

Rockhounding

California's geological forces have created one of the widest varieties of rocks and minerals found in any state. This rock and mineral wealth has long been recognized by rockhounds even before the gold rush days.

Early rockhounds were prospectors looking for valuable minerals and gemstones for commercial purposes. Eventually, however, more people were drawn to rockhounding for recreational purposes, mainly for the beauty that rocks and minerals provide.

By the 1930s, interest in rockhounding increased significantly and it was during this period that rockhounding groups were formed and collecting areas in the desert were publicized.

With increased popularity of rockhounding, some rockhounds regarded certain areas as their own and feared that other collectors would deplete their rocks and minerals. This led to substantial amounts of material being removed and an increase in mining claims. By the 1960s the government saw a need to regulate the collection of rocks and minerals on public lands.



Visitors to the Mojave Desert often ask where they can rockhound. Perhaps the best source of information is rock, gem, and mineral groups found in communities throughout southern California. Libraries, bookstores, and "gem and mineral shows" are also very good sources of published information. Although any hill, mountain, or wash can provide some wonderful rock and mineral discoveries, the following listed areas are some of the well-known sites visited by rockhounds in which good samples can still be found.

Many rockhounding sites require hiking or driving to remote areas on sandy or rocky roads where there is a possibility of getting stuck. It is always a good idea to travel in a group and to bring plenty of drinking water with you when traveling in the desert. If you must travel alone, be sure to let someone know of your plans. Remember to stay on designated open roads. Cross country travel is illegal, as is driving in designated Wilderness Areas.

Bureau of Land Management
Barstow Field Office
2601 Barstow Road
Barstow, CA 92311
Phone: (760) 252-6000
Fax: (760) 252-6098