

Our Local Guide to Visiting Joshua Tree National Park!

Many of our visiting guests plan a visit to the world-famous Joshua Tree National Park. The surreal landscapes, cotton candy skies, diverse wildlife, and “unworldly” rock formations and plant life are recognized around the globe in film and print. Joshua Tree has been an major film and television location since the earliest days of Hollywood. American Old Western and Sci-Fi productions are the most common types of movies filmed here. It is easy to understand why this park is a hugely popular natural attraction.



The park's premier natural “attractions,” which are forests of giant branching yuccas known as Joshua trees, massive rock formations, fan palm oases, and seasonal gardens of cholla and ocotillo, can be enjoyed on a half-day car tour that includes both “high” and “low” desert zones.

Unless you are an experienced, avid hiker, most of your time will be spent in your car. The park has paved roads, many that lead to viewpoints and trailheads. The National Park has also installed roadside interpretive exhibits in areas that have pull-outs and parking areas. These exhibits offer insights into the region's desert ecology, wildlife, and the human history.

Joshua Tree National Park is a year-round destination with four distinct seasons. Always come prepared for the unexpected. Weather in the Joshua Tree area can be fickle!

Spring—March through mid-May—brings delightful weather, with warm sunny days and cool nights, as well as carpets of wildflowers. It's the most popular time of year in the park.

The summer months—mid-May through September—are **HOT**. Highs are in the 100s Fahrenheit. Heatstroke is a serious risk that happens to even experienced hikers in the desert. If you choose to visit, we recommend that you head out **very** early! Please use caution during this time of year and limit walking, avoid mid-day hikes, and stay hydrated. Do your hiking and climbing extremely *early* or very *late*. During the heat of the day, you can take a drive or relax somewhere in the shade. Better yet, enjoy the park from your car, and step out for brief walks.

October is another delightful time in the park. Brilliant warm days that can last into November, though the weather generally turns chilly as November progresses.

The coolest months, December through February, are not usually *that* cold. Expect highs in the mid-60s and lows in the 40s, with occasional rain and oftentimes windy conditions. Come prepared with warm jackets, hats, and gloves, and you can enjoy everything the park has to offer. Snow is rare, and it usually melts quickly.

Prepare for the trip!

“The Park” is a massive desert. It's over 790,000 sq. acres. Remember that it is a desert. And like most deserts, it can be hostile and unforgiving. In the Park there is:

- No water
- No services: Joshua Tree National Park has no stores, gas stations, or food service once you're inside the park. Come prepared with everything you need and some extras in case you encounter an emergency.
- No Food or Concessions
- **No cell phone reception!** Don't count on making phone calls, using Google or Apple Maps, or posting live pictures to social media while in Joshua Tree. Mobile phone reception is nonexistent in most of the park. You might get a weak signal in a few areas. But no phones will give everyone a chance to put their phones aside and enjoy the trip! Tip: it's always a smart idea to notify a friend or loved one not traveling with you on the day that you plan to be at the park.

What to Bring with You:

We use this basic checklist as a starting point for our trips to Joshua Tree National Park. Obviously, if we're camping, rock climbing, bicycling, etc., this list expands, and winter requires extra clothing.

- Spring, Summer and Fall: Shorts
- Winter: Warm clothing, jacket, pants
- Water—more water than you think! (Read our special section on water, below)
- Food—you'll get hungry so pack lots of food! Also bring snack foods (trail bars, protein bars, nuts, etc.).
- Wide brimmed sun hat and sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Sturdy footwear (leave your flip-flops/sandals at the house!)
- Daypack
- Travel size first aid kit
- Hand purifier and/or pre-moistened hand wipes
- A roll of bath toilet tissue (restrooms are supplied, but they can run out in between maintenance)
- Binoculars (optional)

Pack Water! Lots and lots of water!

You lose moisture from your body in the dry desert air no matter what the temperature is or how active you are, which is why dehydration is a year-round concern in the desert. The solution is simple, of course—carry and drink plenty of water. Drink regularly, even if you're not thirsty. You'll need at least a gallon per person per day—twice that if you plan to long hikes, or climbs. Carry water with you whenever you leave the car. Remember, water is available only at the ranger stations, so stock up before you venture into the heart of the park.

How much time do you need to spend in Joshua Tree National Park?

You can choose how much time you want to spend at the park:

- A. **A Taste of Joshua Tree:** Experience a portion of the park and make periodic stops at attractions; take short hikes on easy trails. Plan to spend about 3 hours at the park minimum.
- B. **Overview Tour:** Drive through the entire park from one end to the other, with periodic stops. Plan to spend approximately 6 hours driving through, with periodic stops, short walks and lunch.
- C. **Immersive:** Stop at most attractions, and also choose one or two hiking trails for an immersive experience. Plan to spend the entire day.

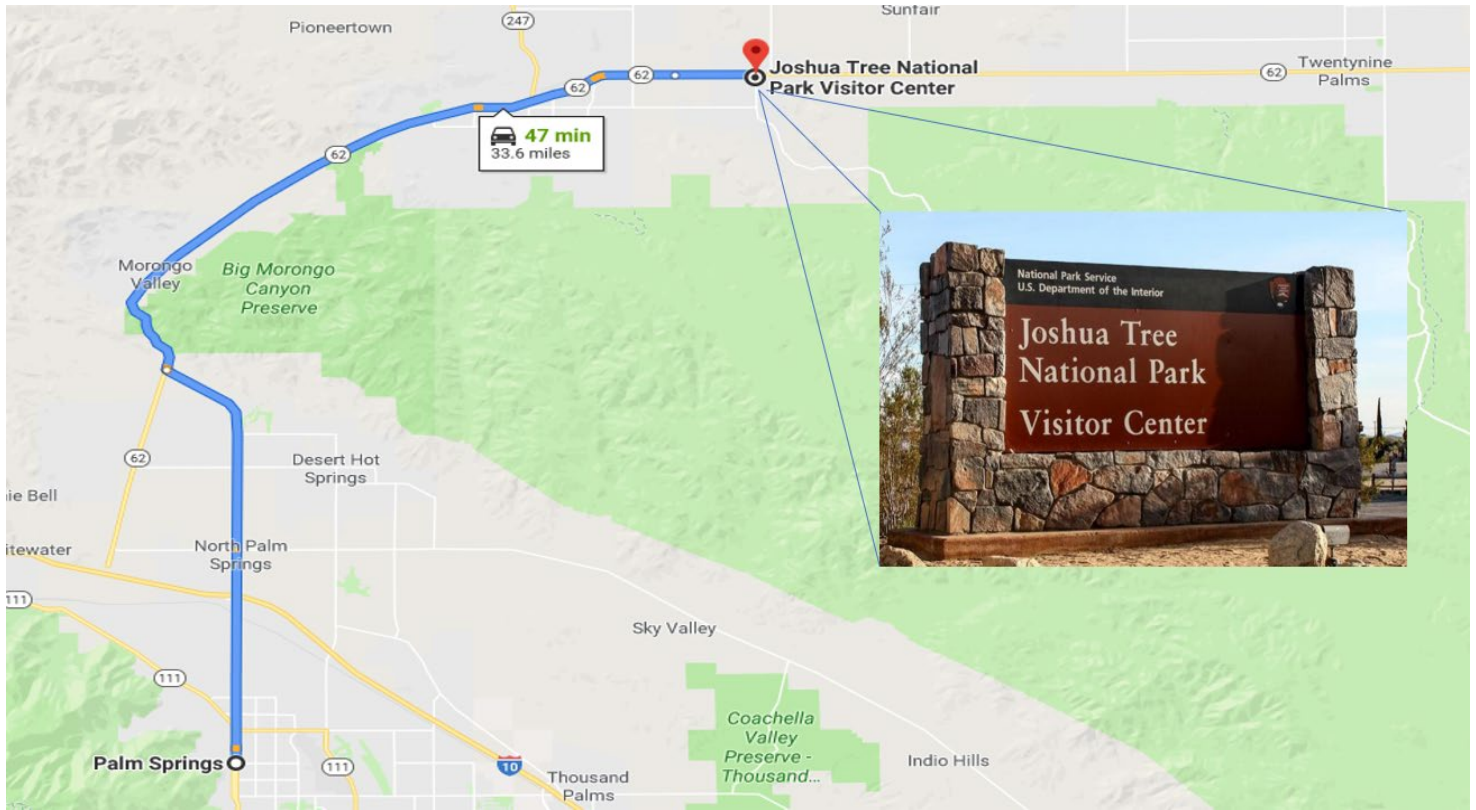
In addition to the durations listed above, allow about 45 minutes to get to Joshua tree from the house, and another 45 minutes to return back to Palm Springs.

Getting to Joshua Tree

You will need your own car or a rental car to get to the park. Due to its enormous size, Joshua Tree has a couple of entrances and exits that are miles apart. For a day trip from Palm Springs, we recommend that you begin your journey at the **Joshua Tree Visitor Center** (see detailed map next page). Following is the address to the Visitor Center:

Joshua Tree National Park Visitors Center
6554 Park Blvd, Joshua Tree, CA
Telephone: (760) 366-1855

1. From Palm Springs, drive west on North Indian Canyon Drive for 13 miles
2. Turn right onto CA-62 E road and drive about 20 miles
3. Turn right onto Park Blvd. The Visitor's Center is on your right (look for the sign shown below)



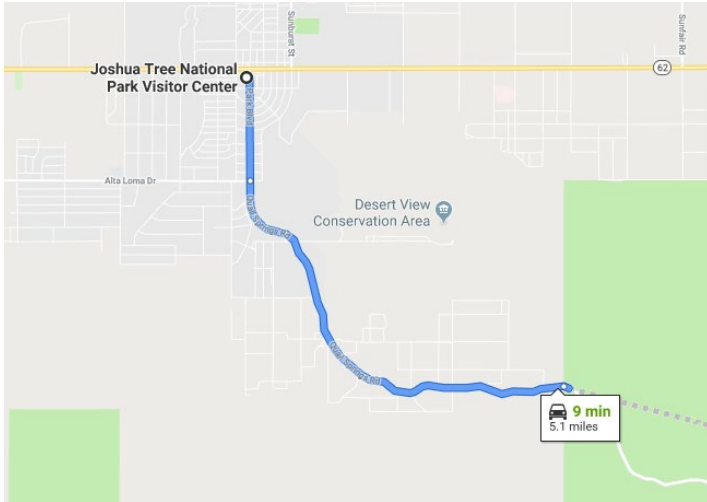
The Visitor's Center has a wealth of information. It's staffed by official US National Park Rangers that can answer your specific questions, and provide you with information that pertains to the day you are visiting. They are up to date on current travel conditions and activities.

1. Purchase a pass to enter the Park. Expect to pay about \$30 for a vehicle pass. (Fee subject to change)
2. Advise a ranger that you might visit **Keys View**, and inquire on the weather conditions. Specifically, you'll want to ask if the view is clear or hazy.
3. Inquire with the Park Rangers about any other events, exhibits or activities that might be occurring on your day.
4. Get an official map
5. Visit the restrooms!

Now it's time to drive into the Park!

After you have stopped off at the Visitor Center and purchased your day pass, it's time to enter the Park:

- Leave the parking lot and drive south on Park Blvd.
- Continue onto Quail Springs Road.
- Arrive at the Entrance and follow the signs to stop at the Ranger Guard Station

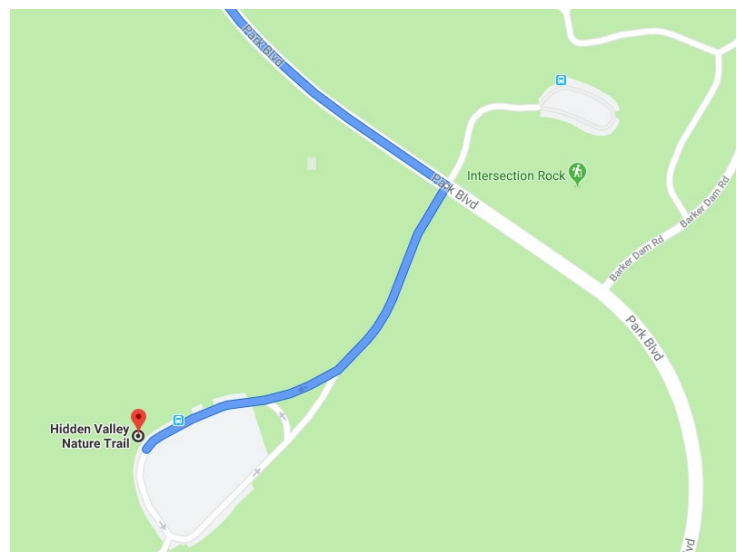


After entering the Park, continue driving on Park Blvd for about 9 miles. At this point you'll start to have some options. Following are a few attractions to get started and on your way to explore the vast park!

Hidden Valley Nature Trail



Hidden Valley is the Park's most popular trail and scenic attraction. It's a well-traveled 1-mile loop trail, easy hike, flat and interesting. It is a Valley surrounded by huge rocks that you "enter" - a pleasant place to walk and take pictures. If you walk or drive just past the main parking area, you'll see a day-use picnic area (with more parking) and from there you can walk to the outer edge of Hidden Valley where there are some fascinating rock formations and even petroglyphs (prehistoric rock carvings).



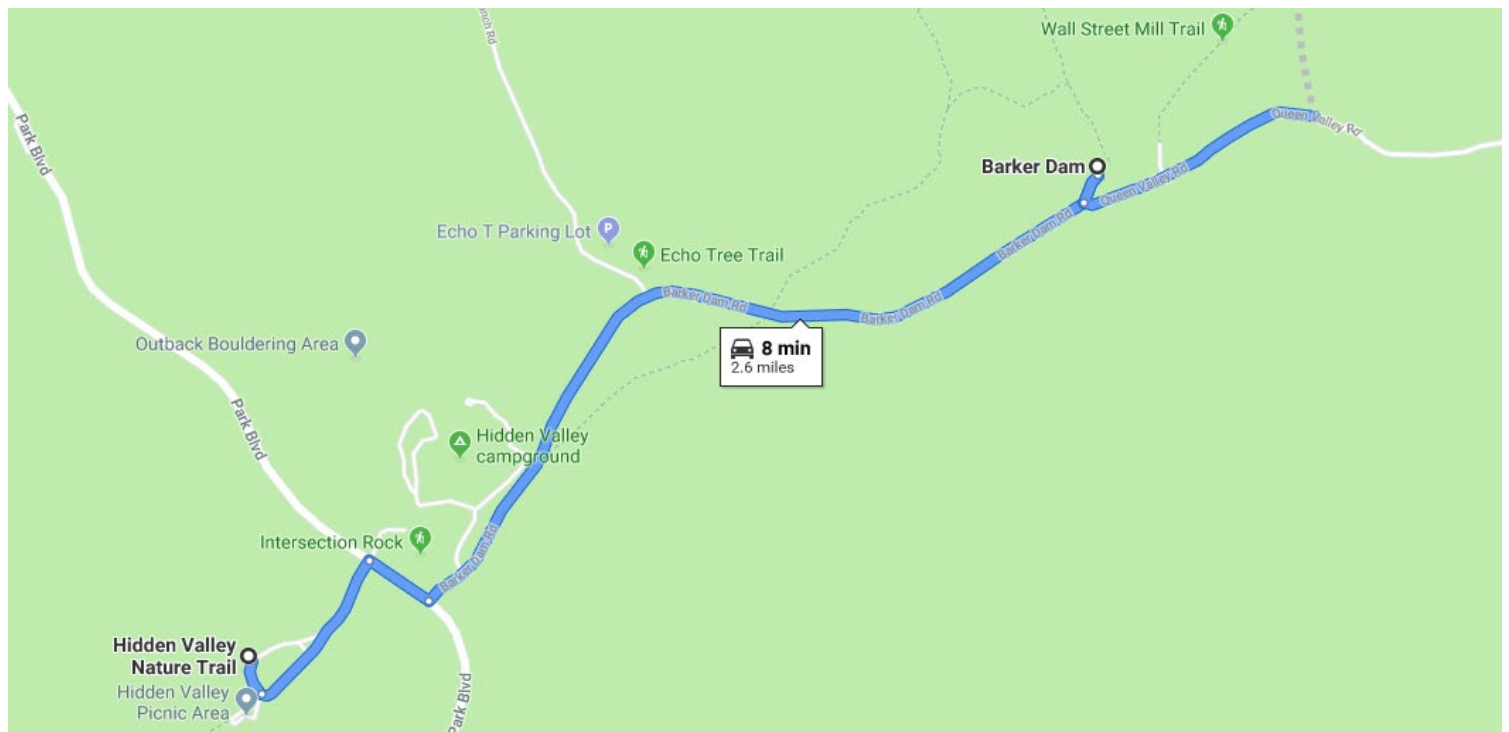
After Visiting Hidden Valley, check out **Barker Dam**, or the **Wall Street Mill Trail**, which are both a short drive away and share the same parking lot.



From the Hidden Valley parking area, turn right onto Park Blvd and then turn left onto Barker Dam Road. Drive about 1.5 miles and turn left onto Queen Valley Rd.

The Barker Dam trail is a 1.3-mile loop

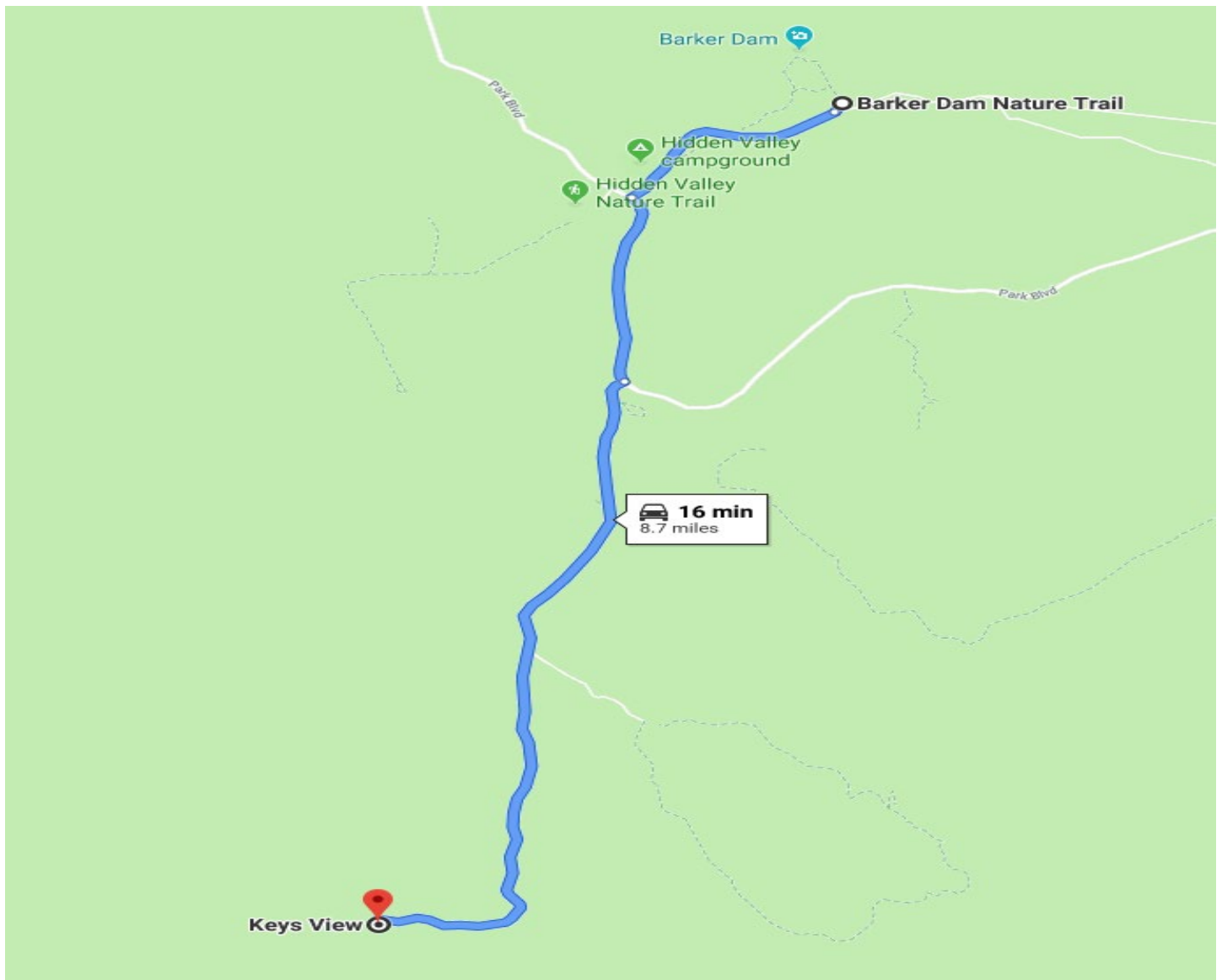
After a summer rainstorm or a rainy winter fills the basin behind it, it's a very special—and unlikely—place: a lake in the middle of a bone-dry desert. Birds love it. There is a good chance you will see wildlife on this hike.



Joshua Tree is full of mines from a century of early settlers in California looking to get rich.

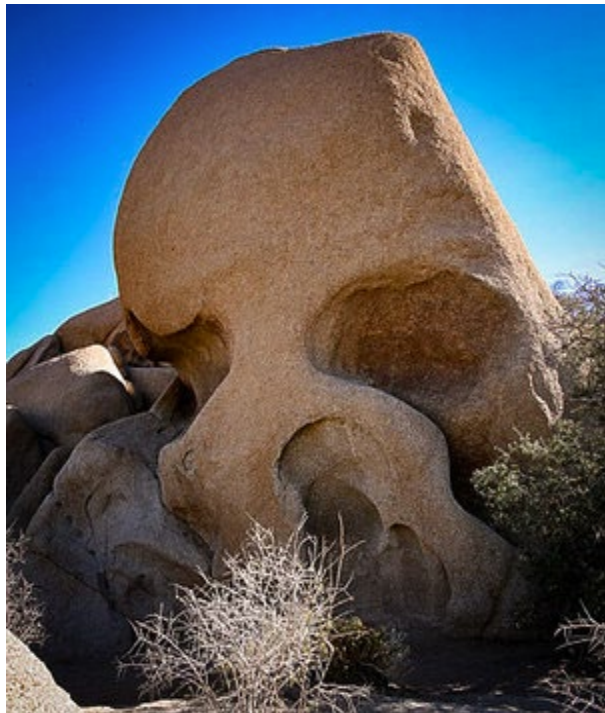
While Wall Street Mill is just one of the many, it is one of our favorites in the park. This gold ore crushing mill was one of the last remaining mills in the park, with operations up until the 1950s. Accessed from the same parking lot as the incredibly popular Barker Dam Trail. While this hike is not on the map you get when entering the park, it is accessed from the same parking lot as Barker Dam and has a plaque and signs to guide you along the well-maintained path.

Next, if the Ranger advised that the weather was clear, consider a jaunt up to **Keys View**.

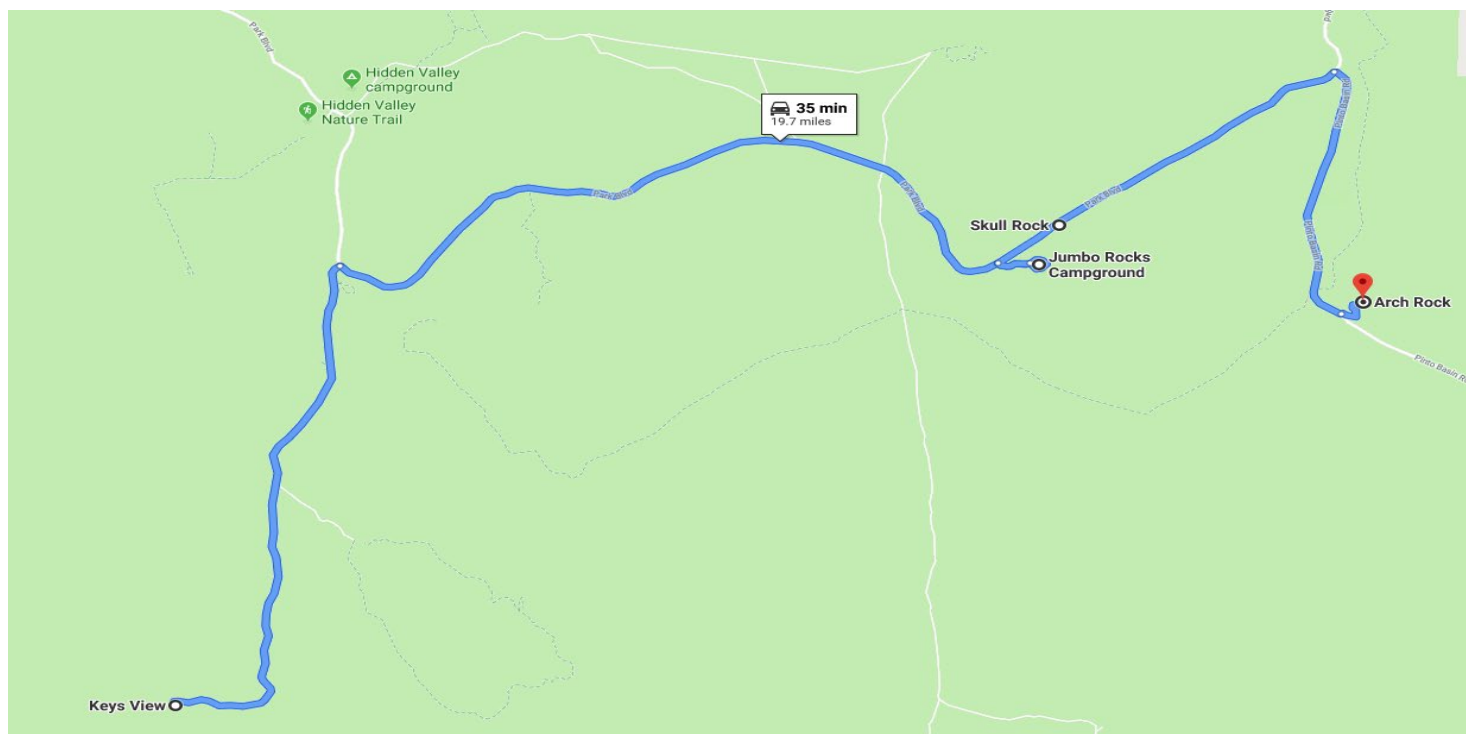


Look closely and you can you see Palm Springs!

After **Keys View** drive back down and then see **Jumbo Rocks**, the naturally shaped (creepy!) **Skull Rock** and **Arch Rock**!



Follow the road back to Park Blvd and turn right. Drive about 7 miles on Park Blvd. and **Jumbo Rocks** is the first attraction. Afterwards, continue on Park Blvd a ½ mile to **Skull Rock**. Arch Rock is another 6 miles away. Continue on **Park Blvd** until you reach **Pinto Basin Rd**. Then turn right and follow the signs to White Tank Campground Rd.

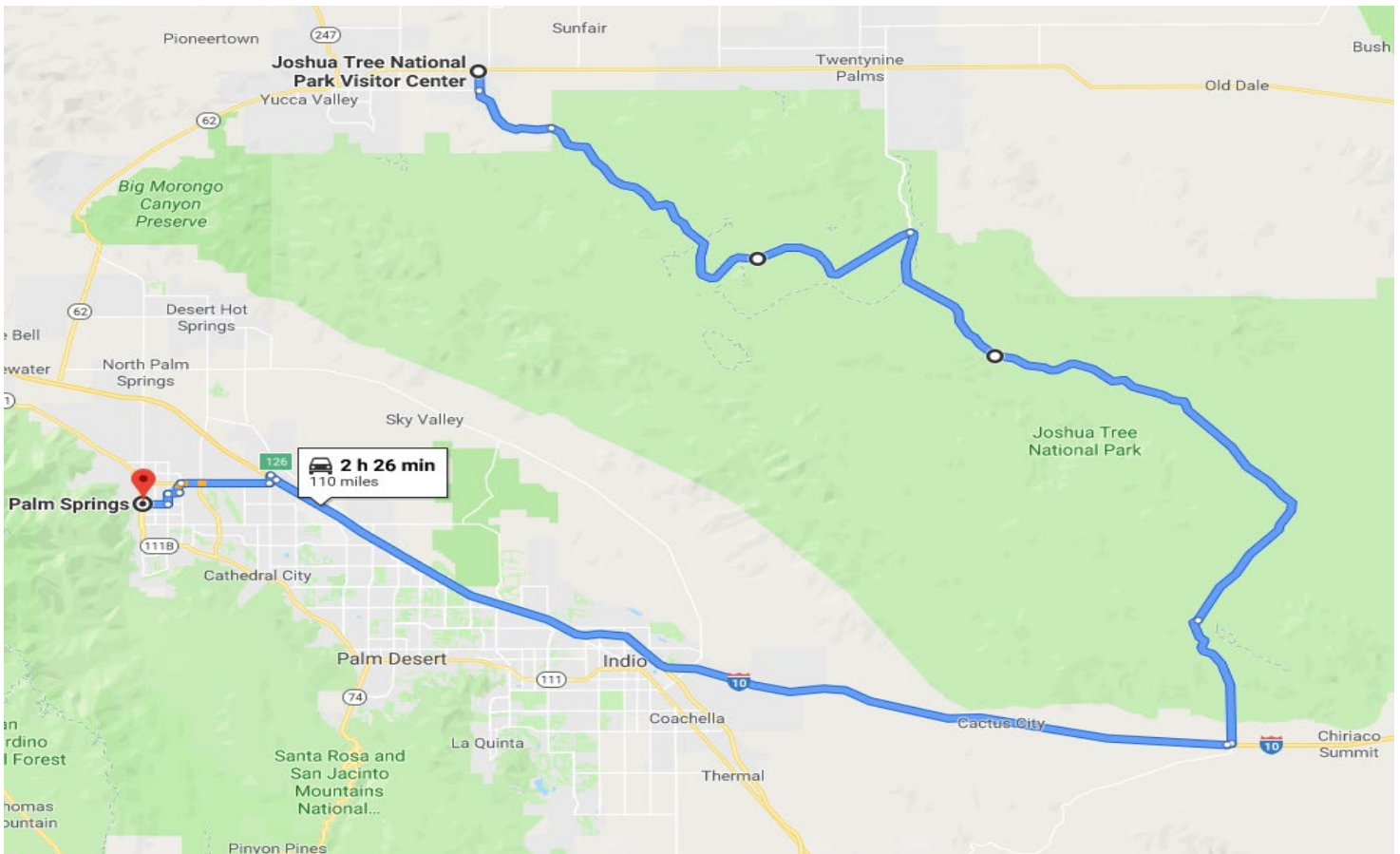


The preceding pages will help you get started exploring the vast Park! Check out a full visitor's map, available at the Park Entrance and Visitor Center to explore and discover more sights of your choosing. The choices are endless!

Part of your decision is to decide to venture throughout the park and return the way you came in, or drive the entire length of the Park. If you decide to venture all the way through, the main road is 73 miles long and takes two hours nonstop to drive it straight through. If you decide to drive all the way through, you'll exit via Cottonwood, and then take the Interstate 10 Freeway westbound to go back to Palm Springs!

Full drive through directions:

1. Drive on Park Blvd southbound
2. Take Pinto Basin Road southbound (30 miles)
3. Take Cottonwood Springs Road southbound (7 miles)
4. Drive on Interstate 10 eastbound to Palm Springs (52 miles)



Shown above is a map of the full map of Joshua Tree from the Visitor Center, through the park's south exit, and back to Palm Springs.

Have a safe and pleasant time exploring Joshua Tree! - Michael and Scott