

Living Desert Zoo & Gardens



www.nmparks.com

New Mexico State Parks Division
Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department
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ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS

New Mexico State Park's AZA Accredited Zoo

Self-Guided Walking Tour

A 1.3 mile **Self-Guided Walking Tour** begins just outside the northeast doors of the Visitor Center and introduces visitors to a variety of habitats found in the Chihuahuan Desert.

Stop 1: Sandhills

This area of mixed vegetation and sand dunes naturally exists east of the Pecos River into Texas. Plants common to this area are Honey Mesquite, Shinnery Oak and Sand Sage. They typically have deep, extensive root systems which help the plants cope with the region's drying winds and limited rainfall.

Stop 2: Aviary

This facility houses a collection of native birds of prey such as Broad-winged Hawks, Golden Eagles and Owls. In addition, you will find the Roadrunner (Paisano) which is New Mexico's state bird.

Stop 3: Desert Uplands

The Gypsum Sinkhole before you, was derived from ancient oceans which covered this region 200 million years ago during the Permian Age. Gypsum is water soluble so caves and sinkholes are common in these rock formations. Gypsum deposits present harsh challenges for growing plants, but some plants known as gypsophiles actually require gypsum to survive.

Stop 4: Arroyo

This dry streambed is typical of the Chihuahuan Desert. During summer thunderstorms, arroyos like this may quickly funnel rainfall resulting in "flash floods". As floodwaters subside, water trapped in rock pools will often persist for weeks or even months, providing drinking water for many species of wildlife. Javelina (Collared Peccary), found in this exhibit, use the shallow cavities and pockets formed by floodwaters for shelter.

Stop 5: Piñon Juniper Zone

Piñon, juniper and oak habitat is found in elevations ranging from 4,500 to 6,500 feet. These upland areas or foothills bridge the gap between the desert floor and the mountains. Summers are hot, but winters often produce

snow. Here you will see badger, porcupine, black bear, birds of prey and the endangered Mexican Wolf (Lobo). The Mexican Wolf was once relatively abundant throughout the Southwest. Currently reintroduction efforts have had limited success.

Stop 6: Nocturnal Exhibit

This interpretive exhibit explores the adaptations of plants and animals that use nocturnalism as a survival strategy for living in the desert. Here you will see live spiders and reptiles as well as the active ringtail cat.

Stop 7: Reptiles

No visit to the desert would be complete without an opportunity to view rattlesnakes and other reptiles. Living Desert exhibits the famed Gila Monster and 14 species of snakes, including six species of rattlesnakes.

As you walk past the pond the next stop is at the Prairie Dog exhibit. This is a chance to see one of the more popular desert dwellers, especially with young visitors.

Stop 8: Return Trail

The return trail to the Visitor Center loops past the hoof stock: American bison, pronghorn, Mule Deer and Rocky Mountain Elk (Wapiti). Mule Deer are found throughout the Chihuahuan Desert while the bison and pronghorn prefer lower grasslands and the elk live in remote mountain regions. The trail then follows the edge of the canyon. Here the desert's more secretive and well camouflaged predators, the mountain lion (puma) and bobcat (Gato Montes) live in their new exhibit. Look carefully because they often hide in the vegetation or on rock ledges. Next, for your convenience, is the restroom. As you walk up the hill, stop at the **Mescal Pit**, site of an annual special event. Be sure and stop at the **Cactus and Succulent Greenhouse**. Inside you will find many varieties of both native and exotic cacti and succulents from around the world. From the greenhouse, follow the trail past the desert pond and picnic area and return to the **Visitor Center and Gift Shop**.

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See Trail Map On Inside →

LIVING DESERT

OPEN DAILY Except CHRISTMAS DAY

Summer Hours: Memorial Day Weekend - Labor Day • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Last Entry 3:30 p.m.)

Winter Hours: Labor Day - Memorial Day Weekend • 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Last Entry 3:30 p.m.)

Admission: \$5.00 Per Person, Children 7-12 \$3.00 (Children 6 and Under Free)

Group Rates available; please call for details.

The Gift Shop is located in the visitor center where desert plants and souvenirs are for sale.

Summer Hours: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. - **Winter Hours:** 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

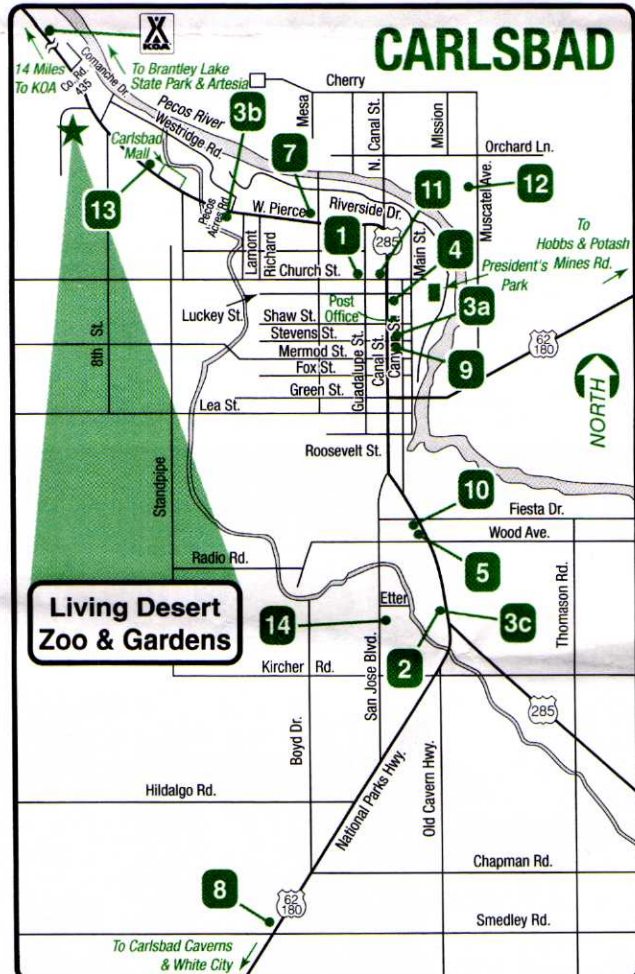
Living Desert Zoo & Gardens State Park is a state operated zoo and botanical garden, specializing in native species of the Chihuahuan Desert and New Mexico. The park's staff is dedicated to the preservation and diversity of New Mexico's wildlife. To that end, the staff works closely with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish, the Wildlife Center, and other public and private entities in wildlife conservation efforts for many injured and orphaned birds, mammals and reptiles.

Living Desert is a safe haven for these animals and the staff works with other regional zoos to provide permanent homes for animals in captivity. In this way, animals that otherwise might not have survived or can no longer survive in the wild become "wildlife ambassadors" and educational resources for children and adults alike.

The Carlsbad Horticulture Society who operate the gift shop hold an annual plant sale in April of each year.



Friends of the Living Desert Mescal Roast is an annual event that is held each year in early May. This four-day celebration brings together Mescalero Apaches, area residents and park visitors to share in the harvest and preparation of the native New Mexico Spike-leaf Agave or Century Plant. Respect of life and nature is essential to the Mescalero's world view and the Mescal Roast is one way that they share their history and traditions with all who attend.



Paintings By Maggie Oso,
The Painting Bear
Available For Sale In The
Visitors' Center



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State Park