

## Trip 2 – Episode #33 – Joshua Tree National Park

One of the reasons we went to Bombay Beach, on the other side of the Salton Sea, was that it was on the way to Joshua Tree National Park.



Several people told us we *had* to go through this park. We weren't really convinced. We'd been through lots of desert regions and we'd seen Saguaro National Park. Did we really need to go to another desert with a different kind of desert forest?

**YES!!**

After a few days of flat desert around the Salton Sea, it was fun to see interesting rock formations again as we drove toward the park entrance.









But as interesting as these were, we had no idea what we were in for.

Not too far from the park, we stopped briefly at the General Patton Memorial Museum, partly to say we were there ...



... and partly because we'd read that we could stay in their parking lot overnight for free if we wanted to. But somehow, we didn't feel great about sleeping next to these...



Instead, we found another free site, just outside the park, which was much more ... peaceful.



And beautiful.







It was our first time “boondocking” (camping without hook-ups) in a while, and it worked out great. And we met a bright young man, Jonathon Malcolm, from Newmarket. He and his business partner are travelling in their motorhomes (yes, they each have one) and operating their software business as they travel across North America. Very cool!

We exchanged travel recommendations and kept in touch – and I later found out that he knows our good friend Jared Klein! All together now: Small World! (Unfortunately, I didn’t get a photo of him and his adorable pup, Chip.)

The next day, we drove through Joshua Tree National Park. We had hoped to get a campsite and stay overnight in the park but they were fully booked. So, we took a long, leisurely drive through this extraordinary park.

We were travelling from south to north, which meant we didn’t see any Joshua Trees for a while.

However, the park also features a forest of Cholla cacti. A park ranger said this forest had approximately 100,000 of these cute “teddy bear” cacti.











Then, before seeing any Joshua Trees, we started seeing these incredible rock formations.













We continued on and saw more unusual rocks.



We thought they were pretty impressive, but then we got to an area called Jumbo Rocks, where the rocks looked even more interesting.





That's when we finally started seeing the iconic Joshua trees. Which aren't in fact trees. They're actually yuccas. The name Joshua Tree comes, it is said, from the Mormons. During the Mormon Migration, in the 1840s, Mormons travelling through the Mojave Desert felt that these unusual "trees" were guiding them, much like Joshua in the Bible, leading the Israelites, with his upstretched arms, to the Promised Land.

Whatever the story, they're striking against the sandy coloured rocks and the blue, blue sky.









And the rocks got more and incredible.







Some started to look like modern art sculptures.







This one could've been a Henry Moore





As we drove on, there were more and more of the Joshua Trees, so they began to look like a forest – much like the saguaro cacti did in that national forest.









And, then, just as quickly as they had appeared, the Joshua trees got sparser and sparser.

And weirdly, we started seeing more of these unusual “trees”.



For some reason, someone seems to feel the need to make these towers look something like trees. Go figure.



Needless to say we were very happy we decided to make the journey (which was not quite as long or as arduous as the Mormons!).



But, after a week in the desert, we longed to be back on the coast. Right on the coast.



And that's where we stayed for a while.