

# Welcome to Carrizo Plain National Monument



At less than 100 air miles from Los Angeles, Carrizo Plain National Monument is a remnant of a natural habitat where antelope and elk grazed and wildflowers swept the spring landscape. Within the Plain are vast open grasslands, white alkali flats of the ancient Soda Lake, and a broad plain rimmed by mountains. Carrizo Plain is home to a variety of wildlife and plant species—including several that are threatened or endangered. The area has significant cultural and historical resources. Evidence of the valley-carving and mountain-moving San Andreas Fault can also be seen in the Carrizo Plain.

The Carrizo Plain is approximately 250,000 acres in size—or about 38 miles long—and 17 miles wide and is jointly managed by the Bureau of Land Management, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy.

Seasonal tours are provided of Soda Lake/Painted Rock and the El Saucito Ranch. To sign up for a tour you can visit, [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or call 1-877-444-6777, TDD 1-877-833-6777.

The Guy L. Goodwin Education center is a great place to start your visit. It is open December–May, Thursday–Sunday, from 9:00AM to 4:00PM (closed on holidays). You can reach the education center at 805-475-2131 during hours of operation.

A natural adventure awaits you at Carrizo Plain National Monument.



## Before You Visit

Prepare yourself for your adventure. The Carrizo Plain National Monument does not provide any services such as water, food, or fuel. Plan your trip accordingly and insure you get these items in one of the neighboring communities before you come (see Gateway Communities). These communities lie 15 miles from the south entrance and 60 miles from the north entrance. Also, insure you bring the appropriate apparel for the time of year you are visiting.

### Weather

Expect warm, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Most rain falls between November and April with occasional snow. Average summer temperatures range from the low 50s °F at night to the upper 90s °F during the day. Daytime temperatures often exceed 100 °F, with a record high of 115 °F. Average winter temperatures range from highs in the mid 60s to lows in the mid 30s, with a record low of 0 °F. The Carrizo Plain receives between 7–10 inches of annual rainfall on the valley floor.

### Pets

Pets must be controlled at all times. In addition, pets must be leashed or caged at all developed sites including the visitor center, interpretive overlooks, trail heads, and camping areas. No pets are allowed in the Painted Rock exclusion zone.

### Nearest Highway Access

The Carrizo Plain has two major sources of access. From the north, the access is via Soda Lake Road off of Highway 58. The other major access is from the south via Soda Lake Road off of Highway 33/166.

### Road Conditions within the Monument

Many roads within the Monument have an unimproved dirt surface and become impassable during periods of rain. The main road, Soda Lake Road, is open year round. However, rains may make parts of Soda Lake Road slippery, muddy, and impassable at times. The Caliente Ridge Road can be especially dangerous when wet and may be closed periodically during periods of heavy rain or snowfall. All roads in the Monument may be periodically closed for safety conditions such as fire hazard, weather, or unsafe conditions. Panorama and Simmler roads often take weeks to dry out after a rain. Even though the other roads in the monument are dry, Panorama and Simmler roads may be impassable—proceed with caution on these roads especially during winter months, and obey all closed road signs.

### Gateway Communities

Gateway Communities located near the Monument help inform and educate the public about the opportunities on the Carrizo Plain National Monument. They also provide services (food, fuel, water) not available on the Monument.

Taft is located east of Carrizo Plain and offers Monument information at the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center at 400 Kern Street. You can visit their website: <http://www.taftchamber.com>. Taft offers a variety of businesses, including grocery stores, fuel, and lodging.

Santa Margarita is located northwest of the Monument and offers visitors information on Main Street (El Camino Real), look for visitor information signs. Santa Margarita offers fuel, food, and shops. Visit their website: [http://www.smcf.org/local\\_information.html](http://www.smcf.org/local_information.html)



## Things to Do

Carrizo Plain National Monument is a great place to enjoy nature and witness human history. People visit the Monument to view wildlife, to see the spectacular wildflower displays in the spring, to walk along the San Andreas Fault at Wallace Creek, to visit the pictographs at Painted Rock, and to just enjoy the solitude. Other visitors enjoy hunting opportunities in the mountains surrounding the plain, camping in the foothills, horse-back riding, hiking, mountain biking, and various other outdoor activities.

## Recreation is oriented toward enjoyment of the area's natural and historic resources

The majority of recreational activities at the National Monument are concentrated around the Goodwin Education Center, Soda Lake, Painted Rock, Selby and KCL campgrounds, the Caliente Mountains, and along the San Andreas Fault.

### Guy L. Goodwin Education Center



The Guy L. Goodwin Education Center is located one half mile west of the junction of Painted Rock Road and Soda Lake Road and is open seasonally from the beginning of December to the end of May. Normal days and hours of operation during the winter and spring season are Thursday through Sunday, 9:00AM to 4:00PM. Make this your first stop to receive updated information. Informational maps and brochures are available at the front door when the Center is closed. Handicapped accessible restrooms at the Visitor Center are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, throughout the year.

### Auto Touring and other Motorized Recreation Use

Most Monument visitors tour the area in cars, stopping at scenic viewpoints, interpretive overlooks, hiking trails, and other points of interest along the way. Typically these visitors stay on Soda Lake Road. More adventurous visitors access the back roads of the Monument with pickups and sport utility vehicles. All vehicles must stay on designated routes. Popular routes are depicted on this map. The speed limit on BLM roads is 25 MPH.

Burrowing owl (background)  
Giant kangaroo rat precincts



The Carrizo Plain National Monument contains hundreds of significant cultural sites. These include everything from prehistoric Native American campsites that are as much as 10,000 years old to 19th century homesteads, some which were farmed and ranched into recent times. Many of the Carrizo sites have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The values of the spectacular Painted Rock site are obvious, but other important cultural sites also add to our understanding of life on the Carrizo, even if they may not immediately appear significant at first glance. Old farm buildings, machinery and implements, fence posts, water troughs and even historical period dump sites represent aspects of a way of life we are trying to preserve.

## Cultural sites add to our understanding of life on the Carrizo

### Native Americans on the Carrizo Plain

Although the Carrizo Plain appears to be a dry, harsh environment, Native American people occupied the area for at least 10,000 years. Archaeological evidence shows that the peak of this occupation occurred during what is known as the Middle Period 4,000 to 800 years ago. During this time, the climate throughout the West was much wetter, and water was plentiful on the Carrizo Plain. Beginning about 1,200 to 800 years ago, a drying trend (revealed by studies of Soda Lake soil

### Hiking

Hiking in Carrizo is generally self-guided and takes place on roads, trails, and cross-country. There are only a few developed trails within the Monument. These include the Caliente Ridge Trail and various interpretive trails:

**Caliente Ridge Trailhead:** This 7-mile long trail is accessed from a small trailhead located at the top of Caliente Ridge and provides panoramic views of the Carrizo Plain as well as the Temblor Range and parts of Cuyama Valley. This trail also provides excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing and bird watching. Moderate hike.

**Caliente Mountain Trailhead:** This trailhead is located 13 miles west of Cuyama on Highway 166. Wide open spaces and spring wildflowers set the stage for hiking on this 2-mile foot path. The trail is not well defined. Hunters favor this trail for access to deer and quail on adjacent public lands. Strenuous hike.

### Camping

The Carrizo Plain has two developed campgrounds.

**KCL Campground** is a semi-primitive campground located at what was the headquarters of Kern County Land Company. A restroom, picnic tables, fire rings, informational kiosk, and horse corrals are available at the campground.

**Selby Campground** is a semi-primitive campground located at the base of the Caliente Mountains, the campground is more secluded than KCL. A restroom, picnic tables, fire rings, informational kiosk, and horse corrals are available on the campground.

Dispersed car camping is also allowed within certain areas of the Carrizo Plain. The designated dispersed car camping areas encompass approximately 100,000 acres where car, tent, backpack, or horse camping is allowed. Generally, dispersed car camping is permitted in the foothills and mountainous areas. Dispersed car camping is not permitted on the valley floor area to protect sensitive biological resources and to prevent obstruction of scenic vistas, nor is it permitted at Soda Lake and adjacent areas. There are established dispersed car camping areas around the monument, please take advantage of these instead of making a new one. Remember... Leave No Trace.

### Hunting and Shooting

Hunting in the Monument is managed and regulated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Areas not open to shooting include a safety zone surrounding the Guy L. Goodwin Education Center and Painted Rock; all designated campgrounds; administrative and recreational facilities including Painted Rock Ranch, Washburn Ranch, and MU Ranch; all pullouts and informational kiosks; Soda Lake; Traver Ranch; and Wallace Creek. The safety zone is ¼ mile around all sites listed above.

**Target shooting is not allowed in the Monument.**

### Equestrian Use

Equestrian use is permitted on the Carrizo Plain. Trailer parking is available, but limited to already impacted areas such as campgrounds and parking areas. Equestrians are prohibited on most walking trails, including but not limited to Painted Rock, Wallace Creek, Soda Lake Boardwalk, and Overlook Hill. Portions of some walking trails are used for equestrians as allowed and signed, such as the Caliente Ridge Trailhead and the Caliente Mountain Trail.

### Mountain Biking

Mountain biking is permitted on the approximately 460 miles of existing public roads on the Carrizo Plain. Throughout the Monument, bikes are treated like vehicles and must stay on designated roads. Mountain bikes are prohibited on most walking trails, including but not limited to Painted Rock, Wallace Creek, Soda Lake Boardwalk, and Overlook Hill.

### Interpretive Trails

**Painted Rock Trail:** The Painted Rock Trail is located 2 miles south of the Goodwin Education Center. This trail gives visitors access to the level 1.4-mile round trip trail to the Painted Rock cultural site. The trail is open to pedestrians only (no mountain bikes, dogs, or horses). Painted Rock is closed from March 1st to July 15th to protect the wildlife and resources. During this closure, tours are available through the [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov).

**Travers Ranch Trail:** The Travers Ranch homestead has a self-guided tour of old farming equipment and discusses the history of farming on the Carrizo Plain.

**Wallace Creek Trail:** A self-guided .75 mile interpretive trail has been constructed at Wallace Creek and along a portion of the San Andreas Fault. The trail walks visitors through the geological activity of the San Andreas Fault on the Carrizo Plain over time.

**Soda Lake Boardwalk Trail:** A boardwalk that follows the edge of Soda Lake is located on Soda Lake Road across from Overlook Hill.

**Overlook Hill Trail:** The Overlook Hill Trail is located off Soda Lake Road 2.1 miles inside the north entrance and provides a great view of Soda Lake and the Carrizo Plain. The trail is short but steep.

### Guided Tours

All docent-guided tours are scheduled through [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov)

**Wildflowers and Painted Rock Tour:** During the spring there are opportunities for a docent-guided tour of the wildflowers and Painted Rock.

**El Saucito Ranch House Tour:** The El Saucito Ranch House is the oldest standing ranch property in the Carrizo Plain, dating back to the late 1870s. The house and the surrounding buildings are open to special tours during certain times of the year. There is an informational kiosk and a 0.25-mile interpretive trail on the property.



## Nature & Science

The Carrizo Plain is a dramatic landscape in a largely undeveloped state. Its designation as a National Monument was intended to conserve the Carrizo Plain's many significant wild and natural values. Here, vast open plains are backed by stark mountain ridges, structures from historic and present-day ranching operations become integral parts of the valley floor. One of California's most dramatic wildflower blooms colors the landscape in the spring, and rare, dark, night skies escape the light pollution of sprawling development. Locations such as Caliente Ridge and the Soda Lake Overlook provide a glimpse into the universe from the dark skies of the Monument.

## The closer you look, the more you see.

### Wild Flora and Fauna

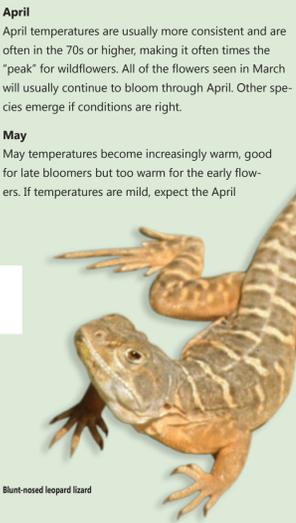
It is common to see wildlife in their natural setting on the Monument. Please view them from a distance and do not disturb. The Monument offers a refuge for endangered, threatened, and rare animal species such as the San Joaquin kit fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel. Vernal pools support the rare longhorn fairy shrimp and other species of fairy shrimp. Reintroductions of pronghorn antelope and tule elk have allowed these once extirpated native ungulates to once again roam the plain together. The area is also home to many rare and sensitive plant species, including California jewelflower, Hoover's woolly-star and San Joaquin woolly-threads. The diversity and abundance of the Carrizo's many plant species serve as the foundation for the animals that thrive here and the beauty that defines the Carrizo. Despite past human use the size, isolation, and relatively undeveloped nature of the area make it ideal for long-term conservation of a unique ecosystem once common in the San Joaquin Valley region of California.

### Wildflowers

Carrizo Plain National Monument can boast some of the most beautiful wildflower displays around. These displays spread across the valleys, over the hillsides and down the canyons. John Muir once wrote that in walking across the valley in the spring, "...more than a hundred flowers touched my feet, at every step closing above them, as if wading in water." This is the type of spring that wildflower seekers hope for each year. The Carrizo still produces these immense fields of wildflowers but unfortunately, this does not happen every year.

### March

Changing temperatures along with rainfall greatly affect the type of wildflower season the Carrizo will have. Visitors can usually expect rainy days in March. In dry years, the end of March can sometimes be the peak time for wildflowers.



Blunt-nosed leopard lizard

flowers to hang on a little longer. More bulbs will bloom, and buckwheat species will begin to bud and bloom. Expect the end of the season to close with beautiful displays of farewell-to-spring.

### Soda Lake

Soda Lake, a normally dry lake bed, covers an area of about 3,000 acres, and is one of the dominant geographic features of the Carrizo Plain. It is the largest remaining natural alkali wetland in southern California and the only closed basin within the coastal mountains. As its name suggest, Soda Lake concentrates salts as water is evaporated away, leaving white deposits of sulfates and carbonates. Despite this harsh environment, small plant and animal species are well adapted to this setting, which is also important to migratory birds. During most winter months the lake fills with water and offers refuge for migratory birds.

### Geology

The geomorphic and geologic structures of the Monument are the product of millions of years of erosion, sediment deposition, faulting, volcanism, and uplift. Most of the sediments that consolidated to form the Caliente and Temblor Ranges were deposited into marine and near-shore basins during the Miocene Epoch.

The San Andreas Fault is the tectonic boundary between the Pacific and North American Plates. The Pacific Plate (west of the fault) is moving northwest relative to the

North American Plate. During the last 11 million years, the San Andreas Fault has moved the Pacific Plate some 183 miles (295 km). The Carrizo Plain is world-famous for spectacular exposures of landforms generated by strike-slip faulting.

In 1857, the strongest earthquake in California's history ruptured the fault through the Carrizo, causing some 16–26 feet (5–8 m) of offset.

### Paleontology

The Monument is distinguished for its world-class fossil assemblages, paleontological resources, and as the location of particular type formations of geologic strata. Several rock formations were first recognized and defined within the Monument such as the Paso Robles, Caliente, and Morales formations.

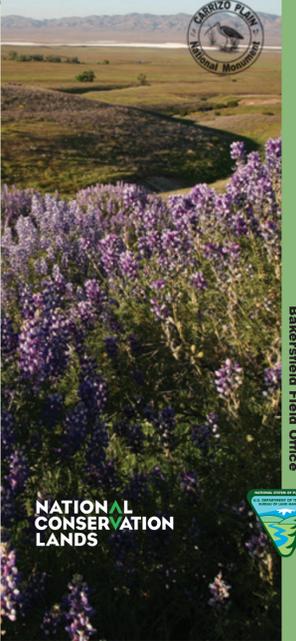
There have been a series of geological mapping surveys conducted in the Monument that identify the potential for paleontological resources in specific formations within the Caliente and Temblor ranges. Both invertebrate and vertebrate fossils occur in these geologic formations.



Above: Aerial view of the San Andreas Fault in the Temblor Range  
Below: A field of coreopsis with Soda Lake in the background

# Carrizo Plain National Monument

Recreation Map & Guide



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS



The BLM manages the Carrizo Plain National Monument as part of its National Conservation Lands, also known as the National Landscape Conservation System, which includes more than 26 million acres of BLM lands "designated for their outstanding scientific values, including cultural, archaeological, biological, social, paleontological, and geologic resources."

The mission of the conservation system is "to conserve, protect, and restore these significant landscapes of exceptional cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations." Managing the natural landscape of the Carrizo Plain National Monument helps ensure that it is conserved, protected, and restored for the long-term benefit of surrounding communities. (Text from *The Carrizo Plain National Monument; A Stunning Natural Area Sustaining Vibrant Communities* by the Wilderness Society)

San Joaquin kit foxes  
Photo by Peter Krapp



## Supplementary Rules

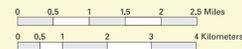
This special area requires special care so visitors will enjoy it for generations to come. Following the guidelines below will make everyone's visit more pleasant.

- Target shooting is prohibited on the monument.
- Any paintball, airsoft, or like weapon is prohibited on the monument.
- All vehicles operated within the monument must be licensed for use on public streets and/or highway travel. Non-street-legal vehicles are prohibited with the following exceptions: When used for authorized, permitted, or administrative purpose, including those used in emergency situations.
- No off road travel by motorized or mechanized vehicles.
- All pets must be controlled by the owner at all times. Additionally, all pets shall remain leashed or caged at all developed sites including visitor centers, interpretive overlooks, trail heads, and camping areas.
- The following animals and activities shall be unlawful within the Painted Rock Exclusion Zone: horses, dogs, non-motorized bicycles (excluding the Painted Rock parking area), cache-type activities (including geocaching and earth caching), discharge of firearms, campfires, with the exception of Native American ceremonial use.
- Still and video photography of the pictograph images at Painted Rock and other rock art sites in the monument are prohibited for commercial purposes.
- Competitive/recreational activities or events shall not include the release of non-native or captive-held native species.
- The use of metal detectors is prohibited.
- Organized groups with 20 or more persons or 5 or more vehicles must secure a permit for any day or overnight use.
- Operation of any vessel, aircraft, boat, or motorized vehicle is prohibited on or within 100 feet of Soda Lake or any adjacent stream, channel, dry lake or body of water.
- Don't deface cultural sites by carving, painting, drawing or shooting.
- Don't dig or otherwise disturb the ground surface in or near cultural sites.
- Don't touch or climb sandstone outcrops, many of which contain cultural features. Contact with the sandstone damages the mineral crust which protects the stone from erosion.
- Don't move, remove or arrange stones, wood or other features. The precise original location of objects is important to our understanding of their significance.
- Don't damage historical buildings and objects by climbing or entering them.
- Don't disturb nesting birds, bats or other wildlife.
- Don't place caches in or near cultural sites.

# CARRIZO PLAIN NATIONAL MONUMENT RECREATION GUIDE 2012



Scale: 1:75,000 (1 inch = 1.18 miles)  
Countour Interval 100 feet



Please respect private property rights and the privacy of private land owners within Carrizo Plain National Monument

All Roads within Carrizo Plain National Monument are unpaved, except the portions of Soda Lake Road shown. During wet weather many unpaved roads are impassible.

Secondary roads are not shown outside the Carrizo Plain NM.

Camping is allowed on BLM land within designated campgrounds or dispersed car camping area. Respect private property. It is your responsibility to know where you are

## Leave No Trace



Plan Ahead and Prepare:

- Get information about the CPNM or your travel route from the BLM, 661-391-6000 or the Goodwin Education Center, 805-475-2131.
- Start your CPNM visit with a full tank of gas.
- Prepare for bad weather and unsafe road conditions with extra food, water, clothing, and first aid kit.
- Respect private and public road closures. It is your responsibility to know where you are at all times, some private property is not posted.
- If you are hunting, know the California hunting regulations and abide by them.
- Bring maps and a compass, and know how to use them to find your way and location even if you have a GPS unit.

### Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:

- **Vehicle Use and Travel:**
- Appropriate vehicle use protects wildlife and wildlife habitat. The speed limit is 25 MPH except on County roads.
- Protect wildlife and livestock; leave gates as you find them.
- Operate motorized vehicles only on designated travel routes. A list of open routes is available from the BLM or on a map available at the Goodwin Education Center.
- Prevent damage to roads and vegetation; avoid travel when conditions are muddy.

### On the Trail:

- Walk on established trails when possible.
- Ride bicycles on designated roads only.
- Prevent erosion and trail widening by using the existing tread surface.
- Hunters—drag any gut piles, skins, etc. well away from trails and highly visible and frequented areas. Pick up shotgun shells and other debris.
- Hunters—the monument falls within the California condor range and it is illegal to use or possess lead projectiles while hunting big game and non game species in this range.

### At Camp:

- Campground quiet hours are 9PM-7AM
- A good campsite is found, not made.
- Place kitchen areas, tents and stock on areas where obvious signs of prior use exist. If outside of a developed campground, leave vehicles along the edge of roadway but not impeding traffic; do not drive to your chosen camp site.
- Camp at least 200 yards away from water sources.
- Camp only in developed campgrounds or in designated camping areas.
- Hunters, please remove gut piles or other animal parts from campgrounds.

### Dispose of Waste Properly:

- **Pack it In, Pack it Out:**
- Pack out everything you brought in with you: trash, spent brass, shotgun shells, cigarette butts, etc.
- Keep wildlife healthy and avoid human food dependence. Protect your food from animals by storing ratons securely. Never bury food or leave it behind.
- **Properly Dispose of Human Waste:**
- Use established restroom facilities when possible.
- Bury human waste in catholes 4-8" deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole. Pack out all toilet paper and dispose of properly.

### Leave What You Find:

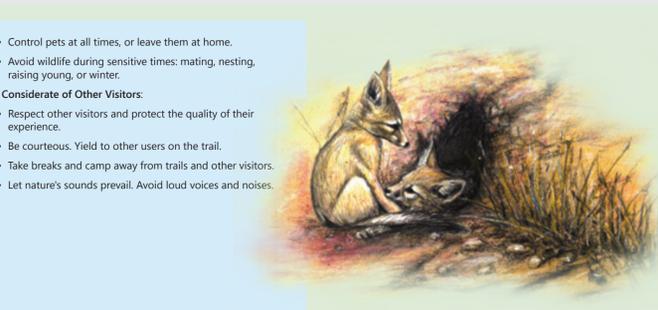
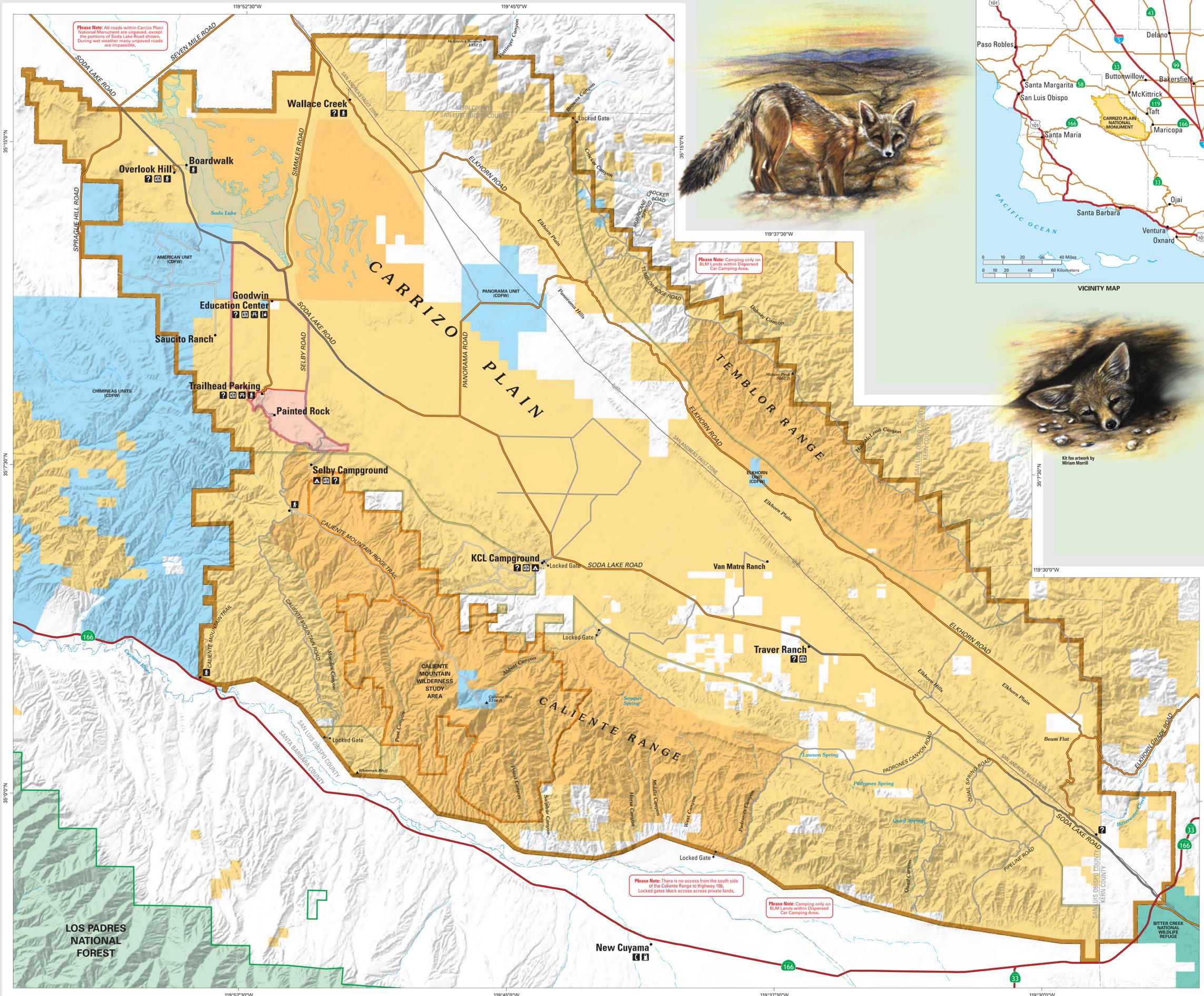
- If you alter an area in any way, restore its natural appearance before leaving.
- Historical or cultural artifacts provide clues to help scientists understand history. They belong to all of us. Leave them as you find them—it's the law.
- Signs are expensive and are paid for by your tax dollars. Please don't use them to sight firearms.
- Many people visit the CPNM for the scenery and quiet they find there. Target practice is illegal within the CPNM.

### Minimize Campfire Impacts:

- Stoves are the best option for cooking. Campfires and fire rings can scar the CPNM's beauty and destroy habitat.
- If you must build a fire, use an established fire ring.
- Bring your own wood with you. Do not burn plastics, glass, or cans. Haul your trash out with you.
- Obtain a campfire permit before building a fire outside of a designated campground. Permits are available from the visitor center, a ranger or the Bakersfield BLM office, 661-391-6000.

### Respect Wildlife:

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.



- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
  - Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors:**
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
  - Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
  - Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
  - Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

LAND STATUS	CARRIZO ROUTES	MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES	RECREATION SYMBOLS	OTHER FEATURES
Bureau of Land Management	State Highways	Carrizo Plain National Monument	Visitor Center	San Andreas Fault—arrows show direction of movement along fault
US Forest Service	Maintained Low Clearance Roads	Wilderness Study Area	Campground	Locked Gate
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Paved Roads	Area Managed for Wilderness Values	Restroom	Intermittent Lake / Alkali Lakebed
State	Primitive Roads	Painted Rock Exclusion Area	Trailhead	Spring
Private / Other	Trails: Non-motorized	No Shooting Zone	Picnic Area	
	Trails: Pedestrian Only	Dispersed Car Camping Area	Information Kiosk	
			Phone	
			Gas	

**Camping is allowed on BLM land within designated campgrounds or dispersed car camping area. Respect private property. It is your responsibility to know where you are.**