agua Caliente tribal land, the canyons are just minutes from downtown Palm Springs yet a world away with undisturbed natural beauty from palm oases to waterfalls.
- **Palm Springs Aerial Tramway:** Soar 8,500 feet/2,950 meters above the desert floor to pine-shaded Mount San Jacinto State Park. Trails lace the forest, and epic views abound.
- **Sunnylands:** Tour the breathtaking Rancho Mirage estate of publishing magnate Walter Annenberg and his wife, Leonore. Book well in advance for house tours; admission to gardens is free. Closed in the summer; check website for more information.

HIDDEN GEMS

- **Integratron:** Book a sound bath at this all-wood acoustical sound chamber with a mystical history.
- **Noah Purifoy's Outdoor Desert Art Museum:** Ten acres of desert land near Joshua Tree feature more than 100 sculptures assembled from unique finds.
- **Oasis of Murals:** Take a self-guided tour of the historical murals in downtown Twentynine Palms.
- **Pappy & Harriet's Pioneertown Palace:** Part of a former movie set for Westerns, this modest venue is a magnet for live music.
- **Sand to Snow National Monument:** This new monument links to Big Morongo Canyon Preserve and the Whitewater Preserve, offering outstanding hiking, birding and desert beauty near Cabazon.
- **Sky's The Limit Observatory and Nature Center:** Walk the Nature and Wilderness Trails, explore the Orrery and experience the Meditation Garden. Call ahead for schedules.

RESOURCES

- **Greater Palm Springs Visitor Center**
70100 Highway 111, Rancho Mirage, CA 92270
| 800-967-3767 | visitgreaterpalmsprings.com
- **California Welcome Center, Yucca Valley**
56711 Twentynine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley, CA 92284
| 760-365-5464 | californiawelcomecenter.com



- BLM Land
- Military Land
- Park
- Attraction
- Natural Area
- National Monument
- State Park
- California Welcome Center
- Major Airport
- Rest Area
- Wildlife Viewing Area

visitcaliforniadeserts.com

For more information on California Deserts, scan the code below.



0 30mi/48km



DRIVING DISTANCES

- Death Valley National Park**
- Los Angeles 319 mi/513 km
 - San Diego 365 mi/588 km
 - San Francisco 523 mi/842 km
 - Las Vegas 104 mi/167 km
- Joshua Tree National Park**
- Los Angeles 177 mi/285 km
 - San Diego 184 mi/296 km
 - San Francisco 536 mi/863 km
 - Las Vegas 193 mi/311 km



- CALIFORNIA DESERTS**
- Northern Desert
 - Central Desert
 - Southern Desert