

NPCA TRAVEL



The Travel Program of the National Parks Conservation Association

MARCH 16-22, 2024

CALIFORNIA'S DESERT LANDSCAPE:

Joshua Tree and Death Valley

ADVENTURE

THROUGH A MESMERIZING DESERT
OASIS WITH EXPANSIVE NIGHT SKIES

LEARN

HOW NPCA IS PROTECTING THE
MOJAVE DESERT

VISIT

FIVE NATIONAL PARK SITES

Death Valley National Park



PARK HIGHLIGHTS 

- Journey among the iconic Joshua trees and unique rock formations at **Joshua Tree National Park**
- Embark on a guided kayaking excursion on the calm waters of **Lake Mohave**
- Hike through a labyrinth of golden-colored hills and winding narrow canyons at **Death Valley National Park**

NPCA EXCLUSIVES 

- Take part in a **one-of-a-kind trip**, custom designed with NPCA’s mission, work and partners at its heart
- With NPCA partners and local experts by your side, get a behind-the-scenes look at **Sand to Snow National Monument**, home to some of the most botanically diverse mountains in the United States
- Connect privately with **National Park Service staff** at Death Valley and Joshua Tree national parks and Mojave National Preserve
- **Engage with a Tribal partner** to learn about the national monument designation of Avi Kwa Ame
- See how NPCA works with **local partners** to protect endangered species, such as the desert tortoise and desert bighorn sheep

California’s Desert Landscape: Joshua Tree and Death Valley

AVAILABLE DATES: March 16-22, 2024 | **Min/Max:** 12/14

Length of Tour: 7 days/6 nights

NPCA Member Price: \$6,475 per person double occupancy; \$7,350 single occupancy

Deposit: \$980 per person due at registration

Arrive/Depart: Palm Springs, California; Las Vegas, Nevada

Reservations: Please contact NPCA’s National Parks Experiences Program at **1.800.628.7275** or email travel@npca.org.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

Moderate



Activity Level: Travelers should be prepared for full-day adventures of walking, standing and sitting. This tour includes activities which may require physical exertion like hiking and long walks. We recommend travelers bring hiking poles. Hikes during our journey are rated easy to moderate and are typically 1-3.5 miles in length. Some trails have significant elevation descent and gain, and our longest hike is 7.2 miles. All hikes are optional and, whenever possible, your guides will provide alternative options for either a shorter or less demanding route. Hikes, walks and vehicle transportation may be on rough terrain and take multiple hours.

Inclusions: All outlined accommodations, meals as noted in the itinerary (B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner), non-alcoholic beverages (alcoholic beverages *will* be included for the welcome dinner and farewell dinner), all transportation as noted, standard gratuities, entry fees for activities listed in the itinerary and carbon offsets for each trip day.

Exclusions: Airfare to arrival location and from departure location, luggage charges, meals not included in the itinerary, alcoholic drinks (alcoholic beverages *will* be included for the welcome dinner and farewell dinner), travel insurance, items of a purely personal nature and any items not listed in Inclusions.

Explore the best of Death Valley and Joshua Tree national parks alongside NPCA experts and partners on this exciting journey through the Mojave Desert. These amazing Southern California and Nevada national park sites offer incredible hiking opportunities across diverse and rugged landscapes. Visit three large desert parks that NPCA helped to establish — **Sand to Snow National Monument, Mojave National Preserve** and **Avi Kwa Ame National**

Monument — and get a behind-the-scenes look at how NPCA works with local partners to protect these valuable places. This trip will introduce you to the diversity of the desert, from lush oases and vast sand dunes to towering monoliths, salt flats and alpine peaks. You’ll also have the chance to spot many of the creatures that call this place home, such as desert bighorn sheep, roadrunners and coyotes. Each night we’ll retire to comfortable accommodations that put us close to the action.



FEATURED BIO: CHRIS CLARKE 

Chris Clarke serves as NPCA’s Ruth Hammett associate director of the California Desert Program. Chris works closely with desert communities to protect national parks, monuments, and other protected places, and the landscapes that surround them. Based near Joshua Tree in Twentynine Palms, California, he has deep roots in this landscape and has written several articles on issues facing this important ecosystem.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 MARCH 16: Arrival Day and Tour Sand to Snow National Monument

Arrive by 12:00 PM into **Palm Springs International Airport (PSP)** in California and meet your Iconic Trip Leader at baggage claim. Once our full group arrives, we'll board our private vehicles for a 30-minute ride to **Sand to Snow National Monument**, which NPCA helped to establish in 2016.

At the monument, we'll meet with a special NPCA partner to hear how Sand to Snow National Monument and Big Morongo Canyon Preserve earned federal protection. Sand to Snow gets its name from the area's extreme elevation change — from the sand of the **Sonoran Desert** to the peak of **San Geronio Mountain** more than 10,000 feet above. This monument is home to the most botanically diverse mountains in the contiguous United States and provides a critical water source for many of Joshua Tree National Park's desert bighorn sheep.

We'll enjoy a scenic hike and picnic lunch before we drive approximately 1 hour to 29 Palms Inn, our hotel for the next two nights. There will be time to check in and freshen up before gathering with our NPCA staff hosts and fellow travelers for introductions and an orientation to the days ahead. We'll learn about some of the key NPCA initiatives related to the itinerary, and hear more details about the hiking, learning and adventure that awaits! Then, we'll enjoy a delicious welcome dinner at the hotel. [29 Palms Inn \(L, D\)](#)



Mount San Geronio viewed from Joshua Tree National Park



DAY 2 MARCH 17: Joshua Tree National Park

Today, we'll take in the wonders of **Joshua Tree National Park** with NPCA's California Desert Program manager and partners. This park is best known for its namesake yucca plant, but the most popular sections of the park are dominated by enormous, intricately shaped granite rock formations.

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll drive 45 minutes to our first hike of the day. As we take an easy, 1-mile stroll along the **Hidden Valley Loop Trail**, we can delight in up-close views of the park's rocky wonders. Nearby, we will continue along a trail which will loop us past **Barker Dam**. This valley, lush with plant life that takes full advantage of the water in the reservoir, also carries with it tall tales from the days of gold mining and cattlemen.

After a picnic lunch, we'll embark on our final journey for the day: the **Willow Hole Trail**. This out-and-back hike ventures into the famed **Wonderland of Rocks**, offering expansive views of the desert and distant mountains. We'll walk through washes and into a labyrinth of cliffs, canyons, domes and unique rock formations. Along the way, we'll learn about how pollution from the agricultural industry in the San Joaquin Valley, some 471 miles away, compromises the air quality and views in the park. We'll also hear about the steps NPCA is taking to address this issue. With an invigorating day of hiking under our belts, we'll return to 29 Palms Inn for some downtime before our group dinner at the on-site restaurant. [29 Palms Inn \(B, L, D\)](#)

DAY 3 MARCH 18: Mojave National Preserve to Laughlin, NV

We'll start our day with breakfast at the inn, then we'll say goodbye to Joshua Tree as we drive approximately 2 hours north to **Mojave National Preserve**. We'll stop in **Mojave Trails National Monument**, midway on our day's journey, to stretch our legs. This monument connects the landscapes of Joshua Tree and Mojave, creating a natural corridor and vast living landscape. On the way, we'll learn about how NPCA is fighting a massive water-mining project that would forever damage this fragile desert landscape.

Upon arrival to Mojave National Preserve, we'll meet with park staff for an introduction to the site. After a picnic lunch, we'll take an exciting 3.2-mile hike along the **Teutonia Peak Trail**. The initial gradual incline through what was once a dense forest of Joshua trees becomes steeper as we climb toward the 5,755-foot

summit. At the top, we can catch our breath while taking in views of the surrounding landscape, including **Cima Dome**, the most symmetrical dome of its type in the United States. As we absorb our surroundings, we might see evidence of the Dome Fire which burned over 40,000 acres in 2020. Since fall 2021, hundreds of volunteers, including NPCA's California Desert team, have turned out to replant Joshua trees in those places hit hardest by the fire. We'll have the chance to chat with NPCA staff and partners about this work, as well as other threats to the area's wildlife.

We can relax from the hike during our less than 2-hour drive to Laughlin, NV. When we arrive, we'll check into our home for the next two nights, the Avi Resort & Casino, which is owned by the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, and then have some downtime before dinner at a local restaurant. [Avi Resort & Casino \(B, L, D\)](#)



Wonderland of Rocks above the Barker Dam
Joshua Tree National Park

DAY MARCH 19: Avi Kwa Ame National

4 Monument

We'll begin our day with breakfast at the hotel before embarking on a guided kayaking excursion on Lake Mohave, within **Lake Mead National Recreation Area**, where we'll take in the desert views from a different perspective. After lunch, we'll drive about 1.25 hours northeast to the central region of **Avi Kwa Ame National Monument**, where we'll learn about Avi Kwa Ame — the Mojave name for Spirit Mountain — and the surrounding landscape. The area is sacred to many Tribes, including several Yuman-speaking Tribes who pay reverence to Spirit Mountain as the center of their creation. We'll have the chance to engage with Tribal leaders as we discuss the advocacy efforts that led to the establishment of **Avi Kwa Ame National Monument**, which preserves over 500,000 acres of some of the most visually stunning, biologically diverse and culturally significant lands in the Mojave Desert.

A little later, we'll visit the petroglyph-rich **Grapevine Canyon**, then return to the Laughlin-area hotel to freshen up before heading to dinner at a local area restaurant. *[Avi Resort & Casino \(B, L, D\)](#)*

DAY MARCH 20: Laughlin, NV to Death Valley

5 National Park

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll check out and begin our journey to **Death Valley National Park**. We'll drive nearly 3 hours, with comfort stops en route to **Shoshone, CA**. In Shoshone, we'll meet with local NPCA partners, enjoy lunch and stretch our legs. Then, it's back on the road for the final hour of driving to reach the **Furnace Creek area in Death Valley National Park**. We will check in to the Ranch at Death Valley, our home for the next two nights. We'll eat dinner in the park before catching a good night's sleep in preparation for tomorrow's adventures! *[Ranch at Death Valley \(B, L, D\)](#)*

DAY MARCH 21: Death Valley National Park

6 We'll have an early start today to enjoy sunrise at the **Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes**. After breakfast and ample photography opportunities, we'll make a quick stop at the **Furnace Creek Visitor Center** to get an introduction to Death Valley from park staff. Then, we'll proceed to the **Salt Creek Interpretive Trail**, an easy 0.8-mile loop where we'll keep an eye

out for endangered pupfish. From there, we'll journey along the moderately-difficult **Mosaic Canyon Trail**, winding our way through narrow canyons and discovering fascinating geologic features at every turn. We'll also have an opportunity to hear about NPCA's work to protect California's desert landscapes and the exciting return of American pronghorn to the park.

In the late afternoon, we'll have some downtime at the Ranch at Death Valley. Then, we'll reconvene for a farewell dinner at the Inn at Death Valley, where we'll be joined by our NPCA staff hosts and new friends to reflect upon a memorable week in California's desert landscape. After dinner, we'll have the option to join park staff for an expansive **night sky viewing program**. Death Valley offers some of the best stargazing in America and is designated a **Gold Tier Dark Sky Park**, the darkest possible rating. Though the moon will likely be bright,

there will still be plenty to see and discover in the night sky. *[Ranch at Death Valley \(B, L, D\)](#)*

DAY MARCH 22: Death Valley National Park to Las Vegas

7 We'll check out of our lodging bright and early to drive to nearby **Zabriskie Point** for one last **Death Valley** treasure. Once there, we will bask in the glow of a final sunrise, taking in the views as we eat breakfast. Afterward, we'll continue for the 2-hour ride to Las Vegas' Harry Reid International Airport (LAS) to catch afternoon flights home. **(B)**

Accommodations and activities are subject to change at any time due to unforeseen circumstances or circumstances beyond NPCA's control.



Travel Insurance: To protect yourself from the loss of deposit and cancellation fees, you are encouraged to purchase travel insurance. If you need assistance, NPCA recommends contacting Travel Insurance Services through USI Affinity at 1-800-937-1387 or at <http://my.travelinsure.com/npc>; email confirmation packets will include additional details.

Traveler Responsibility: Travelers are responsible for choosing an NPCA trip consistent with their ability, fitness and overall health. All travelers are required to complete and return their NPCA waiver of liability, personal information form, flight form, and accept Iconic Adventure's Terms and Conditions before being allowed to participate in a trip. Travelers also are responsible for reading and understanding all pre-departure materials and bringing appropriate clothing and gear.

Trip Cancellation Policy: Written cancellations must be received in Iconic's sales office for a cancellation to be valid. Iconic strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance.

Cancellation charges will be as follows:

151+ days prior to departure	150-126 days prior	November 12, 2023	125-91 days prior	90-0 days prior
Deposit is 100% refundable	Deposit is 50% refundable	Final payment is due	50% of trip cost is refundable	No refund

COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Each of our travel partners have developed robust safety protocols to protect the health of our guests, staff and the communities we visit. Please contact us for details.

PHOTO CREDITS

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Why Travel with NPCA?

Our goal is to offer premium itineraries in educational travel in the places we know best: America's national parks.

For over 100 years, NPCA has worked to protect places of unparalleled natural wonder, historical significance and cultural value. Now we want you to experience them firsthand. Our curated itineraries offer more than just sightseeing. With NPCA, you'll delve into the cultural and natural history of each destination, guided by passionate experts who bring these stories to life. We believe that true appreciation for our parks goes hand in hand with awareness of the conservation efforts being made to protect them. Engage with park rangers, NPCA partners and local communities as they share their invaluable insights and discuss the challenges and triumphs of safeguarding these natural treasures. Leave with a deeper understanding of the critical role we all play in the future of our parks.

ACCESS NPCA STAFF EXPERTISE

Embark on extraordinary adventures led by our team of knowledgeable staff who represent a wide range of backgrounds. With expertise spanning environmental conservation, cultural heritage, wildlife biology and more, our staff brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to each journey. Delve into engaging discussions and gain unique insights into the issues that shape our parks, including land preservation, climate change and Indigenous perspectives. Together, we'll explore the multifaceted aspects of these remarkable landscapes.

TRAVEL WITH PURPOSE

When you choose to travel with NPCA, you're not just embarking on an incredible journey – you're making a meaningful impact. Our commitment to conservation runs deep, and we are proud to share that a portion of every trip's fees directly supports NPCA's vital work. Your choice to travel with us helps protect and strengthen the National Park System for generations to come.

ENJOY PERSONALIZED AND INTIMATE EXPERIENCES

Escape the crowds and embrace the beauty of small-group travel, where personal connections and tailored experiences take center stage. Our trips offer a more intimate setting, allowing you to forge meaningful connections with fellow travelers who share your passion for adventure and conservation.

CONNECT WITH NPCA PARTNERS AND LOCAL EXPERTS

Collaborate with key NPCA partners and local experts who are deeply connected to the destinations we visit. Engage in dialogue with scientists, community leaders and Tribal members who are at the forefront of conservation and preservation efforts. Their firsthand accounts and valuable perspectives will deepen your understanding of the challenges and successes in protecting our national parks.

TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY

Embrace the spirit of responsible travel as you embark on a journey that leaves a positive footprint on the planet. At NPCA, we prioritize partnering with responsible tour operators who share our commitment to sustainability and conservation. With their expertise and dedication, we ensure that every step of your trip aligns with our shared values.

Milky Way seen from Death Valley

Wm Ford

NPCA is the only independent, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advocacy on behalf of the National Park System. Over 70% of our funding comes from donations from individuals like you. NPCA trips are an exclusive NPCA member benefit. One traveler per group must be an NPCA member to participate in an NPCA trip. An annual membership starts at \$15 per person. Please make dues payable to NPCA by check or credit card at npca.org.