LIVING DESERT

OPEN DAILY Except CHRISTMAS DAY

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Last Entry 3:30 p.m.)
Admission: $10.00 Per Person, Children 7-12 $5.00 (Children 6 and Under Free)
Group Rates available; please call for details.

The Gift Shop, located inside the Visitor Center, is operated by the Carlsbad Horticulture Society, a non-profit organization that provides support for the Zoo.
Hours: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.



Living Desert Zoo & Gardens State Park is a state operated zoo and garden, specializing in native species of the Chihuahuan Desert. The Mission of the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park is to immerse visitors into the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem by providing experiences that connect them with the plants and animals adapted to live in this arid environment.

The Friends of the Living Desert is another non-profit organization that supports the operations of the zoo and annual memberships are available. For details, please check with the front desk.

"The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens State Park is working on a new Framework Plan (formerly called Master Plan) project that will include the creation of new animal exhibits, educational opportunities and improved park facilities. The exhibits that are currently empty are slated for renovation or removal, and will eventually be replaced with new animals or points of interest.

Thank you for your understanding and patience and we look forward to sharing a new vision for the park.

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Living Desert



"For your safety and convenience, please stay on trails at all times. Never enter an animal enclosure. Both wildlife and cacti can cause injury."

Living Desert Zoo & Gardens State Park

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Living Desert Zoo & Gardens State Park

New Mexico State Parks Division
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livingdesertnm.org

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. In addition, you will find the Roadrunner (Paisano) which is New Mexico's state bird.

Stop 3: Gypsum Hills

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: Desert Uplands and Arroyo

The Desert Uplands are representative of many areas around Carlsbad, typified by limestone soils and plants such as Ocotillo, Yucca, and Desert Shrubs. 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) live in this type of habitat and use the shallow cavities and pockets formed by floodwaters for shelters.



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 Black Bear, Birds of Prey, and the endangered Mexican Wolf (Lobo). The Mexican Wolf was once relatively abundant throughout the Southwest.

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.

Stop 7: Reptiles

No visit to the desert would be complete without an opportunity to view Rattlesnakes and other reptiles. Living Desert's reptile exhibit features the famed Gila Monster and many species of Snakes, including several species of Rattlesnakes. Take a break at the restroom facilities and enjoy the view from the patio area.

As you walk past the pond, the next stop is at the Bolson Tortoise exhibit. The Bolson Tortoise is an endangered species of the Chihuahuan Desert.

Stop 8: Return Trail

The return trail to the Visitor Center loops past the hoofstock: Pronghorn and Elk. 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 and Bobcat, live in their realistic 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, enjoy the view and follow the trail past the desert pond and picnic area and return to the Visitor Center and Gift Shop.

See Trail Map On Back →

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