

Joshua Tree:

Image and Print Workshop Guide

Tips on travel, packing, gear, general itinerary and more.

Welcome

Welcome to the 2023 Joshua Tree Photography and platinum palladium printing experience lead by Don Messec with generous assistance by Jim Hamstra.

Joshua Tree Area

This is definitely desert, in fact depending on altitude it is many deserts. Besides the area's famously interesting rock formations there is a surprising and diverse amount of life. If you are not familiar with deserts you will be amazed with is so much to see and appreciate. If we are treated to a bloom, there is nothing like it. The park itself covers over 1238 square miles and 5000 feet of elevations.



Cholla Garden

Things are changing. Joshua Tree is seeing disruption with climate change. Deserts are surprisingly resilient, but deserts are also defined by extremes. As resilient as deserts are they are simultaneously delicate, and change is

Travel Tips



happening. This is a favorite place for me, so I am troubled by this. As important as it is for me to treat this place artistically it is also important to treat it as threatened and document its changes.

Where to end up

Twentynine Palms

Located on Twentynine Palms Highway on the North side of Joshua Tree National Park, the desert town of Twentynine Palms is subject matter unto itself. Still it is the most convenient place to find lodging near the park's north entrance which we will use daily. Twentynine Palms is also where I am staying and set up to make prints during the hottest parts of the day. Lodging runs a gamut from typical modern motels to a taste of old Route 66 style roadside stops. There are also B&Bs as well as homes to rent through online sites. I would consider anything calling itself a resort as maybe meaning it has a pool and/or restaurant.

Getting here

You cannot fly directly into Twentynine Palms unless you are a US Marine. There are no civilian airports. My recommendations, if you are not driving, is to use either the airports in Las Vegas or Palm Springs. You can easily arrange for a rental car and you won't need 4-wheel drive. With the proliferation of GPS mapping devices and apps I no longer think it helpful for me to suggest routes. However, if you are coming from I-10 you can cross over through the park. Check your mapping to see if that makes sense for you.

Local Transportation

Plan on having a car. COVID make this a necessity, and it offers an advantage to control more your shooting schedule once you are more familiar with the Park, or have special needs or impulses to accommodate which make having a car a real asset.

Use these included lists as a starting point for planning and packing

Packing

Weather can change dramatically but a few things are always true to bring:

- Start by checking the week's forecast the day you are packing
- Comfortable hiking shoes or boots with some ankle support. Though hiking is not essential you will want the heavier material to protect from cactus at times. Hiking is a good way to see more even is only short distances. Rock and trail surface can be uneven.
- Good socks
- Clothing based on layering and comfort. Temperature swings can be great. Even winter weather can show up at higher elevations.

- Sunglasses
- Hat
- If you have any pass good at national parks bring it so you can enter the park without paying the entrance fee. Both Jim and I have passes. Good to have, and can be bought locally
- Sunscreen
- Aspirin (good for sunburn relief)
- Water bottle
- Coffee travel mug (oh, and coffee)



Gear

You won't need much more that you would normally pack for photo trip, but we will be printing, and you will be working new images while at this workshop.

- Camera and lens – mirrorless, DSLR, iPhone, Sony RX, etc
- Film cameras are ok too, but bring digital files for printing
- Take batteries out of cameras for packing as a precaution
- Pack batteries!!
- Tripod well suited for your heaviest set up
- Extra camera cards
- Battery chargers
- Lens wipes, brush and blower
- Laptop with imaging software and power cord - be up to date, not necessarily latest release but most current update to your version. WIFI can be slow in the desert.
- Cell phone, and battery pack for onsite charging can be useful.
- Weather protective gear if you have it. Heavy garbage bag and umbrella could do.

Itinerary

We will be busy, plan on sleeping when you get home.

Sunday Evening, we will gather around 5PM to take Rapid COVID test, meet each other, drinks, and finger food, and intro to workshop.

Monday-Thursday mornings start early, entering the park about 6-6:30 AM to get to photo sites for best morning light. Eat breakfast, pocket extra from the hotel if they offered breakfast. Bring something that will suffice as lunch. Pack fluids, and sunscreen. Wear your good hiking shoes, hat, sunglasses...

After our morning shoot, we will decide whether to stay hunting photos in the Park or head to town to make prints, work on images. Regardless, we will be back in the Park to make use of afternoon and early evening light. Understand that bad weather is an invitation to take great pictures, so plan on being in the elements if we are lucky enough to get some less than perfect beach weather.

Photo objectives

My hope is for everyone to connect to this beautiful area through photography. It is a true privilege to spend time looking with the intensity and

*What we're
doing*

purposefulness of an artist at our world. Each time is an opportunity to grow and expand our sense of all things including ourselves. That can happen in the oddest places but here is a place with high potential to grow. I have seen for myself my understanding and interest in Joshua Tree grow with each visit. We will be spending a great deal of time immersed in what ultimately is a very personal exploration which I hope you will find greatly enhanced by making prints as an integral part of the experience.

Platinum-Palladium printing

We will get to printing images early, with a needed introduction to the process on Sunday. You will have homework every night preparing images to take through the process each subsequent day. Expect to make between 6 and a dozen prints you will take with you. Bring a box to protect your prints getting home with you.



What's Provided

Everything. I bring trays, chemicals, metals, paper, spreaders, contact frame, digital printer, transparency materials, software, exposure unit. If it is needed to make platinum-palladium prints, I bring it. If you are worried I won't have it, don't. But go ahead and email me any way.

What you will want to have

I am a task master with a grin. Even so you might just collapse from lack of sleep if you have to first shoot your images during the day then work them up for digital negatives at night, after dinner. Bring a good selection of already processed digital files to make PtPd digital negatives for printing. When you have simply had enough - lean on these.

Final thoughts

The days are long and the work mentally and emotionally exhausting. Think about your personal needs - how you keep up good spirits, an openness and energy - day pack accordingly. I will have coffee and snacks at the ole homestead, but you should keep somethings with you incase my stuff does not appeal to you.

Any need to contact me during the workshop will need to happen when I am not in the park due to a near complete lack of cellular coverage in the park.

You can choose to set your own shooting schedule if you want to break off on your own any time after Monday. Some of us work better that way or want our travel companion along who needs to be happy, too. I will accommodate you if that is what you decide. Remember to bring a park pass if you have one. If not, for entering the park on your own the entrance fee need only be paid once for the week.

Important contact information

Please put this in your phone:

Don Messec

(505) 780-0920 mobile

Flying Point Homestead (maybe mine and Jim's
lodging)

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