

Today in Joshua Tree National Park

Today in the Park

Today In The Park

"Today in the Park" is a internet-based system to provide visitors with key information about this day in Joshua Tree National Park. It was inspired by the purchase of TV displays for the visitor centers, which provided a way to communicate park information directly to visitors in real time.

Overview

It includes

- Weather for several days for several locations, including localized Jumbo Rocks
- Sun and Moon rising and setting times and moon phase.
- Live data from Lost Horse RS for air quality, temperature, and wind
- Visitor Advice and Park Announcements
- Weather.gov alerts, edited for local use.
- Campsite information, including live availability from recreation.gov
- Entrance Fees and where to buy
- Events for today and next day

The data is provided in four formats:

1. A "slide show" of pages designed for TV screen. Each viewing location can choose which sections (slides) appear in the rotation. The TV requires only internet access (e.g., any modern Samsung TV) and it only accesses the internet once every 15 minutes for updates. ([Rotate](#))
2. A one-page printed form, similar to what is used at JTV. Includes weather, announcements, and calendar. ([Today Summary](#))
3. A publicly accessible web site that visitors could access themselves. ([Today in Joshua Tree National Park](#))
4. A multi-page document can be printed from the "today" site, and one or more pages posted. (e.g, fees page)

The advantages of this system are:

- Most of the information is self-updating, using a variety of internet sources such as weather.gov and the eps site.
- Manual information is entered in an easy-to-use web form that can be updated on any computer.
- It has a built-in calendar that's easy to update with 1-off or repeating events. Pop-up talks can be entered in the morning for use that day or removed if cancelled.
- It provides a centralized source for key information, so the same information is available everywhere.
- It provides near-real-time information to every visitor center or web-site user.
- It eliminates need for rangers to research information and compose signs for visitor centers.
- It eliminates the need for any special hardware for TV interface.

Resources

- [List of all Pages](#)
- [Today in the Park web site](#)

Today in Joshua Tree National Park

Index of Pages

This project generates the "Today in the Park" report in a variety of formats.

Pages

Link	Result
General Information	
About	General information about the site.
Overview	Overview of the project
Structure	Structure of the system
'Today' Pages	
Today Web Site	Public web site with all data. Can be printed (5 pages). Does not include campsite availability. (or should it?)
Today Summary	One page summary of today's conditions, alerts, and events.
Display Pages	
Scroll	(not recommended) Everything page slowly scrolls to the bottom, then restarts
Rotate	(reommended) Large type version designed for TV. Rotates through topics, changing every 15 seconds. (You can choose which pages (or just one page) appear in the rotation using the admin page.) Uses "snap" animation unless url is "/rotate.php?nosnap"
Topic Pages	
Weather	3-day forecast, Jumbo Rocks, Black Rock and Cottonwood
Fee Schedule	All fees and where to buy
Calendar	Events for next 3 days
NPS Calendar	Events from the nps.gov/jotr calendar
Notices	Alerts and Notices
Campgrounds	Campground status, sites, and fees
Campgrounds TV	Campground (tv version)
Ranger Admin Pages	
Campground Admin	Set status and availability for campgrounds
Ranger Admin page	Sets alerts, notices, calendar events, etc. Includes campgrounds.
Main Admin page	Ranger page, plus default rotation pages, alternate alert.
Local Settings	Settings for <u>local</u> display (pages in rotation, rotation time, etc). Saved in a 48-hour cookie on local

Page	device. Access from the rotation page on the device by clicking over the "Now" time in the title.
Developer Functions	
Reset properties.json	gets coordinates, zones, and other data from weather.gov for significant sites. (only used for reference, not live).
Unset Session	Empties the current php session.
Beta site	Go to the jotrbeta test site (pages)
Refresh caches	Updates all the external data (weather, airq, alerts); should run automatically every hour or so. This is an emergency tool. Can force updates of any or all caches regardless of age.
Rotate No Snap	Rotation pages without the rotation.
View Logs.	Displays list of log records. Click log to view last 40 records.

API Servers
Queried every 30 - 240 mins

Weather.gov

Weatherapi.com

openweathermap.com

airnow.com

rec.gov

nps.gov

weatheralerts.gov

LHRS station

Manual Updates
on web form

Web Server
Linux PHP
compiles data into
web pages

Web Browsers

Rotating Sections

up to 6 sections
refreshes every 15 mins

TV Display

Local Options

Summary

Print

prints 1
page

Public Web Site

Today's conditions
3-day weather
Events next 3 days
Campsite availability
Entrance Fees

Print

prints 5
pages

Today in the Park Visitor Information System

John Springer Feb 2023