

Joshua Tree

Monday, November 14th - Wednesday, November 16th

Joshua Tree



Joshua Tree is one of my favorite parts of the world.



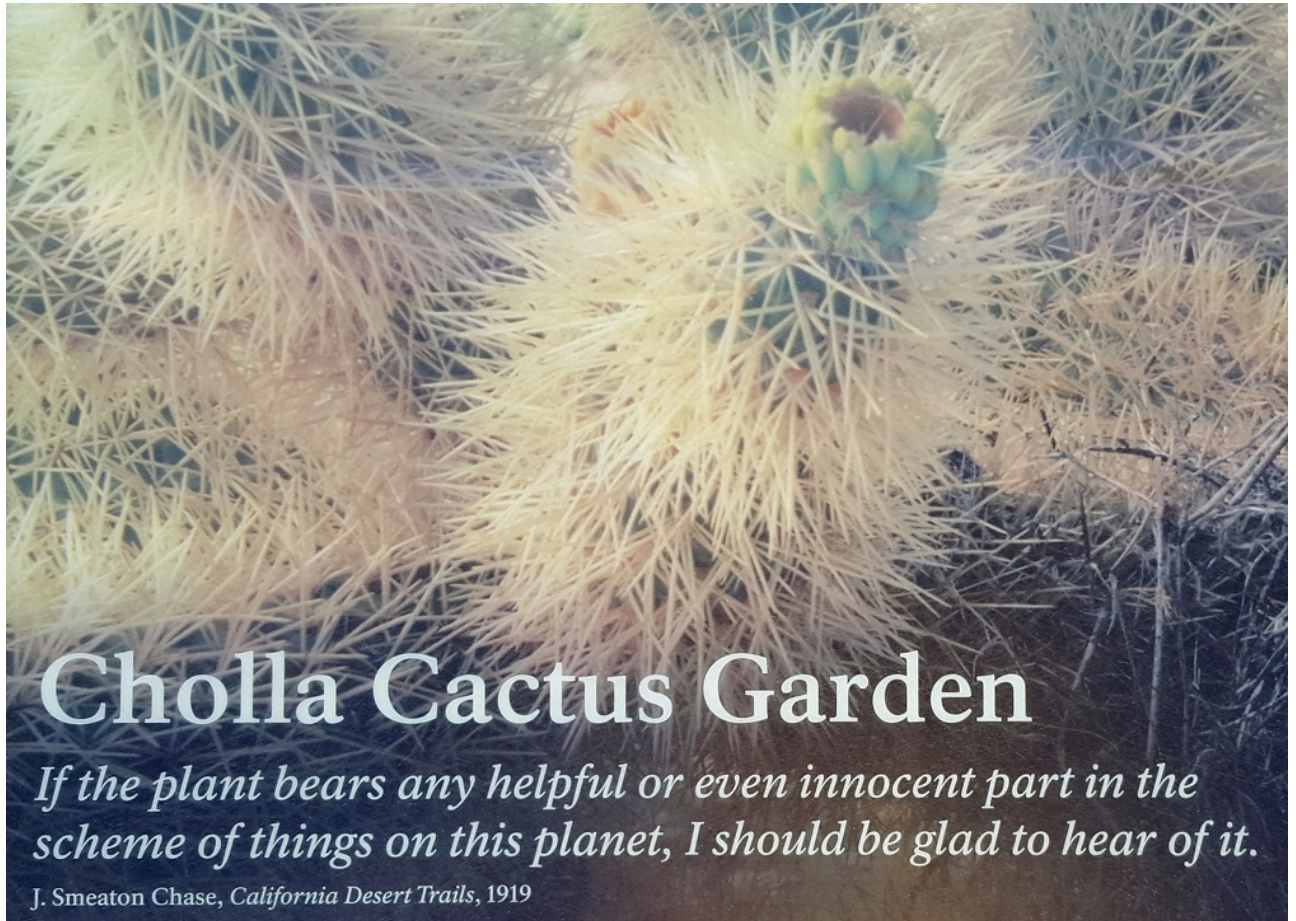
Ocotillo

I started Monday after work and drove down toward the “gardens” area. They had some lovely ocotillo there and, just north of that area, is The Cholla Garden.



Cholla! Cholla! Cholla!

Oh, how I've missed you fuzzy little guys! Well, not so little in this garden area. Totally worth walking through and the signs are delightful.



Cholla Cactus Garden

If the plant bears any helpful or even innocent part in the scheme of things on this planet, I should be glad to hear of it.

J. Smeaton Chase, *California Desert Trails*, 1919

Fun hater!

Joshua Tree



I only took about a million of these photos. The sun causes the cholla to glow and makes my camera grumpy.

*A note of caution as you walk this nature trail:
Be on guard that you do not walk too close to the
cholla cactus. At the slightest touch, the spines
will penetrate your flesh and are extracted only
with difficulty and pain. Be especially watchful
of small children and stay on the trail. Dogs are
not allowed on trails in the park.*

1. Jumping Teddy Bears

From a distance, the top joints of *Cylindropuntia bigelovii*, a species of cholla (pronounced choy-ya), appear to be covered with soft, silvery bristles, which accounts for its common name, “teddy-bear” cholla.

However, each of its spines is tipped with a microscopic barb, and if you try to “hug the bear” or simply brush up against it, the spines will penetrate your shirt, your shoe, your pants, and especially your skin, causing the joint to detach and stay with you. Then the origin of its second nickname, “jumping cholla,” becomes apparent.

Hug the Bear!



My scooter warily eyes the cholla.

I could have happily hung out here for a while, but instead headed north and walked the Skull Rock loop. Slowly and a bit tenderly (dang it lava tubes!). Skull Rock is the one that looks kind of like a skull if you could peel all the other tourists off it. So, of course, you get pictures of random other rocks!



Do you like this picture? Would you like to see a million more just like it? Hooray!



Yucca!

Can be a bit hard to tell yucca and joshua trees apart. Yucca have the curly strings that sometimes make them look a bit fuzzy.



The photo at the top of the page was also from this hike. Sunsets are often subtle yet lovely. And sometimes just amazing.

The next afternoon I started by driving down to Keys View.



Keys View



To the right we can make up the valleys of Palm Springs.



To the left, shimmering off in the distance, is the Salton Sea! An inland sea of toxic beauty.



Exploring Hidden Valley. This area is a small loop inside a valley completely encircled by rock.



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Lot of rock climbing in Hidden Valley. There were a couple scaling the plinth on the right. I watched them slowly scale up, adjusting ropes and carefully choosing their path as I idly walked below.

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All the clouds this day made losing the sun much easier to take.

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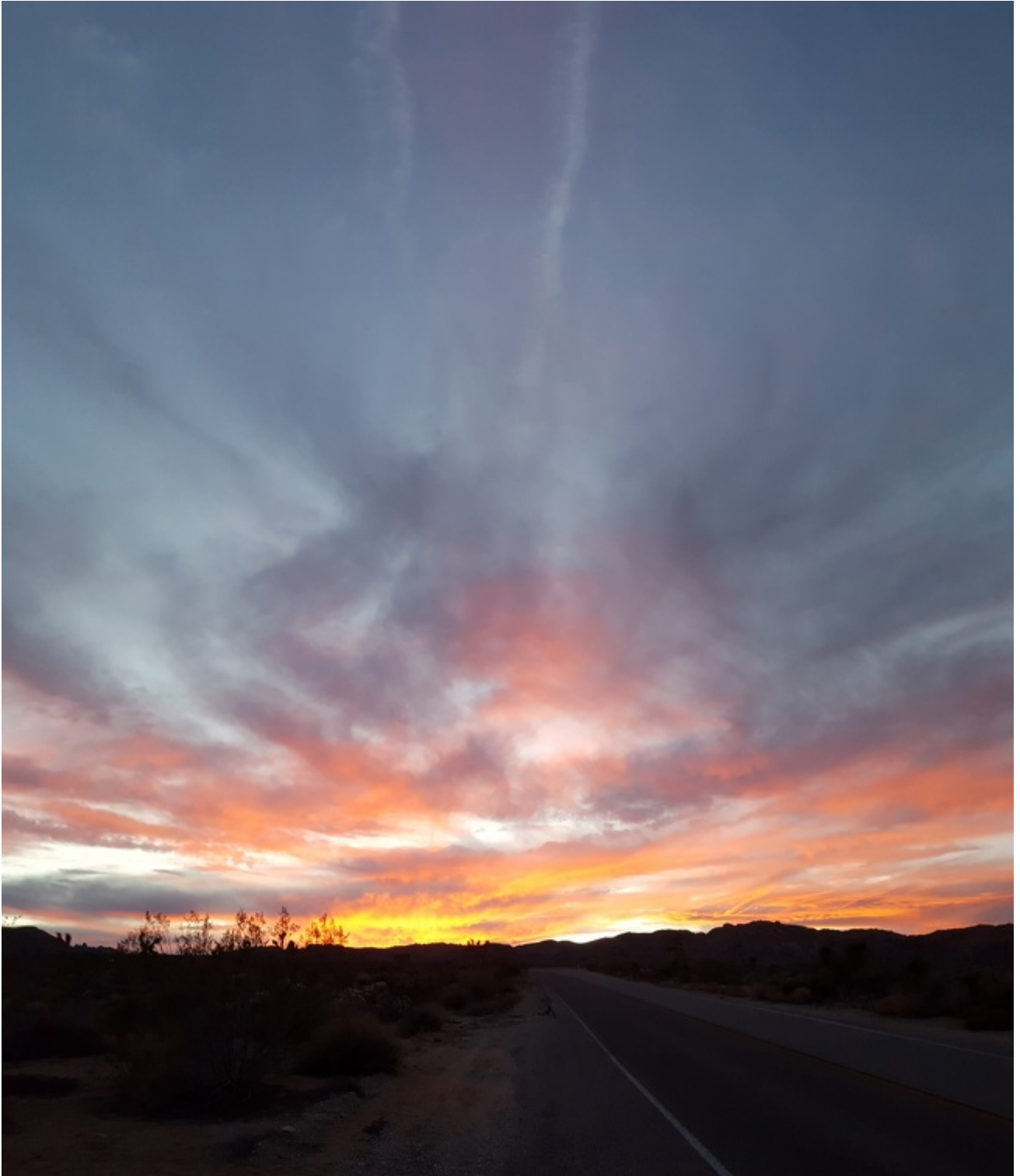


Friendly cholla in the dusk.



I was driving home when the sky caught fire.





All those moments will be lost in time.

I stood at the side of the road and watched the sky smoulder and shift. Eventually day gave up its struggle and quieted.

Later I would walk a few blocks down the road from where I was staying and join some rangers and a crowd of fellows as we slowly walked through the oasis under the supermoon's light. The program touched on moon in local mythology and ecology and it was a lovely evening.

The next afternoon I hiked Split Rock trail.



Split Rock



Lava Lines



Cholla and Yucca.

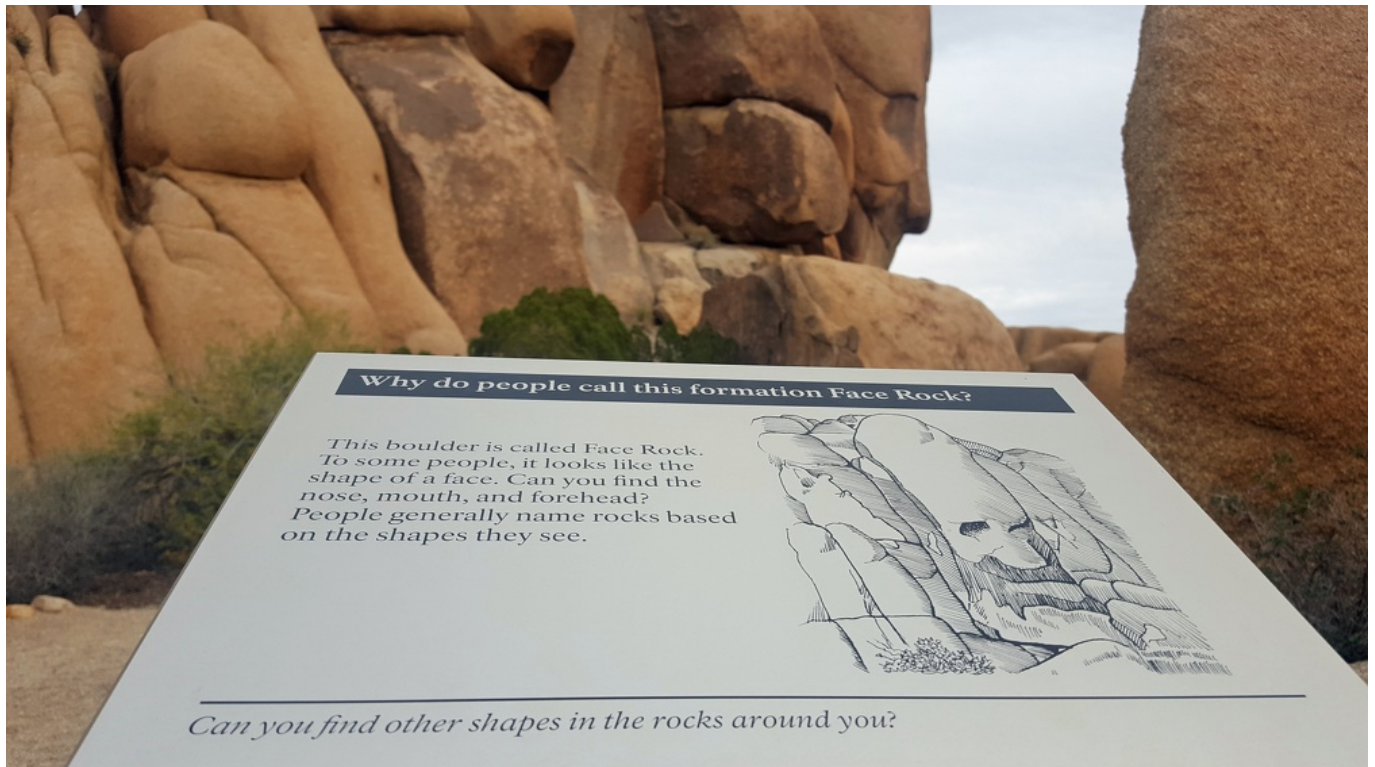


Tiny bits of yellow green amidst the grey and brown.



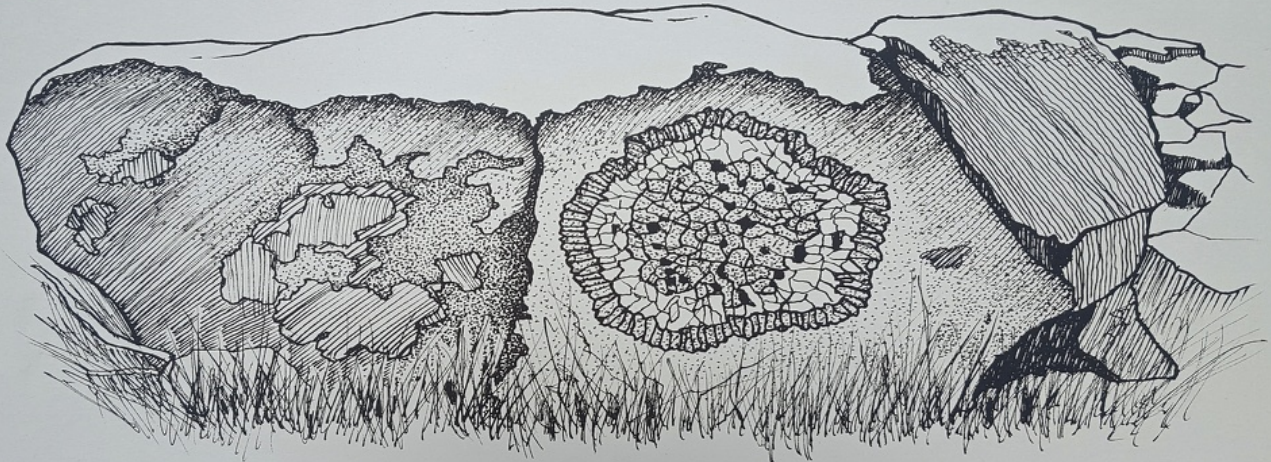
A couple of folks asked what creosote looks like. It's difficult to photograph given the winds I had (especially this day), but here's

a closeup including some fuzzy seeds. They're a woody bush.



Face Rock

What are these colorful patches on the rocks?



Lichen can be found on soil, wood and rock in a variety of colors. Here is a simple way to remember what lichen is and what it is made of: “Alice Alga and Freddy Fungus took a likin’ (lichen) to each other and now their relationship is on the rocks.”

Where else do you see lichen or other colors in the rocks?

Wait, does someone actually find that helpful or easier to remember?



Road to Split Rock trail.



Dinner at the 29 Palms Inn, wherein I teach yet another bartender how to make a negroni.

The final days of the week I stayed out of the park and explored Wonder Valley.