



Photo: Desert Adventures

# Jeep journeys

**Desert Adventures gives groups a new way to experience the desert**

To Charlie and Mary Dungans, the desert isn't a dry, barren land, but a place of possibility.

In 1988, this couple realized that many travelers to the desert experienced little beside traditional activities such as golf and tennis. So, they conceived the idea of offering entertaining, educational jeep tours into the Santa Rosa Mountains. Within four months of brainstorming the idea, Desert Adventures was born with an initial fleet of three used vehicles and a capacity of nine passengers. The tours were a success from the beginning, and by the second year the capacity had grown to 35 tour seats, and clients were coming back for more. Today, Desert Adventures has 16 custom-built Jeep Scramblers with the ability to carry 112 passengers at a time, several times a day. Many of the jeep tours travel to Desert Adventures' private Metate Canyon Ranch, a 1,000-acre preserve located just minutes from Palm Springs.

Desert Adventure's guides are the heart of the business and have been called the "Best Guides in America" by *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine. Known for their vast knowledge and storytelling skills, the guides are trained extensively in local history, geology, ecology, and Native-American lore. New guides spend a minimum of three

months in training before they qualify to offer tours.

As a full-service tour company, Desert Adventures offers several different jeep eco-adventures that cover a wide variety of interests and topics. Groups can explore the eerie world of the San Andreas Fault, wind through the agricultural fields of Coachella Valley, or take a Twilight Adventure among surreal shadows and darkness on the cooling desert landscape.

Group teambuilding activities are also available and include Jeep Photo Riddle Rallies, a Hunt for Gold scavenger hunt, and Survivor on the San Andreas Fault. Motorcoach adventures can be arranged to take groups to destinations such as Joshua Tree National Park, the Palm Springs Aerial Tram, and Salton Sea.

Desert Adventures also caters to groups by arranging parties and special events. Guests can take part in a Wild West Hoedown or experience an Indian Cultural Party.

Groups can also take advantage of Desert Adventure's Desert Discovery Programs. The Indian Cultural Adventure offers a look into the lives of the Cahuilla Indians, as it takes groups on a tour of a culturally and historically accurate re-creation of a Cahuilla Indian Village. Black Bart's Wild West Adventure focuses on the history and legends of the late 19th-century mining era and the settlers who came to seek their fortune in the desert wilderness. A visit to a reconstruction of a gold mine gives groups a chance to watch a gold-panning demonstration and then pan for gold themselves. Optional tour enhancements, such as mini Jeep tours or a picnic lunch, can also be arranged.

Desert Adventures offers tours appropriate for travelers of all ages and physical abilities. Many tours offer the chance to hike or take short walks. Arrangements can be made for anyone with special physical needs. •

**Above:**  
Desert Adventures has 16 custom-built Jeep Scramblers.

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