

Frequently Asked Questions

(Revised February 18, 2020)



Emergencies, Assistance and First Aid.

Be Prepared!

When you come on duty one of the first things you should do is refresh yourself on how to use the radio and telephone to respond to an emergency. Check the ranger schedule to see which ranger is on duty.

A visitor reports someone is injured on the trail, what should I do?

First, get the specific location and description of the injury. Turn on, and call out, on the radio to contact Northern Communications Dispatching. The volunteer should say “Northern, Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, Priority Traffic.” Wait for Northern to respond. They will likely say “Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, go ahead with your traffic.”

At that point, be prepared to provide the location and nature of the injury. You will be advised as to what to do next. It is likely a Park Ranger will also hear this communication and indicate what they will be doing, what they want you to do and/or direct Northern to do something.

If for some reason the radio is not an option, the backup is to call Northern by phone, (916-358-0333).

If you need a ranger urgently, also use the radio, saying “Any available Mount Diablo Ranger, Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center.” Wait for the Ranger to respond and then go ahead with the request.

Ranger Assistance

Rangers are available to address important questions or issues that might

come up with park operations or regulations (dog, bike or other problem). If urgent, use the radio as described above. If not urgent, call the Summit Visitor Center (925-837-6119), Junction Ranger Station (925-837-6129 or South Gate Entrance Station (925-837-0904) and ask the Park Aide to contact a ranger and have them call you at the MCVV or on your cell phone.

Maintenance Help

If there is an urgent maintenance issue – plumbing, electrical or bridge/road/tree down in a major way, you can reach the on-duty staff by asking a ranger to dispatch someone. If not urgent, but needs attention “today,” call the Summit or South Gate as noted above.

You are welcome to call the Maintenance Office (925-837-6122) but they are likely to be in the field somewhere. All other maintenance issues should be noted on your Docent Log for the shift.

Visitor reported trail issues

Most visitor reported trail issues, such as a tree down, rocks on the road, trail sign problems, etc. are not urgent. It is best to just note them on your Docent Log. They will get reported and addressed.



Band-aids

Band aids are in the desk drawer. You can offer one if asked.

Sunscreen

You can offer sunscreen if a visitor asks.



Parking.

Parking enforcement

All vehicles need to pay and properly display the receipt on their dashboard. As of January 2020, the parking fine was a minimum of \$71 plus fees.

Making change

We can make change for \$10's and \$20's from the change pouch in the top drawer of the file cabinet. Please do not take \$100's, as we will not have change for other visitors.

I don't have cash for parking, what should I do?

No good options. Only way to get cash is to go back to Clayton to the ATM at one of the banks.

There is no parking in the upper, lower or overflow parking lots, now what?

No good options. Drive back into Clayton and park on the residential streets where allowed and walk back into the park. Parking on Mitchell Canyon Road is subject to citation and/or being towed.

Mitchell Canyon has a \$6.00 fee. What about other entrances?

Macedo Ranch entrance is \$6.00. The Southgate and Northgate entrances charge \$10.00.

What if someone asks for a parking refund?

A visitor decides they do not want to stay for some reason – dogs, parking full, etc. Tell them to attach a note with their name and address with the parking stub and drop in the iron ranger.

What are the horse trailer parking rules at Mitchell Canyon?

Equestrians should park their horse trailers in the overflow parking lot by the entrance gate on weekends and holidays, but may park near in the lower lot near the horse ties during the week.

Are RV's and camping trailers allowed in the park?

Yes, but there is a size restriction. Generally, the limit is a total of about 20 feet. For Mitchell Canyon, this would be for day use only and the same rules as horse trailers apply. Elsewhere in the park, this is primarily a camp site concern.

We paid our parking fee at Mitchell Canyon; will we have to pay again at the North Gate or South Gate Entrance Station?

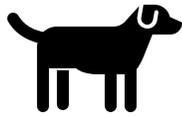
Yes, save your stub and present it at the entrance. There will be an additional charge of \$4.00 for access if within the same day.

Parking at Regency Gate

Weekdays no restrictions. On weekends and Federal holidays, there is limited parking. The new restrictions and related policies are now in place and are being enforced as of February 2020. As a result, we should be very cautious about encouraging visitors to use the Regency Gate on weekends and holidays. This may mean that visitors have to incur the extra hike time from the Mitchell Canyon Staging Area to access the Falls Area, or for that matter, Mount Olympia or North Peak depending on their preferred route. Or park a little further away from the Regency Gate in the approved locations.

However, note that the Regency Gate is open and if visitors want to park in the vicinity, here are the guidelines:

- *Resident only permits are in effect on weekends and holidays for portions of Regency and Rialto Drives.*
- *Signs exist to show where permitting begins and ends.*
- *Parking is allowed at the end of Regency where no houses are located and on Rialto Drive on the side of the street without houses.*
- *Tickets are being issued for violations. In some cases, cars have been towed.*
- *Parking is available on other nearby streets - Mountaire Parkway, El Molino, Weatherly.*



Dog Regulations.

Are dogs allowed on trails?

No—not on trails, fire roads, or in the back country. We do allow them on leash in any “developed area” such as a picnic area, paved road, parking lot, or campground. In those areas, they must be on leash at all times. For more information on dogs in the Park, refer to the Dog Flyer on the Desk.

Where should we send someone who wants to walk with their dog?

Dogs are permitted in many of the East Bay Regional Parks or Walnut Creek Open Space Areas (e.g. Lime Ridge). The nearest East Bay Regional Park is Black Diamond Regional Park with access off Clayton Road in the Town of Clayton.

In North Lime Ridge, north of Ygnacio, dogs must be under positive voice and sight command or leashed at all times (cattle grazing and coyote risks). No dogs are allowed at any time in the center section of Lime Ridge, south of Ygnacio. This is the Lime Ridge Wildlife Preserve. South of the Preserve, dogs are allowed again but on leash only.

What should I do if I see a person heading to Mitchell Canyon with a dog?

The best approach is to ask them if they are looking for a place to walk their dog, as dogs cannot walk on the trails of the State Park. Service dogs are allowed on the trails and fire roads consistent with State Law (please refer to the Service Dog Flyer on the Desk for all the details). Comfort animals are not allowed on the trails or fire roads. This is a challenging topic, please reference the Service Dog Flyer!



Bike Regulations.

Where can I ride my bike in the Park?

On any of the fire roads or paved roads, plus limited single-track trails. There are only a few single-track trails where bikes are allowed. Please reference the Mountain Bike Flyer for more details about bikes in the Park.

Is there a bike map?

No, not a specific bike map.

Are electric bikes allowed in the Park?

Yes, as long as it is a “Class 1” eBike. This is a low-speed pedal-assisted electric bike equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and that stops providing assistance when the bike reaches 20 mph. E-Bikes are subject to the same guidelines as all other bikes.

Motorcycles and ATV’s

Prohibited on the trails and fire roads.

Other Park Regulations

Can I take home a flower, rock or other thing, like a mushroom or pine cone, I might find?

No. All plants, wildlife and natural features are protected. Collecting or destroying anything in the Park is prohibited.

But, use good judgement. If a young kid has a stick in his hand or a small rock, you can get them started with good stewardship habits by encouraging them to find a place to leave the item so everyone can enjoy it, and they can see it again when they come back. However, if it is a young child who doesn't understand and they are getting upset, let it go. Large Coulter Pine Cones, fossils, or other more significant thing, you must ask that it be left in the Park.

Can I fly my drone or model aircraft in the Park?

No. Use of these devices and other unmanned aircraft systems is prohibited in Mount Diablo State Park.

Can I operate my remote-controlled hobby car in the Park?

Battery operated remote-controlled cars are permitted in the Park. The car can't be operated on paved roads and must not be used to interfere with other visitors or harass wildlife.

Alcoholic Beverages

Prohibited in Mount Diablo State Park except by special event permit. Contact the Park Office for such permits.

Fireworks

Prohibited as a fire and safety risk in Mount Diablo State Park.

Weapons

All guns, hunting knives, bow and arrows, spears, pepper spray or anything that can be used as a weapon is prohibited in the Park. The only exception is that off duty law enforcement officers are permitted to carry their concealed weapon while in the Park.

General Park Information

Can I get a season pass for the Park?

There are not annual passes available for Mount Diablo State Park, per se.

Information on all State Park pass types and purchase of selected ones is available at www.parks.ca.gov, or by calling the Park Office (925-673-2891) or by stopping by either the North or South Gate Entrance Stations. Special passes for seniors, disabled or veterans require a mailed application.



Can you reserve the picnic area for special events?

Yes, contact the Junction Ranger Station (925-837-6129).

Do I have to have a reservation for a picnic area?

If they would prefer not to make a reservation and just show up for the day of the event, one person must be present at each picnic table being reserved. We don't allow people to place table cloths, flowers, coolers or other things on tables to reserve them. Another option is to reserve a group campsite

for the day. The cost is equivalent and often less as a certain number of vehicles are permitted in for free.

If the group size is over 40 people, inquire about a special event permit by emailing Feedback.MountDiablo@parks.ca.gov

Is there rock climbing in the Park?

Yes, at Rock City. Most popular is Boy Scout Rock. It is located about a half mile from the South Gate kiosk on the right-hand side. It is accessible from the road or by trail (Madrone Canyon Trail out of Lower Rock City). Also, backside of Sentinel Rock is an option (in Rock City as well), accessible by trail from behind.

And lastly, the Castle Rocks, off North Gate Road, is a good option. However, note that this area is closed to the public from February 1st through July 31st during peregrine falcon nesting season.

Can I do a celebration of life by spreading human ashes in the Park?

Yes. This requires a permit and fee. Contact the Park Office for details and guidelines.



Trails and Hiking.

Who has right-of-way on trails and roads?

Horses have right-of-way over bikers and hikers. Hikers have right-of-way over bikers. However, not all trail and road users remember this. Caution is the best advice.

What is the best spring wildflower and best butterfly trail?

Mitchell Canyon Road and Globe Lily Trail. The Falls Trail is very nice in Spring. Up by the Summit, the North Peak Trail from Devil's Elbow to Prospectors gap has a nice variety of wildflowers.

What is the best hiking route to the summit of Mount Diablo from Mitchell Canyon?

The shortest route is a little over 12 miles. It is a steep climb. With the exception of the Juniper Campground, there is no water between here and the Summit. A free hand out in the wall hanger describes the recommended route. Routes to the Summit are also in the Hiker's Guide to Mount Diablo. There are also good options originating on the Danville and Walnut Creek sides of the Park.

How do I get to Eagle Peak?

There is a free hand out in the wall holder. The recommended route is also in the Hiker's Guide to Mount Diablo.

How do I get to the Falls Trail?

There is a free hand out in the wall holder. Directions from Mitchell Canyon are also in the Hiker's Guide to Mount Diablo.

Where is the Black Point Loop?

See the Hiker's Guide to Mount Diablo. It is accessed by Mitchell Canyon and Red Roads.

What is a good three to four hour loop from the Mitchell Canyon Staging Area?

Head to Mitchell Rock, Twin Peaks, and return by Back Creek and Coulter Pine trails. (Ck handout for Eagle Peak loop)

What is an easy hike from here?

Mitchell Canyon Road is fairly flat for a couple of miles for a nice out and back flat hike. Take the adjoining Globe Lily Trail on the way up for a slightly different route. This is a good option for families with young children. Be sure to give them a handout explaining the interpretive posts along the way.

What are the stakes along Mitchell Canyon Road that have a white top?

The numbers are keyed into a Mitchell Canyon Brochure that describes what you can see at that location. Brochure is available in the MCVC and at the trail head.

Where does the Grand Loop Trail go?

It circles the mountain beginning at the Summit or at Juniper Campground and does not involve Mitchell Canyon. The route for the hike is listed in the Hiker's Guide to Mount Diablo.

When is the next organized hike from Mitchell Canyon?

A schedule of docent lead hikes is posted on the bulletin board in the Center, and also on the MDIA website. Other groups such as Save Mount Diablo or the Sierra Club also offer group hikes.



What are good apps for hiking?

A lot of visitors use All Trails, or Easy2Hike, or Gaia GPS. We have no specific recommendations.

Are there any apps useful in identifying wildflowers or butterflies?

Check the MDIA website for wildflower information and the current Bloom Report. There are lots of options. Some of our docents use iNaturalist. We have no specific recommendations.

How many miles of trails and fire roads are in Mt Diablo?

There are currently 162 miles of trails and fire roads in service.

Why do we have to pay for a trail map?

The map is published by MDIA and all profits are reinvested in the Park. It is not funded by the State.



Camping.

Where can I get information on camping?

There are flyers in the wall hanger, online at www.parks.ca.gov and in the Mount Diablo Review. Camping is only allowed in designated campgrounds.

How do I make a camping reservation?

Go to www.ReserveCalifornia.com. Reservations are recommended. However, if the visitor wants to know about immediate availability, you or the visitor can call Southgate to find out if there are vacancies.

Are camping reservations needed?

Yes, on most weekends and holidays in the Spring and Summer. They are recommended anytime you are interested in a specific campground or campsite. You can also register at North or South Gate kiosks. There are sometimes a few sites available first come, first serve.

Do backpackers who want to camp overnight need a permission to leave a car in the Mitchell Canyon Parking Lot?

Yes. They must have a camping reservation. Leave a copy of the reservation confirmation on the dashboard of the vehicle. If the copy of the reservation is not visible, the vehicle will be issued a citation. Leaving a vehicle at Mitchell Canyon is not encouraged given the challenge of hiking to the campgrounds and returning. There is no backcountry camping.

Is there any camping at Mitchell Canyon?

No. Access to the campgrounds is on North Gate and South Gate Roads and are reached by car.

Is there a way for a group to camp together?

Yes, the best option, depending on the size of the group is one of the group campgrounds. There are five group campgrounds— Stagecoach, Boundary, Buckeye, Wildcat and BBQ Terrace. See the above referenced info about camping for more details. Reservations for group campgrounds are required. It is also possible to reserve a couple of adjacent individual sites in one of the other campgrounds for a small group.

Horses and camping.

People with horses can camp in any campsite where there is sufficient room for their horses and equipment. However, the group campgrounds might be the best option, depending upon the number of campers/horses. BBQ Terrace is the only one with horse ties. Equestrians are required to cleanup all hay and droppings.

General Inquiries

Are there any historic or pioneer sites to visit in Mitchell Canyon?

Not per se. However, there is lots of interesting history to learn and explore. Refer to the book, Mountain Lore, for more information.

What are the tubes for in the ground behind the Center and further up Mitchell Canyon Road? They provide protection from animals for newly planted native species.

What are the little flags on wires?

They mark special plants we have located.

Is there a way to get to Donner Canyon Road from here?

Yes. Refer to the Park map.

Where are the Coulter Pines?

The most obvious trail to see them is the Coulter Pine Trail, but they are seen on other trails – Mitchell Rock Trail, Mitchell Canyon Fire Road and others.

We saw large hairy spiders, are they tarantulas?

Probably. They are most often seen in the Fall during mating season. Refer to the Tarantula Flyer for more details.

When is “Tarantula Season?”

Roughly August through October, depending on the weather.

How did Mitchell Canyon get its name?

The Mitchells lived and farmed here. We sell a book, "Mountain Lore" which gives a lot of historical reference for names used in the State Park.

What are they mining in the quarry at the Park entrance? The rock is Diabase, an igneous rock. It is used in constructing roads and buildings. The gravel in the parking lot is from that mine.

How do I drive to the Summit?

There are driving instructions on the desk. Please explain that it will take about 2 minutes just to get to North Gate entrance in Walnut Creek.

How do I get to Live Oak Campground?

Show them on the Trail Map—it is in Rock City on the other side of the mountain, easiest via South Gate Road or highlight it on the driving directions to the summit.

How do I get to the Juniper Campground?

From Mitchell Canyon, show them how to get to North Gate and then Summit Road.

Where are the Wind Caves?

In the Rock City area on South Gate Road. This is about an hour drive from Mitchell Canyon.

Where is the Mount Diablo State Park Office?

96 Mitchell Canyon Road. As you approach the gate to the Mitchell Canyon day use area, turn right. The office is the first building on your left. Best to call ahead. Hours are variable. 925-673-2891.

**What is MDIA? How do I join?**

Mount Diablo Interpretive Association assists the Park by providing funds and educational experiences for the public by publications, hikes etc. Information is on line at www.mdia.org. Membership forms are available on the desk and attached to an envelope. If the visitor wants to join, payment may be made by cash, check or charge on Square. After they have filled out the information on the form and paid, you may give them the envelope and put the form in the cash box. There is a membership flyer on the desk if they choose to investigate further.

Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center Operations

What if the phone rings in the MCVC and someone is calling for Cameron

(Supervising Ranger)? His new number is 925-673-2895. However, an email inquiry is best. He is often not in the Office. His email is cameron.morrison@parks.ca.gov.

How do I go about becoming a docent or volunteering in any way at the Park? Ask them to contact Steve Elliott at sae612@msn.com.

When is the MCVC open?

We are open weekends and selected holidays. Hours are March through October, 8am to 4pm and November through February, 9am to 3pm.

What should I do if no one shows up for the afternoon shift at MCVC?

Try to phone the MCVC Manager on duty for the month, if not reachable, try to call or text Steve Elliott at 925-640-9797, if you cannot reach anyone and must leave, just follow the closing procedures and lock up. Please leave a phone message with the MCVC manager for the month at some point.

What do I do if the gate is locked when I come in for my morning shift?

First try the camp host to see if they are there to open it. If not, go into the MCVC and call a ranger on the radio to come over to open it.

What if it is raining, do I stay open?

This is a judgement call by the MCVC manager on duty. Usually we stay open during light rain and close during heavy rain.

What should I do if there is no toilet paper in the restrooms?

First check with the camp host to see if he/she is there, if so, they will take care of problem. If not, there is a key in the drawer for the cabinet in the men's restroom which holds the supplies. There is also a key for unlocking the large commercial toilet paper holders in the restrooms.

What should I do if the iron ranger is out of payment envelopes?

There are more in the desk and a key in the key box to open the holder. If you exhaust the few envelopes we have on hand, contact a Park Ranger.

What if the iron ranger payment slot is full?

Contact a Park Ranger to empty it. You can accept and hold a few until that happens, but do not let it go too long. Just put the envelopes in the cash drawer and the manager will get them deposited to the State Park.

Master document of FAQ's prepared by

Mike Brandy, MCVV Co-manager

Please send potential revisions to

brandymike@gmail.com