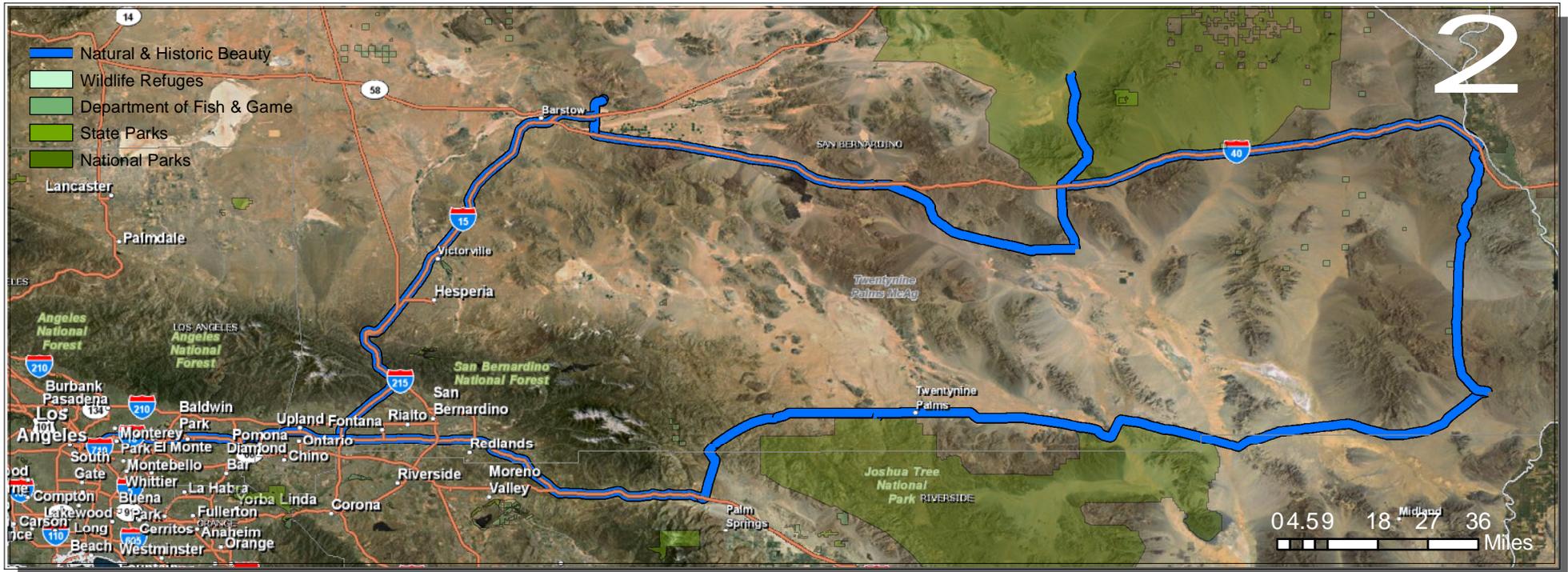


Natural & Historic Beauty

This 615-mile tour takes you through California's vast Mojave Desert and returns through historic gold and silver mining country. Suggested time: 3-5 days



START. LOS ANGELES. Take Interstate 10 east through Redlands and the San Geronimo Pass to the Colorado Desert. At Whitewater, take State Highway 62/Twenty-nine Palms Scenic Byway north to Yucca Valley, gateway to [Joshua Tree NP](#). Along the way, [Big Morongo Canyon Preserve](#) will be on the right side, 10.5 miles north of Interstate 10. Nestled among the Little San Bernardino Mountains, the desert oasis at Big Morongo Canyon is one of the 10 largest cottonwood and willow riparian (stream) habitats in California. The upstream end of the canyon lies in the Mojave Desert, while its downstream portion opens into the Colorado Desert. Continue beyond Joshua Tree and Twenty-nine Palms to...

>> 142 MI. (230 KM.) JOSHUA TREE NP. Stop at the visitor center before exploring the 794,000 acres of Joshua trees, which grow to 40 feet tall. View ecosystems, with arid stretches of ocotillo and cholla cactus giving way to oases of underground springs and palm trees. Campgrounds are available. Return to State Highway 62 and travel east passing [Sheephole Valley Wilderness](#) to the intersection with US Highway 95. Turn left and go north passing [Turtle Mountains Wilderness](#), [Stepladder Mountains Wilderness](#) and [Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness](#) to...

>> 141 MI. (226 KM.) NEEDLES. Founded in 1882 as a railroad town, this historic city is a gateway to several recreation areas. [Havasu National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Moabi Regional Park](#) offer opportunities to enjoy the Colorado River and all it has to offer. The densest concentrations of Bigelow Cholla in the California Desert are found in the nearby [Bigelow Cholla Garden Wilderness](#). From Needles, travel west on Interstate 40...

>> 86 MI. (140 KM.) MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE. Take Kelbaker Road north from Interstate 40 to the visitor center located in the restored Kelso Depot. The [Providence Mountains State Recreation Area](#) - a state park within a national park - that includes Mitchell Caverns is located nearby. Tours are conducted daily, mid-September-mid-May. Return south on Kelbaker Road past Interstate 40 to National Trails Highway, also known as historic Route 66. Turn right and travel west to...

>> 42 MI. (68 KM.) AMBOY CRATER. Designated a National Natural Landmark in 1973, Amboy Crater was recognized for its visual and geological significance. Although Amboy Crater is not unique, it is an excellent example of a very symmetrical volcanic cinder cone. Return via National Trails Highway to Interstate 40 west to Yermo/Dagget Road. Continue north until it becomes Ghost Town Rd to...

>> 78 MI. (124 KM.) CALICO GHOST TOWN. A silver mining town in the 1880s, Walter Knott, of Knott's Berry Farm fame, acquired the old town and restored the remaining buildings. The town includes a mercantile store, train rides, mine tour, and museums. Nearby is the [Calico Early Man Site](#), possibly the earliest known place where human artifacts have been found in North America. Return to Interstate 15, and go south to...

>> 11 MI. (17 KM.) BARSTOW. Founded in 1886 as a railroad depot, Barstow developed into a booming mining town. While in Barstow, you can visit [Rainbow Basin Natural Area](#) 8 miles north off Irwin Road. Many visitors come to see exciting multi-colored rock formations and walk the scenic canyons. Another popular destination is [Stoddard Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Area](#), a diverse landscape for off-highway vehicle recreation. It is characterized by steep rocky mountains, rolling hills, open valleys, and winding sandy washes. Return to Interstate 15, and head south to...

>> 35 MI. (56 KM.) VICTORVILLE. This sunny desert community is home of [Mojave Narrows Regional Park](#), a virtual oasis in the Mojave Desert. Fish, boat, camp, hike nature trails, and enjoy horseback riding on 840 acres along the ancient riverbed of the Mojave River. A short drive from there is the [Mojave River Hatchery](#) which is operated by California Department of Fish and Game. The annual production is 780,000 Catchable size half pound trout and 300,000 Sub-Catchable size trout in 50 lakes, rivers and streams in six Southern California Counties. A few miles the other side of Interstate 15, just past US 395 is [El Mirage Off-Highway Vehicle Area](#), an area popular for speed trials and filming. Take Interstate 15 through the Cajon Pass to Interstate 10 west to return to...

>> 80 MI. (129 KM.) LOS ANGELES.