



Recreating the East Mojave Heritage Trail

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Many overlanders/explorers have either heard of or explored the historic and world famous 140-mile-long Mojave Road. Located in the East Mojave Desert in California, it stretches in an east-west relatively straight line from Fort Mohave near Needles to Camp Cady near Barstow. One of the original settler trails west, it was rediscovered, documented and popularized in the 1970s and 1980s by renowned Mojave Desert explorer and historian Dennis Casebier. Since then, it has been considered one of the top overland and desert exploration routes in North America. However, ask those same overlanders/explorers if they've heard of the East Mojave Heritage Trail and you'll most likely get a blank stare and a "Huh, the what?" in response.

Recognizing the potential for overuse and negative ecological impact, Dennis created The East Mojave Heritage Trail (EMHT) in the latter half of the 1980s as an alternative to the Mojave Road. Rather than following an established historical A to B route like Mojave Road, the EMHT is a comprehensive tour through some of the most remote portions of the East Mojave Desert encompassing many historical sites and areas that give the route its name.

In its original form, the EMHT covered 660.0 miles (yes – 660 MILES!!)

with four guidebooks providing historical facts, information on local flora and fauna, detailed geographic descriptions, as well as cumulative mileage along the route. Included in the guidebooks are: four summary maps, 71 individual detailed maps, and about 1,200 pages of text containing vital route information, history, key personalities, and flora and fauna in each area.

Soon after the final book was published, the 1994 Desert Protection Act was passed, creating the Mojave National Preserve,

and along with it multiple wilderness areas that cut the EMHT in 13 places, impacting more than 75 miles. Given the guidebooks are laid out in precise cumulative miles using geographic landmarks as the primary direction finders, any deviation from the original route rendered the guidebooks useless. After more than four years of effort and at great personal expense, Casebier abandoned the effort, but not before an initial run of books had been published. It was a set of these books that I sourced in 2017

inspiring me to recreate the track in 2019, its 30th anniversary.

I spent 18 months researching, mapping, and coordinating with both BLM and NPS in creating my expedition and in May 2019 launched my solo journey to prove out and complete the EMHT. After six days, I successfully completed my solo trek of the remapped EMHT and with Dennis' blessing incorporated more features and sites that are key parts of the Mojave heritage to make it more appealing to the modern explorer. Additionally,

there are alternatives provided in some areas that are extremely rugged terrain, but do not lead to any particular site. Upon completion of the route, the next 15 months were spent working very closely with BLM and NPS to draft a fully compliant route that they will both support and publish. I'm happy to say, that with their cooperation, levels of which many people told me were not possible, the EMHT is once again a viable and supported long distance route – the new distance – a daunting 733 miles (see inset).

As mentioned, this is a fully comprehensive meandering tour of the Mojave Desert that traverses literally every type of terrain the Mojave Desert has to offer: hard pack, loose sand, packed sand, lava rock, wash, mountain ranges, narrow canyons, wide open vistas, and narrow shelf roads. Beyond the varied terrain, key sites and features are too numerous to list, but most are identified in the guidebooks and supplement guides. There are numerous additional side trips possible including WWII sites, hikes, mines, townships, petroglyph and pictograph sites (not listed in the guides and maps due to protection concerns). The

EMHT traverses some of the most remote reaches of the Mojave Desert so self-reliance and capability are critical to the explorer. It is highly recommended to NOT attempt the EMHT as a single vehicle.

Additionally, Segments 1,2, and 3 traverse both BLM and NPS land so only street legal vehicles can do the entire segments. Segment 4 traverses only

your paint job now.

To complete this route and understand where you are and what you are seeing, the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association (MDHCA) is once again offering for sale the original four guidebooks by Dennis Casebier. The books are \$30 each or \$100 for the complete set of four (tax is added into the listed price for CA sales).

To order or download, go to: <https://mdhca.org/store>

The route file is online at onX Offroad maps. The EMHT is a featured route and the file also contains trail guide and technical rating information. This is a subscription service but onX is offering a 10% discount to Cal4Wheel members. Go to: <https://www.onxmaps.com>

For further details or questions, please feel free to contact me directly via Instagram DM@fractal.exploration. If you wish to read about my expedition, it was originally published in the Overland Journal Gear Guide 2020 and republished on Expedition Portal: <https://expeditionportal.com/the-east-mojave-heritage-trail/>

The East Mojave Heritage Trail after more than 25 years of being dormant, is now compliant and ready for you to explore. It can be broken up into segments or attempted in one long go – either way, it is a phenomenal route that will expose you to pretty much everything the Mojave Desert has to offer.

Enjoy yourselves, explore responsibly, and Tread Lightly. See you on the trail.



RECOMMENDED SEGMENTS

Mileage by segment and recommended timing are below:

- Segment 1: Needles to Ivanpah – 176 miles 2 days
- Segment 2: Ivanpah to Rocky Ridge – 191 miles 2 days
- Segment 3: Rocky Ridge to Fenner – 225 miles 2-3 days
- Segment 4: Fenner to Needles – 141 miles 2 days



BLM land so SXS and other vehicles can do this segment. For all segments, high clearance 4x4 with tires appropriate to the terrain and at least one differential locker is recommended. Some alternates are provided that help mitigate the locker requirement – though not all the way. There are many areas where your paint will get “striped” – so divorce yourself from

Quantities are limited and once they're gone, they're gone. The guidebook(s) will also come with the corresponding Supplement Guide(s) to provide the updated route information to stay compliant. Each supplement guide also contains vital terrain and logistics information. If you already own the books, you can download the Supplement Guides for free.

For more information and photos, visit <https://bit.ly/emht-guide>

