



News Release

For Immediate Release

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California State Parks Re-opens Iconic Providence Mountains State Recreation Area on November 3

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – After being closed for almost seven years due to major infrastructure upgrades, California State Parks Director Lisa Mangat, the Mitchell Family and a number of partners announced the reopening date for one of the most iconic time capsule parks in California. Providence Mountains State Recreation Area (Providence Mountains) is opening to the public on Friday, November 3.

Located on the east side of the Providence Mountain range and within the boundaries of the Mojave National Preserve, the area now known as Providence Mountains State Recreation Area was home to the Chemehuevi people, a branch of Southern Paiute, for at least 500 years. Starting in the 1860s, prospectors arrived in the area, seeking their share of silver, lead, gold and copper. In 1929, amateur silver miner Jesse E. “Jack” Mitchell, on a trip to Providence Mountains, visited two limestone caverns locally known as the “Crystal” or “Providence” Caverns. The idea of turning these caverns into a tourist attraction excited Mitchell. Jack and his wife, Ida Mitchell, ran a resort from 1934 through 1954. Activities included tours of Mitchell Caverns. In 1972, the caverns and the reserve became part of Providence Mountains State Recreation Area.

“We are thrilled to reopen Providence Mountains State Recreation Area, home of the Mitchell Caverns, to the public,” said Director Mangat. “What makes this travel destination so unique is the remoteness and frontier experience it offers to visitors. Witnessing the breathtaking ancient calcite crystals through the new LED lighting within the caverns and the diverse habitat living in them was worth the wait. Thank you to our staff, the California Conservation Corps and partners for helping bring the park alive again.”

Nearly \$1 million in infrastructure upgrades were completed at Providence Mountains. With the help of partners, the popular Mitchell Caverns received major improvements in the renovation process, including new electrical wiring and LED lighting that better illuminates the ancient formations of stalactites flowing from the ceiling.



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Other improvements to the state recreation area included:

- Upgrades to the visitor center, residences, dormitories and hiking trails.
- A new 42-foot free span pedestrian bridge with redwood planks.
- Picnic tables throughout the campground and day-use area.
- Energy-efficient generators and battery system.
- New electrical and water systems.
- Motion activated trail cameras to capture desert wildlife.

Providence Mountains will be open Friday through Sunday (including holiday Mondays) with tours of the Mitchell Caverns available by making reservations on Mondays beginning Oct. 30, 2017. Two self-guided moderate trails are also available with matchless views of desert grandeur.

Below you will find detailed information on the park, including operating hours, entrance fees and how to reserve a tour of Mitchell Caverns:

Operating Hours

- **Open Year-Round:** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Friday – Sunday (including holiday Mondays)
- **Closed:** Monday - Thursday, and Christmas Day and New Year's Day

Entrance Fees

- **Vehicles:** \$10 per vehicle | \$5 for seniors/per vehicle
- **Cavern Tours:** See section below.

Cavern Tours

- **Tour Times:** To ensure the natural integrity of the Mitchell Caverns and animal habitats, only two tours per day will be given - 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Fridays through Sundays (including holiday Mondays). Reservations are required.
- **Tour Details:** The tour involves a 1.5 mile moderate roundtrip hike to/from Mitchell Caverns and an hour guided tour of the cave.
- **Cost:**
 - \$10 per adult | \$5 per child (16 and below) | \$5 per senior
 - *Payment Options:* Credit card or cash. Because of the remoteness of the park, please have exact change.
- **Reservations:** Reservations will be taken by phone only on Mondays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., beginning Oct. 30, 2017. Phone number: (760) 928-2586.
 - You must speak with a staff member to make a reservation. Phone messages and emails will not be accepted.
 - A maximum of 15 people per tour will be accepted.
 - For schools and group tours, please call during reservation hours for information.
 - Do not expect to get a spot on a cave tour without a reservation. Space is limited and tours fill up very quickly.



- **Arrival Instructions:**

- Make sure to arrive early. Give yourself plenty of time to journey to the park as road conditions are primitive and subject to delays.
- Reservation holders must arrive and pay for their tours at least 15 minutes before they are scheduled to depart.

If you are planning a trip to Providence Mountains, some extra preparation and special precaution is needed to have a safe and enjoyable experience. Please keep the following factors in mind:

- Make sure to have plenty of water, more than you think you would need.
- Bring food. There is none available at the park or within 25 miles.
- Bring sunscreen and use it.
- Cell phone coverage is spotty or nonexistent. Bring a map and know your route before leaving home.
- Dress appropriately. Bring layers of clothing. The desert can be very warm or very cold, and weather patterns can often shift within the same day.
- Wear appropriate shoes for hiking such as close-toed shoes.
- Fill your car's gas tank. Nearest town with amenities is 56 miles away.
- Know symptoms and treatment of dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
- Watch out for snakes, scorpions, spiders and other animals. Also be aware that most desert plants have thorns or spines for defense.
- Pack a first aid kit and become familiar with it.

For more information on Providence Mountains, please visit California State Park's website at www.parks.ca.gov/ProvidenceMountains.

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California State Parks

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