

# Trek Aid 102

## Desert Camping & Backpacking



High Adventure Team  
Desert Pacific Council  
Boy Scouts of America



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# Trek Aid 102 Desert Camping & Backpacking

## INTRODUCTION

The great Sonoran Desert of the southwestern United States has many excellent and often spectacular hiking and camping areas; enough for a lifetime without visiting the same place twice. This trek aid addresses camping and backpacking information for the Colorado and Mojave desert areas in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Joshua Tree National Park, the most popular destinations for Scouts from Southern California.

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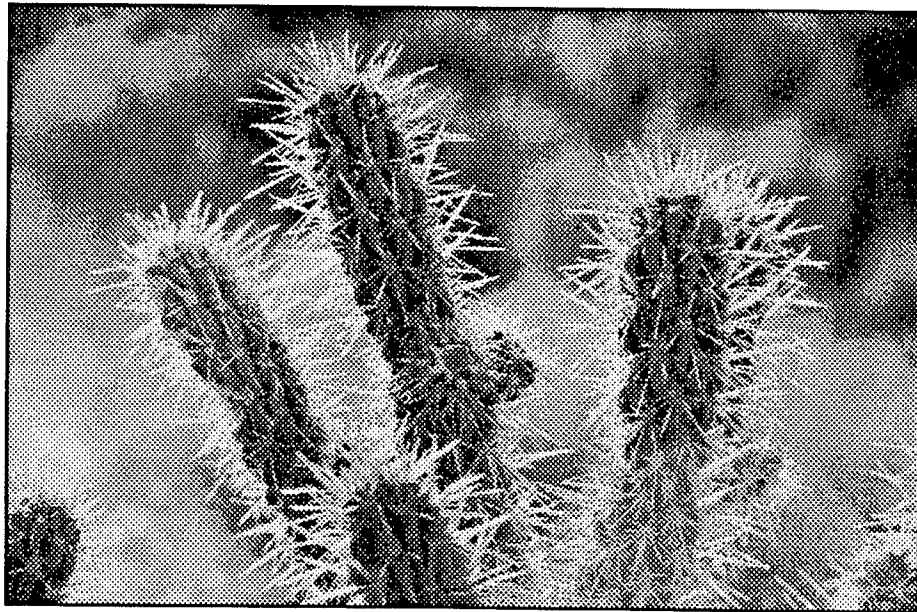
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### Colorado and Mojave Deserts

California has two major desert areas— the Colorado and Mojave Deserts. Fortunately for those in Southern California they are both accessible in relatively short driving time, making weekend desert treks possible.

The Colorado Desert is the California part of the Sonoran Desert which ranges from the base of Mt. San Gorgonio in the north, to the south and east into Mexico and Arizona. Elevations normally range from 2,000 feet to below sea level. Rainfall varies from 1 to 5 inches annually; frost is possible in the winter.

The Mojave Desert extends from Death Valley to about the Riverside County line eastward. Elevations range from a high of 4,500 feet to below sea level in Death Valley. Rainfall varies from 4 to 15 inches annually; snow is possible in the winter.



# Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is one of the largest state parks in the United States, covering 600,000 acres of San Diego County, and parts of Riverside and Imperial Counties from the Santa Rosa Mountains to the Mexican Border. The name is derived from Juan Bautista de Anza, who led a 1776 Spanish colonial expedition through the area, and the Spanish name for bighorn sheep, borrego, which are native to this area.

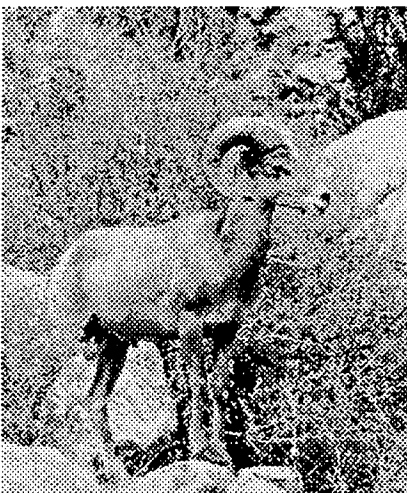
Over time, the Anza-Borrego area evolved from a shallow sea to expansive grasslands, a fresh water lake, and finally a desert. Today evidence of sea shells, fishes, and large mammals can be found throughout the park. Re-arrangement of the area's geology and ecosystem continues because of the forces in the San Andreas fault system. Geologists consider the region to be one of the most diverse and interesting on the continent.

The desert abounds with plant and animal life, including over 600 species of desert plants and 350 kinds of vertebrate animals. If winter rains are abundant, the desert will burst into a riot of color from the blooms of desert plants. Flowers, depending on elevation and location, will bloom from February to June. Animals may be seen all year, although many are active only at night.

The Anza-Borrego area was home to the Yuha Man, Pinto Indians, Yuman and Shoshonean Indians, Spanish explorers, miners, ranchers, and homesteaders. Hiking, backpacking, and exploring here will lead to discovery of evidence of these past "visitors" to the area.

The best place to start exploring the Anza-Borrego Desert is at the Park's Visitor Center in Borrego Springs. Informative and educational displays are available, and information on trails and the location of water can be obtained from the Park Rangers. A short slide show explores the various seasons of the desert and the interaction of natural elements with the plants and animals of the region.

Within the park there are three State Park and two San Diego County campgrounds which have water and toilets. Also, there are nine primitive campgrounds, some of which have chemical toilets but no piped water. You may camp anywhere within the park, except near designated campsites and seasonal closure areas. Normally vehicles must stay within ten feet of paved or dirt roads. Except for designated fire rings in some campgrounds, ground fires are NOT permitted, so all campers and backpackers must use chemical or charcoal stoves. Most trailheads and popular camping areas are 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours drive from San Diego.



# Joshua Tree National Park

Two large desert ecosystems, primarily determined by elevation, come together at Joshua Tree National Park. There are few areas which more vividly illustrate the contrast between high and low desert. The lower desert, the Colorado Desert, occupying the eastern half of the park, is dominated by creosote bushes and small stands of Jumping Cholla cactus and Ocotillo. The higher and slightly cooler and wetter Mojave Desert is the habitat of the Joshua Tree, which grows throughout the western part of the park.

A third ecosystem, the oasis, provides a dramatic contrast to the surrounding dry desert areas. Five fan palm oases are in the park, indicating where water occurs naturally at or near the surface. These oases support an abundant wildlife population.

Within these three ecosystems the Pinto Man, Indians, cattlemen, homesteaders, and miners struggled to maintain an existence. Evidence of their passing is found throughout the park. Remains of dams, abandoned ranches, and homesteads are scattered throughout the monument's more than 500,000 acres. Hikers will easily find the remnants of the Lost Horse and Desert Queen Mines.

The National Park contains some of the most interesting geological formations found in the California deserts. Rugged mountains of twisted rock and exposed granite overlook canyons, mounds of smooth boulders, and alluvial fans of gravel and sand that form a giant desert mosaic of beauty and complexity.

Joshua Tree National Park is open all year, with the best visiting time in the fall and spring. Winters can be cold, especially at night, and summers are very hot during the day. The nine campgrounds, which fill up early on weekends, have tables, fireplaces, and toilets available. Two of the campgrounds, Cottonwood in the south and Sheep Pass in the north, have group camps which may be reserved in advance. Except for the southernmost Cottonwood Campground, Black Rock Canyon Campground in the north, and the four information/entrance stations, there is no drinking water available. Park Rangers present weekend evening programs and can provide additional information on hiking and backpacking opportunities. The entrances to the National Park are about 3 to 4 hours drive from San Diego. The entrance fee is currently \$5 per vehicle.

# Planning & Preparation

## Planning Checklist

Planning and preparation for a desert backpack must be thorough—the safety and enjoyment of you and your unit depends on it. Use Trek Aids 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 as a source of planning information. Also utilize the references contained in this Trek Aid. Use a checklist for things to do, equipment, and supplies to bring.

### 1. Trek Selection

- (a) Where will the backpack be held?
- (b) What section of the trail (if there is one) will be followed?
- (c) Where is the starting point (trailhead)?
- (d) Where are the camping spots? (Note: many H.A.T. awards require camps be 1 1/2 to 2 hours scheduled backpacking time from start or end points.)
- (e) Where and when will the trek end?
- (f) Where is water available, or will it all have to be carried?
- (g) Have all required permits been obtained?
- (h) Is the planned conservation project approved by the proper authority?

### 2. Transportation to and from Trail

- (a) Who will drive? Is seat belt and insurance information available?
- (b) Are standby drivers available?
- (c) What is the starting time and estimated trailhead arrival time?
- (d) When and where is the pick up point, and what is the estimated home return time?
- (e) Do all drivers have maps showing the route to and from the drop off and pickup points? Is parking available?
- (f) Do plans need to be made for a car shuttle between the trailhead and pickup point?

### 3. Safety

- (a) Do several reliable non-participating parents have the trek plan which shows:
  - The planned route and campsites
  - Pickup point and expected time of return
  - Who is the contact if the unit is “overdue” (this should be defined for each trip)
  - Names and telephone numbers of all parents in case of delays or emergencies.
- (b) Are all participants physically fit to go on the trek?
- (c) Are medical problems, such as asthma or allergies, of any of the participants known to the trek leaders? A completed Scout medical form for each participant is recommended.
- (d) Has a permission slip and medical release been obtained for each participant?
- (e) What will be the worst weather condition encountered and what is needed to prepare for it?
- (f) Key Phone Numbers:
  - Anza-Borrego Desert State Park - (619) 767-5311
  - Joshua Tree National Park - (619) 367-7511
  - San Diego County Sheriff - (619) 236-3111

# Equipment & Food Suggestions

## 1. Backpacking Equipment

- (a) Backpack with a comfortable "hip" band
- (b) Sleeping bag adequate for the cold expected
- (c) Foam pad (ensolite) or air mattress
- (c) Chemical backpacking stove (to be shared)
- (d) Light weight backpacking tent (to be shared)
- (e) Pots, spoons, and cups needed to cook, eat and drink
- (f) Two or more plastic water bottles
- (g) "Ten Essentials" Plus
  - First aid kit • Map and compass • Flashlight with spare batteries and bulb • Pocketknife • Waterproof matches and a small candle • Sun glasses, sun screen, and chapstick • Spare food and water • Extra clothing • Metal mirror and whistle • Two large plastic garbage sacks • 50' of 1/8" nylon rope • Note pad and pencil • Toilet paper

## 2. Personal Equipment

- (a) Loose fitting and comfortable clothing
  - should be sufficient for "layering" in cold temperatures
  - long pants and long sleeved shirts for sun & brush protection
- (b) Properly fitted and broken in footwear (should have thick soles to protect from sharp rocks and cactus)
- (c) Extra socks
- (d) Extra underwear
- (e) Wide brim hat or cap with a bill
- (f) Windproof and waterproof jacket
- (g) Rain gear
- (h) Backpackers trowel to bury waste
- (i) Personal hygiene articles
  - toothpaste & brush
  - soap & towel
- (j) Cleaning and drying material for pots and cups
- (k) Tweezers & comb for cactus spine removal

## 3. Food

All food backpacked should be selected to provide energy and minimize weight and volume in your pack. Experiment to determine which combinations are best. Lightweight food can be enjoyable and filling. Breakfasts should not involve any complicated cooking and trail lunches should be simple and "cook free". Avoid large meals, they require much water to digest. Meals should entail minimum cleanup, especially if water is packed in. Avoid items which are diuretics, such as coffee, tea, hot chocolate, etc.



(a) Water (One gallon minimum per day is a basic guideline)—If water is available at planned camps, carry two quarts each. If not, all needed water must be carried. Remember that lightweight backpacking food needs water in addition to what one would normally drink. When desert backpacking, it is often better to use foods which do not require re-hydration. If local water from streams or springs is used, it must be treated first. Giardiasis and other harmful micro-organisms are present in most untreated water supplies in the desert. One way to treat water is to boil it for several minutes. Another method is to use chemical purification (iodine or chlorine). There are water filters available which claim to remove all bacterial micro-organisms, including Giardiasis.

(b) Breakfast suggestions

• Individual packets of oatmeal or cream-of-wheat • Dried cereal and reconstituted dry milk • Fresh or dried fruit • Breakfast or granola bars • Hard-boiled eggs

(c) Lunch suggestions

• Crackers and cheese • Sandwiches • Salami or similar meats • Fresh vegetables and fruits • Bagels or pita bread • Canned sandwich spreads

(d) Dinner suggestions

• Cups of soup or noodles • Dehydrated meals (if water availability permits) • Canned meals (only on two or three day treks) - Place in a “seal-a-meal” bag to reduce weight and trash volume • Precooked meals that can be reheated in water-proof plastic bags • Buy individual items to make a meal such as rice, dried meat, and gravy mix

(e) Trail snacks and desserts

• Dehydrated desserts • Pudding cups • Trail mix, store made or your own (avoid chocolate—it melts!) • Jerky • Fresh fruits and nuts • Fruit leather

## Health, Safety, & Survival

The desert is a beautiful place to hike and backpack, but it can be very dangerous to the careless, uninformed, and ill-equipped. The majority of desert areas are without water, and although many days survival without food is possible, you cannot survive long without water. Difficult terrain and general lack of recognizable landmarks can cause one to become lost or disoriented easily. There are also some unfriendly animals and insects. It is best to plan treks in the desert for late fall, winter, and early spring. It is usually too hot to attempt treks at other times. Each trek member should be briefed on the following guidelines:

Stay together. Many desert treks are cross-country since there are few “signed” trails. Established trails are quickly hidden by flash floods and other acts of nature. Make extensive use of maps and compass. Keep the unit close together, within sight and sound of each other. Have each person follow the rule of frequently looking back—if you cannot see another member following behind, stop walking until you see each other. Do not place unit members in a position of always having to catch up—stay together. If night



trekking is planned, limit it to easy terrain on moonlit nights.

If you are lost, find shade and stay there. Place a large, bright object (spread out tent, ground cloth, etc.) out in the open where it can be seen during the day. Do not attempt to hike out, particularly in the heat of the day. Limit all activities to early morning, night, or early evening.

Know the character of the area in which you are backpacking. Make all trek members aware of the type of terrain they will be walking upon. Many desert areas are rocky while others are soft sand. Careless walking or running can lead to sprained ankles or worse. When walking near canyon rims be aware that the edges might be undermined. Do not throw or roll rocks—someone might be below you.

Cactus spines. Many desert plants have their own protection from humans and animals. Needles, spines, thorns, hooks and many other devices are employed to discourage damage to the plants. Cholla cactus “balls” have been known to go through the soles of tennis shoes - watch where you walk and sit. Cactus spine removal is the most common first-aid treatment given to Scouts in the desert. Cholla pods are large enough to be removed with a pocket comb, and the needles with heavy duty tweezers or a hemostat. Tiny needles from a cactus like Beavertail can take many hours and fine tweezers to remove.

Insect bites/stings. Bee stings are the most common insect caused malady in the desert, but they usually only cause irritation, discomfort, and swelling for a few days. Bees can detect moisture from a long distance, and will settle on wet clothing or skin. Remove stingers carefully with a scraping motion, to avoid squeezing more poison out of the venom sack (the bulb attached to the remaining stinger after the bee has fallen off). Use an extractor, if available, to remove venom. Wash carefully, apply an anti-infectant (Stingezel also if available) and keep clean. Keep the site cool (if anything cool can be found), and evacuate to a doctor if any sign of allergic reaction appears.

Rattlesnakes are common throughout San Diego County, and are very prevalent in desert areas. They generally hibernate during the cool winter months, but may occasionally come out during warming trends. Most bites have been recorded during April, May, and June between 3 P.M. and 6 A.M., but they may be encountered at any time of the day. Rattlesnakes are one of the dangers which can be avoided by following a few rules and common sense.

Rattlesnakes live under rocks, rock piles, brush piles, and abandoned structures, so always be aware of where you are walking. Follow the practice of “watch where you are going and go only where you are watching”. Do not place your feet or hands in any area you cannot see. Use flashlights at night. Remember that the snakes are just as afraid of you as you are of them. If you see a snake LEAVE IT ALONE unless it is a direct threat to you or someone in your unit. Stay at least ten feet away to observe it, but do not try to kill it. All wildlife in both parks is protected by law.

All rattlesnakes have two types of venom, hemotoxic and neurotoxic. Hemotoxic venom attacks the circulatory system which includes the heart, blood vessels, and blood cells. Neurotoxic venom attacks the nervous system, including the brain. Most rattlesnakes have only a small amount of neurotoxic venom, but the Mojave Green Rattlesnake has a higher percentage than others. Thus it is much more dangerous if it bites someone.

If someone does get bitten by a rattlesnake, treat the victim and kill the snake if possible, and keep it for identification. There are at least six different kinds of rattlesnakes in the desert; some have different types of venom. It will aid treatment if the type of snake is known. Treatment should be as follows:

Keep the victim quiet and lying down - treat for shock.

Place a loose constrictor (not a tourniquet) above the bite. Do not stop blood flow!

If available, use an extractor to remove some of the venom.

Do not use a snake bite kit—cutting could cause permanent damage. Also, the snake may have not injected any venom, 30 % do not.

Do not use ice on the bite. It does not slow spread of venom.

Evacuate to medical help immediately.

Water. Remember that desert water sources are very important to desert animals, plants, and an occasional backpacker. Do not camp near them (at least 200 feet away) and do not pollute them. Wash yourself, clothes, and eating/cooking utensils out in the dry desert—not near the water hole or stream. When planning your trek, always be sure of your water sources. Always carry plenty with you and plan on a gallon of water per person per day. Since you may be sweating a lot, use drink additives that will replace your lost electrolyte salts. Because of the presence of microorganisms in the water, treat it before drinking or cooking with it.

Heat Exhaustion and Heatstroke. The best way to prevent heat exhaustion and heatstroke is to follow some basic rules.

Spend a couple of weeks getting acclimated before exerting yourself in high temperatures.

Take short training hikes.

Drink plenty of fluids and stop frequently to cool off. At each break, everyone should be checked for their condition and that ample water is being consumed.

Wear lightweight, light colored clothing and a hat.

Replace lost body salts by eating and drinking items that naturally contain salt. Do not use salt tablets.

Heat exhaustion must be treated quickly or it may develop into a heatstroke. The normal symptoms are any or all of the following: weakness; muscle cramps; headaches; dilated pupils; dizziness; vomiting; profuse sweating; pale, cool, and clammy skin (the opposite of the heatstroke symptom); and normal temperature. To treat a victim of heat exhaustion:

Lay the victim down in a cool place with the feet slightly elevated.

Cool the victim with cold packs or wet cloths.

Give the victim slightly salted water or a liquid electrolyte replacement (e.g. Gookinaid, Gatoraid, etc.) to drink.

Watch and care for shock.

If the victim does not recover quickly, transport to a doctor as soon as possible.

If a malfunction occurs in the body's heat-regulating system, the body's temperature can zoom up to 105 degrees F or higher, causing heatstroke. Coma and/or death can follow quickly if not treated. While it can come on with very little warning, symptoms are usually a headache; dizziness; confusion; lack of sweating; hot, dry, and red skin; constricted pupils; and high body temperature. To treat a victim of heatstroke:

Lay the victim down in a cool place with the head elevated.

Open the clothes and cool the body down quickly with water or other means available (be careful not to chill-shock the victim).

Apply treatment for shock.

If the victim can tolerate it, slowly administer slightly salted water or a liquid electrolyte replacement (e.g. Gookinaid, Gatoraid, etc.) to drink.

Get the victim to a doctor immediately.

Sunburn. Remember that the sun can burn skin quickly, even in winter. Use sunscreen, SPF 15 or better, on your face, ears, nose, neck, and back of your hands. Do not use a suntan lotion since it will not block out the harmful sun rays. Use a "chapstick" with a sun block in it for your lips. Wear a wide brim hat or a hat with a bill to help shade you from the sun. Sun glasses will also protect your eyes from the sun and reflected glare off rocks and sand.

Hypothermia. Do not discount the possibility of hypothermia in the desert. Cool windy evenings and/or cold nights are common; easily sufficient to cause hypothermia. Sunburn can give a false sense of warmth.

## Customs, Courtesies, & Rules

Clothing. Clothing should be loose fitting and light in color. Long pants and long sleeved shirts will protect against the sun, rocks, and plants you may encounter. If it is known in advance that the trek will go through areas that do not have much brush, cactus, or rocks, shorts may be used on the trek, but remember to protect against sunburn. At night the temperature may drop to the high 20's or low 30's, so be prepared with warm clothes and jackets.

During the winter it may rain so be prepared and check the weather reports before you leave home. Canyons and washes can become raging torrents of water without notice—do not camp in them if rain is possible or anticipated. Some washes near mountain slopes can flood without any sign of clouds overhead. When it is raining in the mountains, consider that run-off may flow all the way to the wash you are in or near.

“Take only pictures, leave only footprints”. This sums up the Outdoor Code and the conservation principles championed by the Boy Scouts of America. The desert is a great outdoor museum to be enjoyed now and in the future. Follow the guidelines below on all trips into the desert, for a day or a week.

Leave the trails, campsites, and open areas as clean or cleaner than you found them.

Do not damage or remove plants, trees, animals, or insects. Many are protected by law or could be dangerous to your health and well being. Scars on the land take centuries to recover.

Always practice “no impact” or “no trace” camping and backpacking. Since most areas in the desert parks are open to camping, leave your camping area so when someone else arrives they will never know you camped there. Do not ditch around tents and do not “cut” trails. Both practices leaves unsightly results and can cause erosion.

Never enter private property without prior permission. There are mine claims and home sites in many areas of the desert. Please respect them. Some private areas have armed guards that do not appreciate trespassers.

Please take care of your human waste and food waste by burying it in a hole 6" to 8" deep. Dig the hole well off trails, away from campsites, and at least 200 feet from any water source. Never burn the toilet paper—it could blow away and start a fire in the desert underbrush.

Remember that “A Scout is Friendly”. Let other people pass on the trail when they ask and never block the trails with your pack when you are stopped for a rest or a snack. Horse riders have the right away on the trail—step off the trail, downhill side, remaining still and quiet. Some horses spook easily, especially when they see a person with a strange “hump” on their back.

Respect other people's campsites and their desire to enjoy the desert.

Do not enter them unless invited. Also be mindful of noise pollution by keeping the noise level down and being quiet at night. Others camped around you may want to enjoy the quiet of the desert. You will be surprised how far a normal talking voice can be heard on a still desert night.

## Suggestions for New Backpackers & Trek Leaders

If you are just starting to backpack or your unit has little experience in the desert, there are many places to obtain help and guidance. All backpacking treks can be made enjoyable for Scouts and adults alike with training, planning, and common sense.

1. Ask your Scout Executive or Commissioner for help finding a unit which has desert backpacking experience. They will be more than willing to help you plan backpack outings and provide needed knowledge. Many will invite your unit to participate in their own planning and outings.
2. Contact the Council's High Adventure Team for assistance. H.A.T. members will help you with your planning and provide information on High Adventure awards, trails, training, etc. They will talk to your unit and put on a slide show or equipment demonstration at your meetings.
3. Participate in a weekend backpack training session at a Council camp. This training is for units under their own leadership and is given by experienced H.A.T. instructors. This is an excellent opportunity for units to learn basic backpacking and trail camping using Council provided equipment. Packs, backpack cooking kits, lightweight stoves, and tube tents are issued at the camp. Individuals bring their own personal equipment and clothes, plus lightweight food. Instructors will assist Scouters to plan food and personal equipment. A backpack hike of about seven miles will be taken. This training is usually given the second weekend of the month, except for July, August, and September. It starts Saturday morning and is usually completed by late Sunday afternoon. Reservations should be made by calling Council Headquarters.
4. Have the unit's adult leadership complete the High Adventure Leader Training. Adult Scouter leadership training by experienced H.A.T. instructors is recommended for all units planning to have High Adventure activities. It provides an excellent foundation for trek leadership, including:
  - a. Planning and organizing treks afoot and afloat.
  - b. Information on lightweight foods and equipment.
  - c. Practical wilderness conservation, trail customs, and courtesies.
  - d. Information on the permit systems of public land management organizations.
  - e. Health, safety, and trek leadership.
  - f. Information on local trails and the Colorado River.

## Training Hikes or Backpacks

The basic H.A.T. Leadership Training consists of three sessions: one week-day evening, one Saturday, and one weekend practical training at a Council camp. The schedules and times may be obtained by calling Council Headquarters.

The H.A.T. Specialist course consists of a series of sessions on specific high adventure topics. The course session devoted to desert backpacking provides a full weekend of discussion and another weekend of backpacking in the desert. This course is highly recommended for those interested in more comprehensive information about desert camping and backpacking.

Before a unit attempts a major desert backpack for a High Adventure Award, it is recommended that some short hikes or backpacks be completed. This applies to a unit going out for the first time or to a unit which has new backpackers as members. A "shake-down" outing is always helpful.

Details of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park hikes described below can be found in various trail guides. Be sure to use maps and follow the trail guides closely. The following are excellent for shakedown hikes:

### 1. Borrego Springs to Sheep Canyon

This is a moderate (soft sand much of the way), 10 mile round trip with an overnight to a canyon area that nearly always has running water. There are palms in the canyon with small waterfalls farther up into Sheep Canyon itself. The canyon splits into two forks. The south fork is interesting but a more strenuous climb. The main (north) canyon contains most of the waterfalls. Start from Horseman's Camp just north of Borrego Springs—check with the ranger to make sure cars may be left in the parking lot. Hike the road, following the signs all the way to primitive camp sites. Returning the next day, the route can be varied by going farther east to the north end of the Lower Willows and walking down the creek to where it intersects the road. Then the road can be followed back to Horseman's Camp.

### 2. Culp Valley Campground to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Headquarters

This trek can be a day hike or an overnight with a backpack. Pick up the former California Riding and Hiking Trail 0.2 miles north of the Campsite, going west on the trail, north of the lookout point indicated on the map. Note that this trail is not maintained and is difficult to follow for the first mile. The trail slowly makes its way down the mountains, eventually coming out on highway S22. Walk the highway for about one mile until you can see the park headquarters. Hike the rest of the way cross-country. At the headquarters, take time to follow the well marked nature trail and also view the excellent slide show on the desert seasons, as well as the other exhibits. This hike is about seven miles long.

### 3. Blair Valley to Indian Pictographs

For a flat, five mile hike, follow the dirt road that skirts the northern edge of Blair Valley, heading east along a rocky ridge. The road turns to the south, then east, eventually ending at a park description of the pictographs. A short hike (one mile) up the trail will bring you to the pictographs. Return, follow-



## High Adventure Award Requirements

ing the branch of the road that heads northwest, east of the rocky ridge. It will continue beyond a pass made for the old Butterfield Stage Line. Going south over that pass will place you near the camp sites in Blair Valley. An interesting side trip is to go right when the road branches at the south end of Blair Valley and follow the trail to the remains of a homesteader's house.

### 4. Bow Willow to Rockhouse

Hike south from the Bow Willow Campground, following the trail to the Rock House. From there, continue to circle NNE over a low pass eventually coming to Bow Willow wash. A favorite camp spot is near a dependable spring (stay 200 feet away) about one mile up wash (west). Follow the wash to the east and it will bring you back into the campsite. This is about a 7 1/2 mile hike. Much of this hike is in soft sand, so allow extra time to accommodate a slower pace and extra breaks.

### HIGH ADVENTURE AWARDS

Trek Aid No. 100, High Adventure Awards, lists many requirements for High Adventure Awards. The general requirements are listed below followed by requirements specific to individual awards which may be earned in the desert.

#### General Requirements

1. **Changes or Exceptions:** Changes, exceptions, modifications or waivers of any High Adventure Requirements shall be made only in advance of the outing and in writing by the High Adventure Team of the Council sponsoring the Award. They shall not be made by any other person, including Council employees and volunteers or professional Scouters.
2. **Award Must Be Earned:** Awards shall not be given as "kudos", courtesy gifts, "consolations", etc. to any group or person who has not completed all of the requirements for the Award, including these General Requirements.
3. **Recipients Must Be Registered Members of the Boy Scouts of America:** Only currently registered members of the Boy Scouts of America are eligible to receive High Adventure Awards. They shall not be made available to persons not so registered.
4. **Scheduled Outing:** Awards may be earned only on scheduled outings of registered Units, a District, or a Council.
5. **One Trip, One Award:** Only one Award may be earned for one outing unless otherwise stated in writing in the Award Requirements. Example: The Desert Pacific Council "High Sierra Indicator Segments" are designator segments for use with other Awards, and the Great Western Council "14,495 Club" Mt. Whitney climb may be earned as part of a long-term backpack.

6. **B.S.A. Tour Permit Required:** A Local Tour Permit, B.S.A. Form 4426, issued by the local Council, is required if the distance is less than 500 miles and the tour is within the United States. A National Tour Permit, B.S.A. Form 4419, issued by the Western Region, is required if the tour is 500 miles or more or if the tour is in a foreign country. Both Tour Permit forms are submitted to the local Council, and National Tour Permits should be submitted in duplicate a month or more in advance. The Desert Pacific Council has been authorized to issue Local Tour Permits for limited travel in Baja California.

7. **Other Permit Required:** Where other permits are required they must be obtained for the tour to be eligible for High Adventure Awards. These are: Wilderness, Dispersed Area, Use, Primitive Area, National Park, Camping, Fire, State Park, etc. See the current editions of applicable publications.

8. **Requirements for Adult Leaders with High Adventure Training:** For all High Adventure Awards earned there shall be at least one adult leader with the group who has successfully completed the High Adventure Leadership or the High Adventure Backpack Leader Training and holds a currently valid HAT card.

9. **Carry All Equipment, Food, and Water:** Backpackers, cyclists, skiers, and snowshoers shall carry all of their equipment and food plus their share of the group equipment. The use of any type of mechanized vehicle or pack or riding animals automatically disqualifies all users. For river trips all personal food and equipment plus their share of group equipment shall be carried in the user's craft. Any person who rides in, whose food or equipment is carried by or whose craft is towed by power craft is automatically disqualified. No drops or deliveries of food, equipment, or water are permitted unless specifically authorized in advance in writing by the High Adventure Team. In some cases, particularly backpacking treks over 8 days, cycle trips over 5 days, and some 3-day desert backpacks, permission may be obtained in advance for food or water drops.

10. **Scheduled Backpack Time:** Scheduled backpack time is defined as that time actually backpacking on the primary trail. It does not include side trips, day hikes, fishing, mountain climbing, etc. Scheduled backpack time is used in some High Adventure Backpacking Awards as a more equitable method of determining qualifying distance in the mountains and in rough terrain. The general formula is: 2 miles per hour plus 1 hour for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain. Example: A 15-mile backpack equals 7 1/2 hours of Scheduled Backpack Time. If the trek also climbed from 9,000 to 10,000 feet, an altitude gain allowance of 1 hour would be added, making it 8 1/2 hours Scheduled Backpack Time.



11. Familiarity with Trek Aids and Hike Aids: Adults and youth leaders should be familiar with Desert Pacific Council Trek Aids 2, 3, 5, 6, and 100, and with Los Angeles Area Council Hike Aids. For cycling, there should be familiarity with the Orange County Council Bike Aid.

12. High Adventure Award Form: The High Adventure Award Form of the Desert Pacific Council, B.S.A., must be completed, including the names of those qualifying for the Award on the reverse side, before submission to the Council. No High Adventure Awards shall be sold without a complete and correct High Adventure Form, including National Awards and those from other councils.

## Desert Trek Awards



### DESERT BACKPACK (Desert Pacific Council)

1. The backpack must be made in the Mojave or Colorado Desert of the southwest U. S.
2. Complete an overnight backpack of 7 1/2 hours scheduled backpack time in 2 consecutive days, camping at least 1 1/2 hours scheduled backpack time from both the trailhead and pick-up point.
3. The backpack must be in an arid desert defined as "an area of low annual rainfall, high evaporation rate, scarcity of water, wide range of temperature and sparse vegetation". This does not include the chaparral ecology. It ranges from sandy flat lands to jagged, steep mountains. The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the Joshua Tree National Park are excellent examples of desert parklands.
4. Each person shall, as part of a group project, complete one hour of conservation work to improve the trail, campsite, or the general area either on or within 30 days of the backpack. NOTE: Trail work, except clean-up, must be authorized in advance by an area ranger.

### DE ANZA TRAIL (California Inland Empire Council)



1. Complete one or more backpacks:
  - a. Between the first crossing of Coyote Creek north of Borrego Springs to the location of a former corral over a mile north of the top of climb, north of the Turkey Tracks, camping for the night at the Middle Willows. Backpack may be made in either direction.or
  - b. Make two backpacks on separate weekends:
    - (1) From the first crossing of Coyote Creek north of Borrego Springs to Middle Willows, camping for the night at Middle Willows and returning to Borrego Springs.
    - (2) From the former corral over a mile north of the climb, north of the Turkey Tracks, to the Middle Willows, camping there for the night and returning to the former corral.

2. Chemical stoves shall be used. Ground fires and fuel gathering are strictly prohibited in the Anza-Borrego Desert State park.

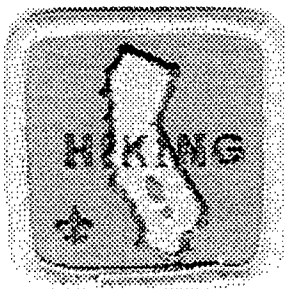
**HIKE IN A NATIONAL PARK OR NATIONAL MONUMENT (LA Area Council)**

1. Make an overnight backpack of at least 7 hours scheduled backpack time, camping in a primitive camp in the backcountry.
2. The campsite and over half of the backpack must be in a National Park or National Monument.

NOTE: The nearest National Park or Monument for desert backpacking is Joshua Tree National Park in Riverside County.

**HIKE IN A STATE PARK OR COUNTY PARK (LA Area Council)**

1. Make an overnight backpack of at least 7 hours scheduled backpack time, camping in a primitive or trail camp in the backcountry.
2. The campsite and over 1/2 of the backpack must be in a State Park or County Park. The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is an excellent area for earning this award.



**U.S. MORMON BATTALION TRAIL (Desert Pacific Council) (Reference: Trek Aid 107, "US Mormon Battalion Trail")**

1. History of the Mormon Battalion Trail
  - a. Read a History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War (see Bibliography in Trek Aid 107).
  - b. Discuss with Scoutmaster, Advisor, or with a Counselor appointed by Scoutmaster, the history emphasizing:
    - (1) What was the Mormon Battalion and what was its dual mission?
    - (2) What was the approximate size of the Mormon Battalion at departure from Ft. Leavenworth, departure from Santa Fe, and arrival at San Diego?
    - (3) Recruitment of the Battalion.
    - (4) Crossing of both Pawnee Forks and Colorado Rivers.
    - (5) Forced marches under Colonel Smith.
    - (6) The "Battle of the Bulls".
    - (7) Tucson.
    - (8) Box Canyon.
    - (9) Hardships crossing the desert.
    - (10) Some of the daily distances covered and the length of time on the march.



2. Visits to Memorials and Museums

- a. Visit a memorial dedicated to the Mormon Battalion.

- b. Visit a museum that displays artifacts of that era.

NOTE: In San Diego visit two of the following in "Old Town".

- (1) The Mormon Battalion Memorial in Presidio Park.
- (2) The Mormon Battalion Visitor's Center, 3510 San Juan Street.
- (3) The Hazard Museum in the Sealy Stables.

### 3. Rations of the Battalion

- a. Describe the daily ration on the trail.
- b. Describe some of their water problems.
- c. The supper on the backpack shall be a typical trail supper of the Battalion both in type and in quantity. Beef jerky may be substituted for dried mule meat and the supper must be cooked over a chemical fuel stove.

Typical Trail Supper: Using dried mule, ox, or sheep meat, prepare creamed meat on biscuits or meat dumplings. Remember, no milk. Or, meat cooked on a stick or boiled with campfire biscuits. Bring boiled turnip, mustard or similar greens.

### 4. Hiking the Battalion Trail

Take an overnight backpack of at least 15 miles or 7 1/2 hours scheduled backpack time in 2 consecutive days along the original trail of the Mormon Battalion. NOTE: In San Diego County the only section of the trail still open is in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Recommend selecting a 15 mile backpack in that section of the trail roughly between the intersection of San Felipe Road (S-2) and Montezuma Road (S-22) southward to Palm Springs (east of the Canebrake Canyon Ranger Station). Keep to the eastward of the private property in Earthquake Valley and further south along S-2. The trail is generally not marked. Camping is permitted almost everywhere in the State Park. Fuel gathering and open fires are strictly prohibited.

CAMELBACK (Desert Pacific Council) (Reference: Trek Aid 103, "Camelback")



- 1. Take a backpack along sections of the California Riding and Hiking Trail (CR&HT) which are in the Cuyamaca State Park, Cleveland National Forest, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Travel on the Pacific Crest Trail does not count toward this award. Feeder trails to the CR&HT may be used for award purposes as long as half of the backpack is actually on the CR&HT.

The backpack shall be:

- a. An overnight backpack of 15 miles or 7 1/2 hours scheduled backpacking time in two consecutive days with the night's camp not closer than 2 hours scheduled backpacking time to the trailhead or pick-up point.

or

- b. A backpack of 30 miles or 15 hours scheduled backpacking time in not less than three consecutive days with no night's camp closer than 2 hours scheduled backpacking time to the trailhead or pick-up point.

2. Each participant, as part of a group project, must complete 1 hour of conservation work to improve the trail, campsite, the general area, or Scout Camp. This conservation project may be completed either on the backpack or within 1 month before or after the backpack, and shall be before the receiving of the award. NOTE: Trail work, except clean up, must be authorized in advance by the Area Ranger, the Trail Foreman, or by the Council High Adventure Team.

3. See the Trek Aid 103 for the award combinations.

#### CROSS COUNTRY BACKPACK (LA Area Council)



1. Plan a trip of 25 or more backpacking hours—anywhere in the mountains, desert, coast, or any combination of these.
2. At least 12 of these backpack hours shall be cross country where trails do not exist.
3. Minimum time on the trail—6 days and five nights.
4. Minimum age of youth—12 years.
5. Each participant must show evidence of completing a previous Long Term Trek of 25 hours—50 miles or more.
6. Each participant must have earned the following Merit Badges or have the equivalent knowledge: Camping, Cooking, Hiking, First Aid, Swimming.
7. Each participant must complete three preparation hikes within the last four months prior to the backpack.
8. Each participant must complete a one hour conservation project prior to the trip, after the trip, or during the trip prior to receiving the award.

#### HISTORIC TRAILS (National Council)



1. Locate an historic trail and study the information related to the site. The De Anza Trail or the Mormon Battalion Trail would qualify, but only one award for one trip may be earned.
2. Hike or camp two consecutive days and one night along the trail or at a historical site (as near as possible).
3. The unit must plan and participate in a historical activity by doing one of the following:
  - a. Cooperate with an adult group such as a historical society to restore and mark all or part of the trail site.

- b. Cooperate with an adult group such as an historical society to plan and stage an historical pageant or other public event. Such event shall be large enough to merit coverage by local press. Attach clippings to the High Adventure Award form.

There are many other general awards available from other councils that could be applied to desert backpacking treks. See *HIGH ADVENTURE AWARDS FOR SCOUTS AND EXPLORERS* published by the Orange County Council High Adventure Team.

## Backpack Itineraries

In addition to the trails and backpacks listed above, nearly any point-to-point route can be hiked in the desert, limited only by safety considerations. The following are additional suggested backpack routes, mostly cross-country. Use guidebooks and maps to carefully find and plan the route, itinerary, and logistics. Provide trek information to leaders, at-home contacts, and to Park rangers before departing:

### Joshua Tree National Park

There are more than 467,000 acres of wilderness areas within the National Park that can be hiked, but very few watering holes. Cross-country hikes are generally not recommended unless a guide is available who knows the terrain well. Many potential routes traverse rugged terrain which require the use of technical climbing gear and/or extended detours.

Besides the various scenic, historic, and geologic nature trails, there are 32 miles of the California Riding & Hiking Trail that loop around the northern campsites. This trail offers convenient trailheads (easy vehicle shuttle), many scenic vistas, and moderately level hiking. Another popular hiking trail, in the northernmost part of the park, is "Boy Scout Trail" which provides a rugged and remote hiking experience. Nearly all other trails are more suitable for day hikes.

### Anza-Borrego State Park

Because of many crossroads and access roads, there are several point-to-point or round trip backpack opportunities in Anza-Borrego. The longer routes may require the use of water caches or dropoff rendezvous, disqualifying them for some High Adventure Awards. Plan logistics carefully. Some of the more popular routes not previously described are:

Culp Valley through Grapevine Canyon to Yaqui Flat  
Pegleg Monument to Rockhouse Canyon (and return)  
Pinyon Wash to Pinyon Mt. road to S2  
Blair Valley to Whale Peak (and return)  
Split mountain through Sandstone Canyon to Agua Caliente (rugged)  
Horseman's Camp to Cougar Canyon or Indian Canyon (and return)  
Cottonwood Spring to Wilson Peak (and return)  
Kane Springs Road to Harper Canyon and Flat (and return)  
Fish Creek Camp to Elephant Knees (and return)  
Indian Gorge to Sombrero Peak to Bow Willow

# Desert Campsites

## Joshua Tree National Park

### Established Campgrounds

The National Park is comprised of both Colorado and Mojave Desert ecosystems, and there are campsites in each area. The lower Colorado Desert area contains the Cottonwood Campground and Visitor Center. Water is available at the campground and there are group campsites that may be reserved. This area is easily reached from I-10.

In the higher Mojave Desert area there are eight campgrounds but there is no water available except at Black Rock Canyon. Water can also be obtained at the three information centers at the north entrances (off of CA Route 62) to the National Park. This area is very popular with rock climbers, making it extremely difficult to obtain an established site. These campsites are:

- a. Black Rock Canyon Campground
- b. Indian Cove Campground
- c. Hidden Valley Campground
- d. Ryan Campground
- e. Sheep Pass Campground (Group camping)
- f. Jumbo Rocks Campground
- g. Belle Campground
- h. White Tank Campground

### Open Camping

Camping is allowed anywhere in the wilderness area which is one mile or more away from roads and established campgrounds (there are a few posted "no camping" or day use only areas), but you must notify Park Service personnel of your plans by registering at Backcountry Registration sites ("B" on the Joshua Tree map). There are many abandoned mine shafts in the Park, especially the northern section. It would be wise to camp far enough away to avoid temptation to explore, even though they are obviously "off-limits".

## Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

### Established Campgrounds

The State Park is made up of a large expanse of Colorado Desert, the eastern edges of the Laguna Mountains, southern range of the Santa Rosa Mountains, and various small desert mountain ranges. Unrestricted camping is allowed in the majority of the park, although there are some closures in the summer time for Big Horn Sheep protection, and there are restrictions around designated campgrounds.

There are five organized campgrounds within park boundaries, all of which have piped water available:

- a. Borrego Palm Canyon Campground—State Park
- b. Tamarisk Grove Campground—State Park
- c. Bow Willow Campground—State Park
- d. Vallecito Stage Station (Youth area available)—County Park
- e. Agua Caliente—County Park

There are also various designated primitive campgrounds located throughout the park. These campgrounds offer an excellent desert camping experience. They have cleared, level camp sites but usually no water. Various springs and creeks exist within the State Park, but they may not always be flowing. It is best to check with area rangers about these water sources before you leave on a trek. Water from all these sources should be purified unless told otherwise by a Park Ranger. The established primitive sites are:

- a. Dos Cabezas
- b. Culp Valley
- c. Mountain Palm Springs
- d. Fish Creek
- e. Arroyo Salada
- f. Sheep Canyon
- g. Little Pass (Blair Valley)
- h. Yaqui Pass
- j. Yaqui Well
- k. Holmes (ORV area)

#### Open Camping

A unique joy of camping in Anza-Borrego State Park is that camping is not restricted to established campgrounds, which are all accessible by passenger vehicle and therefore often busy. The following areas are possible camp sites which provide interesting places to camp, or are convenient layover points on cross-country hikes:

Sandstone Canyon (slot canyon), Split Mountain (wind caves), Font's Point (vista), Pinyon Mountain (vista), Domelands (fossils), Carrizo Gorge (vista), Indian Gorge (palm oasis), Smugglers Canyon (minerals), Grapevine Canyon (water hole), Arroyo Seco Del Diablo (mud caves), Coyote Canyon (perennial stream), Butler/Rockhouse Canyon (springs), Calcite Canyon (minerals), Cougar Canyon (water falls/pools).

#### Other Desert Areas

There are many other desert areas in the Southwest and Mexico that are open to desert treks. Check with the local responsible public agency for availability of camping and water in their areas. Some of the more interesting, among many others:

Salton Sea, Colorado River corridor, Yuha Desert, Calico Mountains, Death Valley, Mitchell Caverns, East Mojave National Scenic Area, Red Rock Canyon (Nevada), Red Rock Canyon (Ridgecrest), Pinnacles National Landmark.

## Trail Guides & Other References

### DESERT TRAIL GUIDES

*The Anza-Borrego Desert Region*, Lowell & Diana Lindsay, 1985, Wilderness Press

*Day Hiker's Guide to Southern California (II)*, John McKinney, 1989, Olympus Press

*Afoot & Afield in San Diego County*, Jerry Schad, 1992, Wilderness Press

*Discover San Diego*, Leander & Rosalie Peik, 15th edition, 1989, Peik's Enterprises

*A Guidebook to the Mojave Desert of California*, Russ Leadabrand, 1966, Ward Ritchie Press

*Exploring Joshua Tree*, Roger Mitchell, 1964, La Siesta Press

*Anza-Borrego Desert Guide Book*, Horace Parker, 1979 (Rev. Ed.), Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association

### GENERAL INFORMATION

*Adventuring in the California Desert*, Lynne Foster, 1987, Sierra Club

*Complete Book of Outdoor Survival*, J. Wayne Fears, 1986, Outdoor Life Books

*Backpacking One Step at a Time*, Harvey Manning, 1980, Vintage Books

*Group Backpacking--A Leader's Manual*, Chuck Gormley, 1979, Groupwork Today, Inc.

*Let's go Backpacking*, Thomas H. Griffin, 1972, Sentinel Publications

### MAPS, OTHER THAN USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

Cleveland National Forest, US Forest Service

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

Joshua Tree National Park, National Park Service