

How To Navigate with Map & Compass

Information

Date/ Time: Saturday, March 11, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Sunday, March 12, 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 need to provide their own compass. Maps will be provided. Participants are responsible for their own lodging and meals.

NOTE: GPS will not be taught in this class, although we will be briefly working with on-line apps like All Trails or Gaia GPS on phones.

Itinerary

Saturday, March 11, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Black Rock Nature Center

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

Sunday, March 12, 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

To be determined

- 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)

Other Required Class Materials

- Day pack, big enough to carry the following:
- 2-4 quarts of water
- Closed toe hiking shoes—NO SANDALS of any kind, even hiking sandals!
- Lunch and snacks
- Clothing layers
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen

Optional Class Materials

- National Geographic: Joshua Tree National Park map
- GPS Device (if you know how to use it)
- Camera
- Binoculars
- Field guides
- Trekking poles
- 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.

Hike Level

Moderate - Since the hiking will be off trail, there may be some rock scrambling for a short distance (50 to 100 yds at most). Expect loose, uneven terrain when off trail.

Instructor Biography

MISHA ASKREN is an outings leader for the Sierra Club and was an instructor in the Wilderness Travel Course for 15 years. 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.