

at Joshua Tree National Park

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“How-To” Navigate with Map & Compass

Information

Date/ Time: Saturday, March 9, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Sunday, March 10, 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Meet at: [Black Rock Nature Center](#) (click on the link for a map to the meeting site)

9800 Black Rock Canyon Road, Yucca Valley, CA

Instructor: Misha Askren, Sierra Club Group Hike Leader

Overview

Do you want the confidence to explore the desert without getting lost, even when you leave the trail? Misha Askren will teach participants how to navigate using a map and compass in this two-day field class. Participants will learn the basics of topography, map reading, using a compass, and the history of navigation during classroom and field exercises on Saturday. On Sunday, participants will put all their skills together in a route-finding adventure in the wilderness of Joshua Tree National Park, going to interesting spots and finding caches. These map and compass skills will allow participants to explore the wilderness and find their way back home. They also can be potentially lifesaving, in the event someone does get lost. No previous experience with compass or topo maps is needed. Participants will provide their own compass. Maps will be provided.

Itinerary

Saturday, March 9, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Black Rock Nature Center

- Lecture on maps
- Field exercises with map and compass.
- Lecture on compasses

Sunday, March 10, 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Hidden Valley Picnic Area

- Putting it all together
- Map & compass adventure in the field
- Lunch break, **bring your own food**

What to Bring to the Course

Required Class Materials – maps will be provided.

- USGS 7.5 topographic map, Indian Cove Quadrangle, North American Datum 1927

- Orienteering compass: **Note:** an orienteering compass has a transparent rectangular base, liquid filled compass housing, orienteering lines inside the dial, and accuracy of 2 degree increment on the compass dial. **The compass MUST have a sighting mirror.** The compass should also have adjustable declination. A Suunto MC-2 compass or a Silva Ranger compass are acceptable for this class.
- Ruler (not metal)
- Pencil (not a mechanical pencil)

Optional Class Materials

- Hiking poles
- Clipboard

The 10 Essentials: Everyday in the Desert

- Day pack
- 3-4 quarts of water
- Hiking boots with traction soles
- Lunch and snacks
- Clothing layers
- Hat
- Sun glasses
- Sunscreen
- Notebook and pencil/pen
- Whistle

Fitness Requirements

Participants must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold. Since the hiking will be off trail, there may be some rock scrambling for a short distance.

Hike Level

Moderate

Guidelines

- You are responsible for your safety.
- Park your car in designated areas only. Parking along the side of the road is dangerous to you and the environment.
- Rattlesnakes are present in the desert. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see them.
- Only you know your limits, please let the instructor or Desert Institute Representative know if you do not want to continue.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.

- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.
- Before leaving the class, check out with the Desert Institute Representative.

Instructor Biography

MISHA ASKREN is an outings leader for the Sierra Club and is an instructor in the Wilderness Travel Course. He leads trips that are “off-trail” in the wilderness in the Sierras, the San Gabriel Mountains and in Joshua Tree.

Suggested Reading

Wilderness Navigation by Bob & Mike Burns – available at the Visitor Centers or [purchase online](#).

* The Desert Institute staff/instructors will attempt to accommodate participant’s needs; however we reserve the right to deny a student participation in the course due to concerns regarding health and safety issues.