

DESERT INSTITUTE
at Joshua Tree National Park Association
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Spring Session
2023

The Art and Culture of Bombay Beach

Information

Date/Time: Feb 11, 2023, 1p-5p

Meeting location: park alongside 2126 2nd St., at the corner of 2nd Street and Avenue G in Bombay Beach (look for the “Bombay Soleil” sign on the upper deck).

If people want to eat lunch before the tour, they can come early and go to the Ski inn upon arrival (cash only). It's the main local watering hole/dive bar that serves food - burgers, sandwiches, etc.

Tour Leader: Sandi Wheaton, photography instructor and tour director

Overview

During this half day cultural tour, enjoy a guided discovery of the unique town and art sites of Bombay Beach on the east shores of the Salton Sea. Bombay Beach was mostly forgotten after flooding in the 1970s/80s demolished its waterfront, but artists enchanted with this quirky post-apocalyptic-looking place have since breathed new life into the community. Since 2016, the annual Bombay Beach Biennale season has attracted artists from around the globe, creating artworks, performances, pop up galleries and events in the vacant lots and empty buildings. As the Salton Sea shrinks, the open-air canvas grows, and new installations are constantly popping up on the increasingly exposed playa.

The Salton Sea is your tour guide Sandi Wheaton's creative muse. This Canadian photographer was so mesmerized by its desolate beauty during her first visit in 2004, she has traveled here annually to document the area's changes ever since. Her 2011 “Promised Water, Promised Land” solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Windsor contrasted her Joshua Tree National Park and Salton Sea photographic works, and was the cover feature of Toronto's Slate art magazine. Sandi moved her studio from Detroit to the desert in 2018, and now offers photo classes and tours of the area from “Bombay Soleil”, her studio space / house in Bombay Beach.

Itinerary

Saturday, Feb.11, 1:00-5:00pm

- 1:00 pm – meet outside Sandi's studio at 2126 2nd St., Bombay Beach, 92257. Introduction, start walking tour of Bombay Beach
- Break during walking tour for a beverage, sit down and restroom use at a local bar
- Drive to beach area to park for completion of walking tour, followed by sunset at the beach among the artworks

What to pack

Essential

- Snacks/drinks (suggested 2 litres water)
- Comfortable and sturdy closed-toed walking shoes (some areas may have scattered debris including glass, metal, rocks, fish bones, barnacles, etc.)
- Comfortable clothing that gives sun protection
- Sun protection: sunscreen, hat or visor, sunglasses
- Small pack or camera bag
- Camera (smartphone is very adequate) for photos, should you choose

Fitness Requirements

ACTIVITY LEVEL: moderate, involves slow-paced walking over uneven surfaces, and standing for several hours, exposure to elements

Instructor Biography

SANDI WHEATON is a freelance tour director and photography instructor based in Windsor, ON and the Salton Sea, CA. After being downsized from General Motors in 2009, she took a life-changing drive across America on historic Route 66, creating three photography projects and an award-winning travel blog. One of Sandi's greatest passions and long-term photography projects is the ecologically-troubled Salton Sea in southern California. She has been visiting and photographing the Salton Sea since 2004, sharing the work through several solo exhibitions over the years. A true globetrotter, Sandi leads tours in Canada, the US and Iceland, has taught Forensic Photography at the University of Windsor, and travels far and wide with Crystal Cruises as a guest lecturer, teaching "Creative Media Fundamentals".

* 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.

