



Mojave River

A desert paradox, the Mojave River is mostly hidden underground during its hundred-mile course from the San Bernardino Mountains to Soda Lake, in the middle of the Mojave Desert. When the river does appear, it is seemingly out of the blue, either in a silty torrent after a mountain rainstorm, or along a few rare reaches where the bedrock pushes water to the surface. Where it does flow above ground, the Mojave brings abundant life to the desert in a stunning array of flora and fauna.

Why It Matters

One word: Water. So precious in the desert, the river is one of only a few sources of reliable water in the western Mojave ecosystem. People, too, increasingly rely on the Mojave River's water, making it all the more important to preserve habitat in balance with the needs of rapidly growing communities.



Fish

The Mohave Tui chub (pictured), the river's only native fish, was nearly wiped out decades ago but persists today thanks to reintroduction efforts and the preservation of rare stretches of river that flow above ground. The 4.5 mile reach that WRC protected last year is one such stretch where the fish could be reintroduced.



Wildlife


Despite their aridity, deserts often teem with life. The Mojave is one of them, with more than 1,000 plant species and 600 animal species. The Mojave River is key to the survival of many threatened and sensitive species including desert tortoise (pictured), Cooper's hawk, least Bell's vireo and desert bighorn sheep.



How to See It

Desert wonders, sublime canyons and wildflower blooms await eager explorers of the Mojave in the early spring and fall. The trip pairs well with a drive on [Historic Route 66](#), which offers plenty of detours to hike, camp and view wildlife. Watch for flash flood advisories and bring a paper map (or one that works without cell service). Four-wheel drive is recommended for unpaved roads.


Camp

 Stay overnight and stargaze at campgrounds like the [Mojave Narrows Regional Park](#) near Victorville, [Hole-in-the-Wall Campground](#) in the Mojave National Preserve and the BLM's [Afton Canyon Campground](#). Check for potable water.

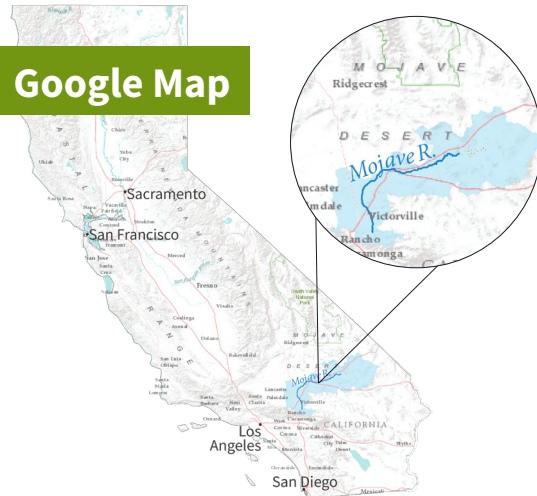
Wildflowers

 Wet years bring dazzling desert blooms, which start in February and peak in March and April. The preserve keeps a [list of what's blooming](#) among more than 80 species of wildflowers. A day hike to the top of [Amboy Crater](#) in the [Mojave Trails National Monument](#) offers a panoramic vantage point for blooms.

Hike

 Experience the "Grand Canyon of the Mojave" on a 20-mile trail through [Afton Canyon](#), where the river flows reliably and you can see bighorn sheep, roadrunners and raptors in the colorful canyon. The Mojave National Preserve offers a [list of hikes](#) that showcase sand dunes, volcanic domes and Joshua tree forests.

Google Map



Best Times of Year to Visit

Wildflowers: Feb-Apr
Hiking, biking: Spring and fall

Reading List

[The Mojave and its Valley](#)
[The Strange History of the Mojave River](#)
[Mojave Wildflower Photo Guide](#)
[The Ancestral Mojave River](#)



CONSERVATION

THE WRC STORY

In 2018, Western Rivers Conservancy protected a jewel of the Mojave Desert, one of the few places where the [Mojave River](#) flows above ground year-round. By acquiring the 1,647-acre Palisades Ranch, we conserved 4.5 miles of the river and one of the Mojave Desert's finest riparian corridors, with cottonwoods and black willows that stand in beautiful contrast to the arid surroundings. A true oasis, the property harbors 39 special-status wildlife species, including southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo and Mojave River vole. Once slated for a golf course and 1,300 homes, the land is now forever conserved. With support from the State of California and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we transferred the property to our partner, the [Mojave Desert Land Trust](#), for permanent protection.

How to Help