



Photographs by GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times  
**RANGER** Anna Marini starts along a trail at Hidden Valley to check on hikers at Joshua Tree National Park on Aug. 19.

# Search and rescue team helps Joshua Tree visitors avoid peril

Prevention focus aims to keep hikers on path away from emergency situations

JOSHUA TREE, Calif. — It's 4 p.m. in Joshua Tree National Park and the air temperature is hovering around 99 degrees — relatively mild for an August afternoon. But at ground level, the sand along the popular Hidden Valley Nature Trail has reached a scorching 136.

"I don't want my bare feet on that," says ranger Anna Marini as she shows her thermometer gun reading to a couple visiting from Switzerland, who are appropriately awed.

Marini uses the tool as a prop to engage hikers traversing this surreal desert wilderness that's roughly the size of Rhode Island. As the coordinator of the park's Preventative Search and Rescue program, her mission is to protect visitors from hazards that include extreme heat, razor-sharp cacti and thirsty

By Alex Wigglesworth



**MARINI'S** temperature gauge reads 134.9 degrees Fahrenheit when pointed to the ground at the trailhead on Aug. 19.

bees. Hopefully, parkgoers will learn enough to avoid stumbling into a predicament that requires an emergency response.

"Everything I do is usually just a friendly conversation, with an air of warning in the back," says Marini, who founded the PSAR program in 2021.

With visitation surging at national parks in recent years, site managers have come to rely on a mix of signage, social media posts and on-the-ground outreach campaigns to help keep visitors safe. Fifteen parks now have official PSAR programs, and at least 30 more are either considering one or in the process of starting one.

The efforts may be working: The number of national park [See **Rangers**, A10]

## Child actor shields 'hugely flawed'

Teachers on film, TV sets say the system to protect minors frequently falls short.

By Stacy Perman

On a sweltering Saturday morning in early July, nearly 1,000 Civil War reenactors in full period regalia — along with cannons, muskets and bayonets — converged on the grounds of Daniel Lady Farm in Gettysburg, Pa., to commemorate the 161st anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.

Also there were a film crew and several actors who came to shoot scenes for Oscar-winning director Kathryn Bigelow's upcoming Netflix feature. The historic reenactment was to be used as a backdrop.

But Jean Marie Donnelly was troubled.

The studio teacher and designated child welfare worker was there to work with a 10-year-old actor. The production, she said, invited two young local boys dressed in Union costumes who were attending the reenactment with their grandparents to appear in a scene with her minor.

[See **Set teachers**, A9]

## La Niña may set a path to drought

By Hayley Smith and Grace Toohey

As La Niña gathers strength in the tropical Pacific, forecasters are warning that the climate pattern could plunge California back into drought conditions in the months ahead.

La Niña is the drier component of the El Niño Southern Oscillation system, or ENSO, which is a main driver of climate and weather patterns across the globe. Its warm, moist counterpart, El Niño, was last in place from July 2023 until this spring, and was linked to record-warm global temperatures and California's extraordinarily wet winter.

Though ENSO conditions are neutral at the moment, La Niña's arrival appears increasingly likely.

[See **La Niña**, A7]

## Houses of the holy? 'Basic dignity' in L.A.

By Dakota Smith

The Rev. Paul Anthony Daniels knows the names and life stories of the people who sleep in their cars near St. Mary, a century-old church in Palms.

In the past, homeless people have spent the night in St. Mary's Sunday school room.

So it wasn't a huge leap for Daniels to think about building affordable housing

on the church property.

A place to sleep, bathe and cook "provides a basic dignity" that can turn around someone's life and also help the neighborhood, said Daniels.

"The unhoused are a part of this community," he added. "Not only in the sense that we shelter them, but also in the sense that they live literally around the property."

Across Los Angeles, [See **Housing**, A7]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times  
**THE REV.** Paul Anthony Daniels, of St. Mary in Palms, says it's too soon to speculate on new housing.

## California races to combat deepfakes ahead of election

State lawmakers hope to stem the tide of political content altered with AI.

By Queenie Wong

Days after Vice President Kamala Harris launched her presidential bid, a video — created with the help of artificial intelligence — went viral.

"I ... am your Democrat candidate for president because Joe Biden finally exposed his senility at the de-

bate," a voice that sounded like Harris' said in the fake audio track used to alter one of her campaign ads. "I was selected because I am the ultimate diversity hire."

Billionaire Elon Musk — who has endorsed Harris' Republican opponent, former President Trump — shared the video on X, then said two days later that it was meant as a parody. His initial post had 136 million views. The follow-up calling the video a parody garnered 26 million views.

To Democrats, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, the incident was

no laughing matter, fueling calls for more regulation to combat AI-generated videos with political messages and a fresh debate over the appropriate role for government in trying to contain emerging technology.

On Friday, California lawmakers gave final approval to a bill that would prohibit the distribution of deceptive campaign ads or "election communication" within 120 days of an election. Assembly Bill 2839 targets manipulated content that would harm a candidate's reputation or electoral [See **Deepfakes**, A8]

**Big pharmacies struggle to adapt**  
Retail challenges force CVS to cut costs, Rite Aid to empty shelves and Walgreens to close stores. **BUSINESS**, A12

**Fixing sidewalks may take awhile**  
Get in line, Angelenos. A crew might come by in 10 years, if you're lucky, Steve Lopez writes. **CALIFORNIA**, B1

**Fan who dropped homer finds love**  
Man couldn't hold on to Shohei Ohtani's historic 40th home-run ball, but Dodgers fans provided him support. **SPORTS**, D1

**Weather**  
Abundant sunshine. L.A. Basin: 88/65. **B9**

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