

The Keystone

The Official Guide to Red Rock Canyon

No. 7

Winter/Spring 2004

A Lost Creek Returns?

One of the most common questions at the visitor center is where visitors can see a waterfall. With a little luck, and a visit at the right time of the year you will be able to see one at *Lost Creek*.

It's not easy to find running water, and especially waterfalls, in the desert. Red Rock Canyon is a part of the Mojave Desert, one of four deserts in the United States. This area is located five miles (8 km) west of Las Vegas, known to early Spanish explorers as *The Meadows*. Like nearby Death Valley, Red Rock Canyon sits in the rain shadow of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range in California. Its high peaks capture most of the moisture from Pacific Storms heading eastbound.

The visitor center at Red Rock Canyon sits at an altitude of 3,720 ft (1,127 m) above sea level. Here rainfall averages between four and 10 inches per year. Occasionally the visitor center and nearby mountains



The Lost Creek waterfall during a rain storm.

photographs by Brian L. Buttazoni



are covered in a light dusting of snow.

As you drive the 13-mile (20.9 km) scenic drive, you will notice the relative sparse vegetation cover and a great deal of exposed rock. The gray colored limestone mountains in the background were formed under ocean waters and have countless numbers of fossilized sea creatures hidden within them. The white and red sandstone, known locally as *Aztec Sandstone*, were a part of a larger system of sand dunes that stretched into Southwestern Colorado. These rocky mountains make a substantial barrier for water to soak in, making even brief thunderstorms episodes of intense runoff. The result is that while some water flows here all the time, the best opportunity to see a waterfall is right after a rain storm.

You have several choices to see a waterfall at Red Rock Canyon. Trails into the canyons along the base of western escarpment such as Ice Box and Pine Creek Canyons can take you to seasonal waterfalls. The shortest and most well known trail to a waterfall along the scenic drive is the *Lost Creek, Children's Discovery Trail*. This short trail takes you to a seasonal waterfall, where in the middle of winter you may have a rare opportunity to see frozen icicles clinging to a nearby redbud tree.

Whether you are here to see a waterfall or not, there is plenty to explore and experience at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area!



Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area is administered by the Bureau of Land Management.
Our website is www.redrockcanyon.blm.gov



Welcome to Red Rock Canyon

Friends of Red Rock Canyon welcomes you to one of the most amazing places on earth! Nature has been working steadily for the last 600 million years to create this beautiful environment. During your visit today, you can actually experience “living history” by walking atop an ancient limestone seabed or climbing on petrified sand dunes. Look closely and you can find specimens of rock art, mysterious messages from the past left by indigenous people that made Red Rock Canyon their home.

Take a little time today and you can explore deep colorful canyons with hidden waterfalls, stroll through natural gardens to enjoy endless varieties of desert plants, or have an adventure climbing high in the mountains. You might even get to meet Mojave Max, our world famous desert tortoise. Experience Red Rock Canyon’s rich tapestry of towering sandstone and miniature flowers, relentless sun and welcoming pools of shade. Find a quiet spot along a trail and let the sun warm your face. Sage and juniper scents calm and cleanse a busy mind. Soft breezes speak with ancient voices, whispering to simply close your eyes and become a part of the living history around you.

If you want to become a part of our Red Rock Canyon family, we have many opportunities for you to get involved. Whatever your area of interest, there is a place for you here, and your contribution is appreciated. We have groups of volunteers that do trail maintenance, gardening, cultural research, and environmental education just to name a few. Everyone is welcome, whether you can actively volunteer or simply want to belong. Membership includes a great newsletter “The Desert Trumpet,” mailed to you monthly. Look on page five to find our membership application.

Friends of Red Rock Canyon is “working today to preserve tomorrow.” Thanks for visiting!



**Tom Pfaendler, President,
Friends of Red Rock Canyon**

Federal Fees and Passports

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area is a part of a national *Recreational Fee Demonstration Program* authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1997. This program represented a major change in the user fee program on our nations public lands. Of the fees collected, up to 80% is returned directly to the area that collected the money. Prior to 1997, all user fees collected were deposited directly in the U.S. Treasury. *Why are there fees?* The general appropriations that the U.S. Congress makes each year does not cover all our operating costs. The fees we collect pay for programs and projects not otherwise funded through regular means. In fiscal year 2003, Red Rock Canyon collected approximately 1.3 million dollars in entrance, special use and camping fees. Of this about 30% was used to cover the costs associated with litter pickup and disposal, visitor center housekeeping, and other janitorial services. Approximately 15% was used to offset the costs associated with fee collection.

FEES AND PASSES <i>(rates subject to change)</i>	
One day entrance pass	\$5
Red Rock Canyon 12-month pass	\$20
Golden Eagle 12-month pass <i>(Good at all federal areas that charge an entrance fee including BLM, Forest Service and National Park Service areas). Does not apply to camping fees.</i>	\$65
Upgrade National Park pass to Golden Eagle pass	\$15
Golden Age lifetime pass <i>(U.S. citizens or permanent residents 62 years and older - one time fee)</i>	\$10
Golden Access lifetime pass <i>(U.S. citizens or permanent residents with permanent physical disability who are eligible for federal disability benefits). This pass must be obtained from a park ranger at the visitor center.</i>	free



*Friends of
Red Rock
Canyon*



*Red Rock Canyon
Interpretive Association*



*Bureau of Land
Management*

The publication of this newspaper was made possible by funding from the **Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association, Friends of Red Rock Canyon and the Bureau of Land Management.**

Content was provided by Tom Pfaendler, Chuck and Pat Williams, Alice Stewart-Hatchett, Athena Sparks, Kate Sorom and Brian L. Buttazoni. Illustrations provided by Sharon K. Schafer.

Layout, design and editing was done by Brian L. Buttazoni.

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area
HCR 33, Box 5000 Las Vegas, Nevada 89124
(702) 515-5350



How to spend your time at Red Rock Canyon

One hour Visitor Center and Scenic Drive

Your first stop should be at the visitor center, where you will find exhibits on the cultural, natural and geologic history of Red Rock Canyon. In the rear of the visitor center is a tortoise habitat, where you may see live tortoise in an enclosure (Apr-Oct). Books, maps and other items can be purchased in the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association Bookstore. Afterwards, drive the 13-mile (20.9 km) scenic drive, stopping at the various parking lots and scenic viewpoints along the way.

Up to two hours Visitor Center, Scenic Drive and Short Hike

Your first stop should be at the visitor center, where you will find exhibits on the cultural, natural and geologic history of Red Rock Canyon. In the rear of the visitor center is a tortoise habitat, where you may see live tortoise in an enclosure (Apr-Oct). Books, maps and other items can be purchased in the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association Bookstore. Afterwards, drive the 13-mile (20.9 km) scenic drive, stopping at the various parking lots and scenic viewpoints along the way. About eight miles (12.9 km) on the scenic drive, take the Willow Springs turnoff and park at the Lost Creek - Children's Discovery Trail parking lot (the first paved parking lot on the left). This trail is an easy three-quarter mile (1.2 km) loop that takes about 25 minutes to complete. There is a short side trail which leads to a seasonal waterfall (Jan-Mar).

Up to three hours Visitor Center, Scenic Drive and Hike

Your first stop should be at the visitor center, where you will find exhibits on the cultural, natural and geologic history of Red Rock Canyon. In the rear of the visitor center is a tortoise habitat, where you may see live tortoise in an enclosure (Apr-Oct). Books, maps and other items can be purchased in the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association Bookstore. Afterwards, drive the 13-mile (20.9 km) scenic drive, stopping at the various parking lots and scenic viewpoints along the way.

There are two hikes that are popular choices within this amount of time, *Calico Tanks* and *Pine Creek Canyon*. Both trails are approximately 2.5 miles (4 km) in length and take about 1.5 hours (roundtrip) to hike.

The trailhead for *Calico Tanks* is at the Sandstone Quarry parking lot about three miles (4.8 km) on the scenic drive. This trail starts at the site of the old Excelsior Stone Quarry, which operated in about 1905. Today you can see the remnants of this site where large blocks of sandstone were cut from the side of a hill. This moderate hike takes you up a wash through the colorful Calico Hills to a large tank (*tinaja*) where there may be seasonal water (Jan-Apr). There are some outstanding views of red rock and you can see part of Las Vegas.

The trailhead for *Pine Creek Canyon* is just past mile 10 on the scenic drive. This moderate hike takes you past the Wilson homestead site, across open desert to the mouth of the canyon. Along the way you pass Ponderosa Pine trees that have migrated down the canyon along the creekside. These trees are usually found at higher altitudes. Unimproved trails continue deeper into the canyon where you may find seasonal waterfalls (Jan-Mar).

Visitor Facilities



Handicap accessible restrooms can be found at the visitor center and most pullouts on the scenic drive. Wheelchair accessible trails are located behind the visitor center, near the Willow Springs Picnic Area and at the Red Rock Overlook.



The visitor center is open daily all-year except for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. From late October through March it is open 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., and from April through late October from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. BLM staff and volunteers are available to give current information on trail and road conditions. There are exhibits that explain the area's cultural, natural and geologic resources. A gift shop and bookstore is operated by the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association (see sales on page seven).

Fast Facts



The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for managing 264 million acres of public land for multiple uses including wilderness, grazing, mining and recreation.

Red Rock Canyon is one of 14 national conservation areas in the U.S. managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Originally established in 1990, Red Rock Canyon encompasses 198,000 acres including two wilderness areas.

Each year nearly one million people visit Red Rock Canyon.

Climate & Temperatures

Red Rock Canyon is a part of the Mojave Desert. It averages 294 days of sunshine per year. Rainfall averages between four and 10 inches per year.

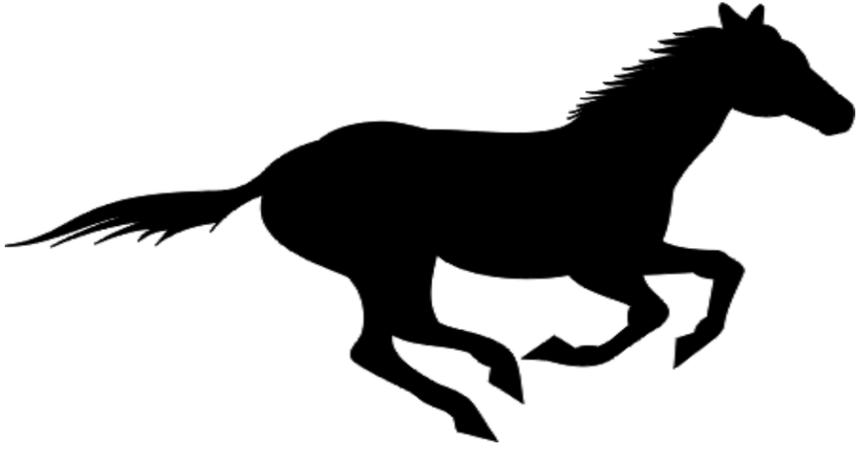
Seasonal High & Low Temperatures (°F)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
High	56	62	68	72	88	98	104	102	94	81	66	57
Low	32	37	42	50	59	68	75	73	65	53	40	33

Flash Floods!!



*Can occur at anytime.
Before you hike, check the local weather forecast, watch for clouds building over the mountains, and never hike or drive across a flooded path.*



Where Can I Ride a Horse?

There are three horse stables near Red Rock Canyon. Their hours of operation, cost and length of rides vary. All operate on a year around basis.

Red Rock Riding Stables is located at Bonnie Springs/Old Nevada, six miles (9.6 km) southwest from the entrance to the scenic drive. For more information call: 702-875-4191.

Old West Tours is located at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, three miles (4.8 km) southwest from the entrance to the scenic drive. For more information call: 702-798-7788.

Cowboy Trail Rides is located midway between the entrance and exit of the scenic drive on Hwy 159 (W. Charleston Blvd.) For more information call: 702-387-2457.

Horseback riding is permitted on a few of the trails on the 13-mile scenic drive. There is an extensive trail system in the Cottonwood Valley where you can ride your horse. Check at the visitor center for more information.

Can I Operate My Four-Wheel Drive, ATV or Ride a Mountain Bike at Red Rock Canyon?

Vehicle use for Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area is limited to designated roads only. Vehicles and motorized equipment must be licensed and street legal. The use of ATVs is not allowed since they are not licensed and street legal.

One of best opportunities to use a four-wheel drive vehicle is the Rocky Gap Road. It is a gravel and dirt road that leaves from Willow Springs Picnic Area and winds its way up to the summit of the western escarpment. This road is narrow, has frequent wash outs and is generally not maintained. Travel to the west of the summit into Lovell Canyon is not recommended even with a 4x4.

Check at the visitor center for more information on 4x4 use in the Cottonwood Valley area.

If you are interested in four-wheeling cross-country or ATV use, there are several alternative places to go including: *Big Dune*-15 miles (24 km) south of Beatty, Nevada on US 95; *Eldorado Valley*-five miles (8 km) west of Boulder City, and *Jean/Roach Dry Lake Bed Area*-20 miles (32 km) south of Las Vegas, east of Jean, Nevada.

Mountain biking is allowed on trails in the Cottonwood Valley, about 10 miles (16 km) to the south on Hwy 160. **Mountain bikes are not permitted on any trails on the 13-mile scenic drive.**

Become a Junior Ranger!



How would you like to earn a certificate and Junior Ranger badge? Before you go out on the scenic drive, stop by the visitor center and pick up a Junior Ranger Discovery Book from the information desk. In the booklet are activities for all ages on wildlife, geology and cultural history. Check out the exhibits in the visitor center, take the scenic drive, then return to the visitor center with your completed activity pages and you will be sworn in as an official **Junior Ranger** of Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area!



While you're in the area you may want to stop by Spring Mountain Ranch State Park...

Spring Mountain Ranch State Park is open seven days a week all year. Hours of operation vary throughout the year. It is located on W. Charleston Boulevard (Highway 159) between the exit of the scenic drive and Blue Diamond.

The park is a 520-acre site located on the Old Spanish Trail, an oasis used by travelers during the 1800s. In 1974, this ranch became a Nevada State Park. The main ranch house is open as a visitor center, where there are guided tours. The park also has a picnic area and group use facilities which can accommodate up to 100 people. Reservations for the group area are required. The park has an entrance fee of \$5 per vehicle. From June through August, the park features theatrical productions performed in the group use area.



Red Rock Canyon Partners



Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association

our website is www.redrockcanyonlv.org

About the Interpretive Association

The primary purpose of the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association is to enhance the recreational, educational and interpretive programs of the Bureau of Land Management and other governmental agencies, by providing materials and services to the public which promote an understanding and appreciation of the natural history, cultural history and sciences of Southern Nevada and Red Rock Canyon.

The Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association is a not-for-profit association involved in a number of cooperative efforts including: the junior ranger program, interpretive publications, exhibits, and outdoor interpretive panels around the tortoise habitat. The association is also responsible for providing the staff at the entrance station and operating the book and gift store in the visitor center.

Naturalists working for the association provide guided walks and other programs for visitors to learn more about the natural and cultural resources of Red Rock Canyon. Reservations for these programs are required and can be made by calling 702-515-5367 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association Book and Gift Store

See page seven in this newspaper to view some of our neat books and gifts.

See you at the visitor center!



Friends of Red Rock Canyon

VISIT OUR WEBSITE www.friendsofredrockcanyon.org

The mission of Friends of Red Rock Canyon is to support the Bureau of Land Management in the protection and enrichment of Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

How can you help?

Friends of Red Rock Canyon continues to grow through the commitment and generosity of our members and corporate benefactors. The future challenges facing Red Rock Canyon include urban encroachment, loss of native species habitat and continuing to educate the visitors on this unique and rare area. Other areas of concern include overuse, transportation and parking within the conservation area.

By joining and supporting Friends of Red Rock Canyon, whether financially or with your valuable volunteer contributions, you will be helping our efforts to protect this area so that future generations can enjoy its beauty first hand.

Please call us if you have any questions at 702-255-8743.

Membership Application

Type (circle one) - \$15.00--Family \$10.00--Individual

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Apt: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____

Dues enclosed: \$ _____ Additional Contribution \$ _____

Mail to: Friends of Red Rock Canyon
P.O. Box 97
Blue Diamond, NV 89004

Membership period covers October 1 through September 30.
Dues cannot be prorated.

Friends of Red Rock Canyon

Ever wondered how the BLM is able to maintain such a heavily used conservation area such as Red Rock Canyon? We do it through the efforts not only of BLM staff, but with the financial and volunteer support of our partners such as Friends of Red Rock Canyon. In 2003, Friends volunteers contributed more than 15,800 hours toward trail improvements and rehabilitation, fencing projects, vandalism removal and litter pickup. In addition, Friends contributed crucial financial resources to the projects described on this page.

Thank you Friends!!!

Friends established the nation's first permanent memorial at the visitor center for the September 11, 2001 tragedy. The memorial complemented a dedication walkway under construction around the tortoise habitat.

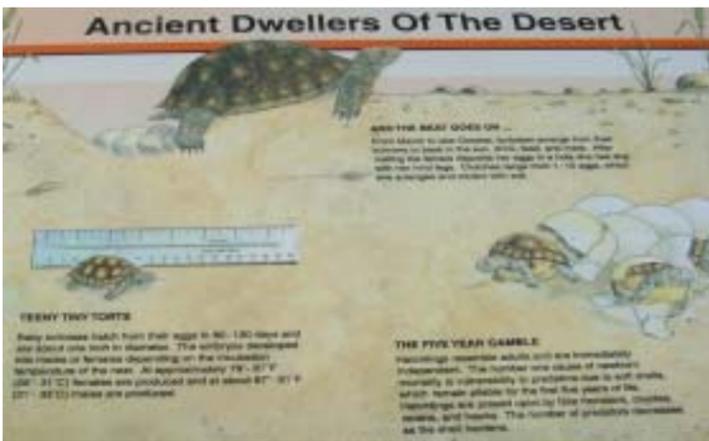


2004 marks the 20th Anniversary of Friends of Red Rock Canyon. Won't you join us for this anniversary and give something back to Red Rock Canyon?



Red Rock Days October 2004

Friends of Red Rock Canyon is proud to offer an opportunity to place a personalized natural sandstone memorial tile in tribute to your loved one. Tiles are 12" x 12" and can contain up to 72 letters of text. The tax-deductible donation is \$300 and all net proceeds will be used towards the conservation of Red Rock Canyon.



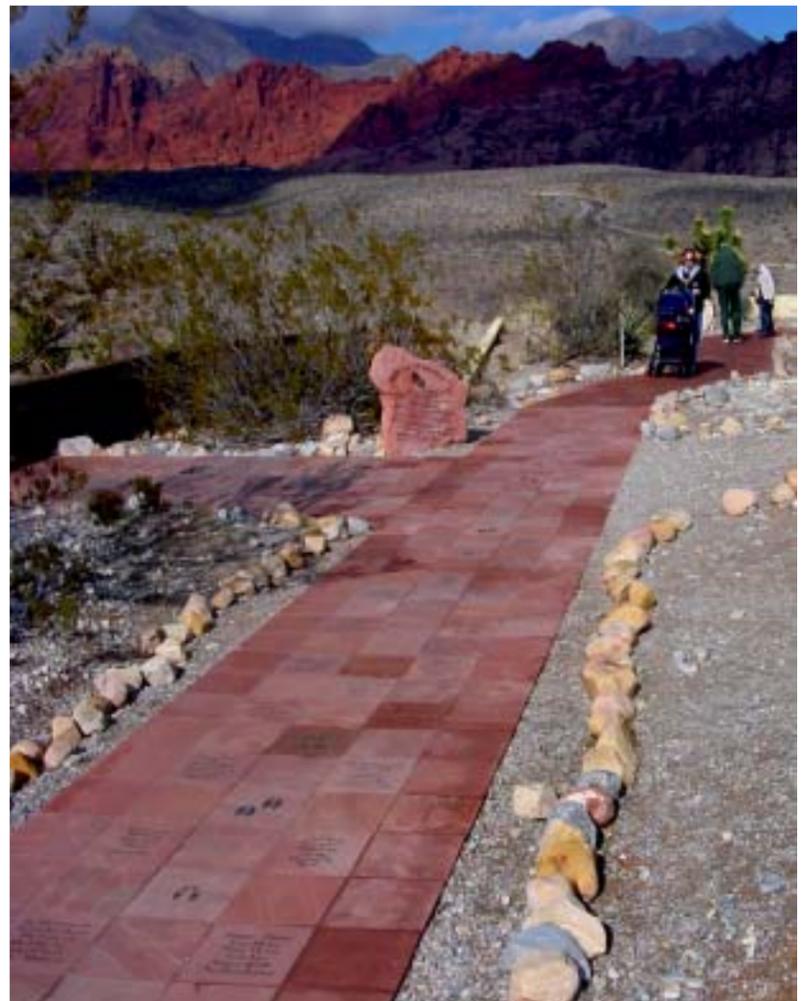
At the visitor center, Friends contributed financial support to purchase new wayside exhibits around the tortoise habitat. Friends has secured additional financial resources to add exhibits along the scenic drive.

How can you help?

Friends of Red Rock Canyon continues to grow through the commitment and generosity of our members and corporate benefactors. The future challenges facing Red Rock Canyon include urban encroachment, loss of native species habitat and continuing to educate visitors about this unique and rare area. Other areas of concern include over-use, transportation and parking within the conservation area.

By joining and supporting Friends of Red Rock Canyon, whether financially or with your valuable volunteer contributions, you will be helping our efforts to protect this area so that future generations can enjoy its beauty first hand. Our website is: www.friendsofredrockcanyon.org

Please call us if you have any questions at: 702-255-8743.



photographs by Brian L. Buttazoni