

2027 ANZA-BORREGO DESERT PHOTO CONTEST RULES

Please read entire document to ensure you are not disqualified:

1 Subject Matter

Subject matter should be naturally occurring scenes or objects found within Anza-Borrego Desert State Park®, or people enjoying those objects or scenes. The following types of subject matter should not be included in your images:

- The Galleta Meadows metal sculptures - they are not within the boundaries of the Park, nor are they naturally occurring objects.
- Buildings and other man-made objects, unless of historic or archaeological significance in the Park, or a part of the "People Enjoying Anza-Borrego Desert State Park®" category (example: mountain bikes, highway-legal Jeeps, telescopes, binoculars, etc. are allowed)
- Agricultural or non-native species of plants (e.g. oleander, rose bushes, petunias). We understand not everyone will know native vs. non-native plants, and so will make some exceptions in rare cases at the discretion of our panel of judges.
- Agricultural or pet animals (dogs, cats, horses, etc.), unless they are associated with people in the "People Enjoying Anza-Borrego Desert State Park®" category. Dogs must be on a leash.
- Any activity or object that is against Anza-Borrego Desert State Park® regulations (example: dogs off leash, ground fires, harassing animals, etc.).

2 California State Parks Regulations Compliance

All photographs must adhere to and follow regulations set by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Applicable codes can be downloaded from the [DPR website here](#). For the purpose of this contest, they are abbreviated as follows but you are responsible to know all Park rules:

- Animals: Entrants must not injure or distress any animal in an effort to gain a photograph. This includes baiting, trapping, capturing, and/or handling.
- Plants: Entrants must not disturb any plant in an effort to gain a photograph. This includes picking, manipulating, digging up, and/or removal of any living or dead plant part.
- All dogs must be on a 6' leash and are not allowed on trails or in wildflower fields.

3 Image Guidelines & Restrictions

Double Exposure & Composite Photography: Traditional or digital double exposures that combine unrelated subjects, scenes, or locations into a single image are not permitted and will be excluded from judging. Composite photographs that combine elements from different locations, different moments, or unrelated scenes are also prohibited. Examples include:

- Placing wildlife photographed in one location into another landscape
- Combining a night sky captured at one location with a foreground photographed elsewhere
- Adding celestial elements, landscapes, or subjects that were not naturally present in the original scene

However, layered or blended exposures captured at the same location and featuring the same scene or subject are permitted when used for technical or artistic enhancement. This includes:

- Night sky images created from multiple exposures taken at the same location and during the same session
- Foreground and sky blends captured from the same composition to balance exposure or reduce noise
- HDR/exposure blending
- Focus stacking
- Stitched panoramas

All edits and blends must maintain the integrity of the original scene as it was experienced in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Photo Editing: There are no restrictions on photo editing, except for the double exposure and composite image exclusions above. Black and white conversions, color alterations, and other enhancements will all be judged within the context of the contest's theme.

Identifying Marks: Do not add a signature or watermark to your photograph. Photos with signatures or watermarks will be disqualified, as they jeopardize the anonymity of the contest.

Rules Continued on Next Page...

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4 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Digital Editing Rules

Anza-Borrego Desert Photo Contest celebrates authentic photography that reflects the real landscapes, wildlife, night skies, and experiences of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools—including but not limited to Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, DALL-E, Adobe Firefly generative image tools, or other text-to-image/image-generation software—is prohibited in all contest categories. Entries must originate from a photograph captured by the submitting photographer.

Moderate digital editing that preserves the integrity of the original scene and subject matter is permitted. Acceptable adjustments include cropping, color correction, exposure adjustments, sharpening, noise reduction, dodging and burning, healing, cloning, removal of sensor dust or minor distractions, layer masking, stitched panoramas, focus stacking, HDR/exposure blending, and infrared photography. Photoshop's Content-Aware Fill/Expand or similar AI-assisted corrective tools may be used only for minor cleanup purposes comparable to healing or cloning and may not significantly alter the scene or introduce new visual elements.

The addition, removal, replacement, or generation of substantial content—including skies, wildlife, celestial objects, landscapes, plants, people, or other elements—is not permitted. Composite images created from multiple unrelated photographs are also prohibited. Contest organizers reserve the right to request original RAW files or unedited image files for verification. Entries found to violate these rules may be disqualified.

5 Permission to Use Submitted Images

By entering this contest, you grant Anza-Borrego Foundation and its representatives a non-exclusive, perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free license to use, reproduce, publish, and display your submitted photograph(s) in any media format, for purposes including but not limited to marketing, promotion, educational outreach, and fundraising, whether or not directly related to the contest. You retain full copyright to your work. This license does not require additional compensation and does not limit your right to use or license the image elsewhere. We will give photo credit when possible.

6 Non-eligible Participants

The following persons may not enter this contest:

- ABF staff and board members
 - Photo contest judges and committee members
 - Borrego Art Institute paid staff and board members
 - Employees of the Colorado Desert District of California State Parks
 - Immediate family members of any of the above persons
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7 People in Photos

If your photo contains identifiable people, you must attach a [release form](#), signed by each person in the photo (or each minor's parent or guardian).

Questions? Please email Briana at briana@theabf.org!

Submission Instructions Continued on Next Page...

ROUND TWO SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS & REQUIREMENTS

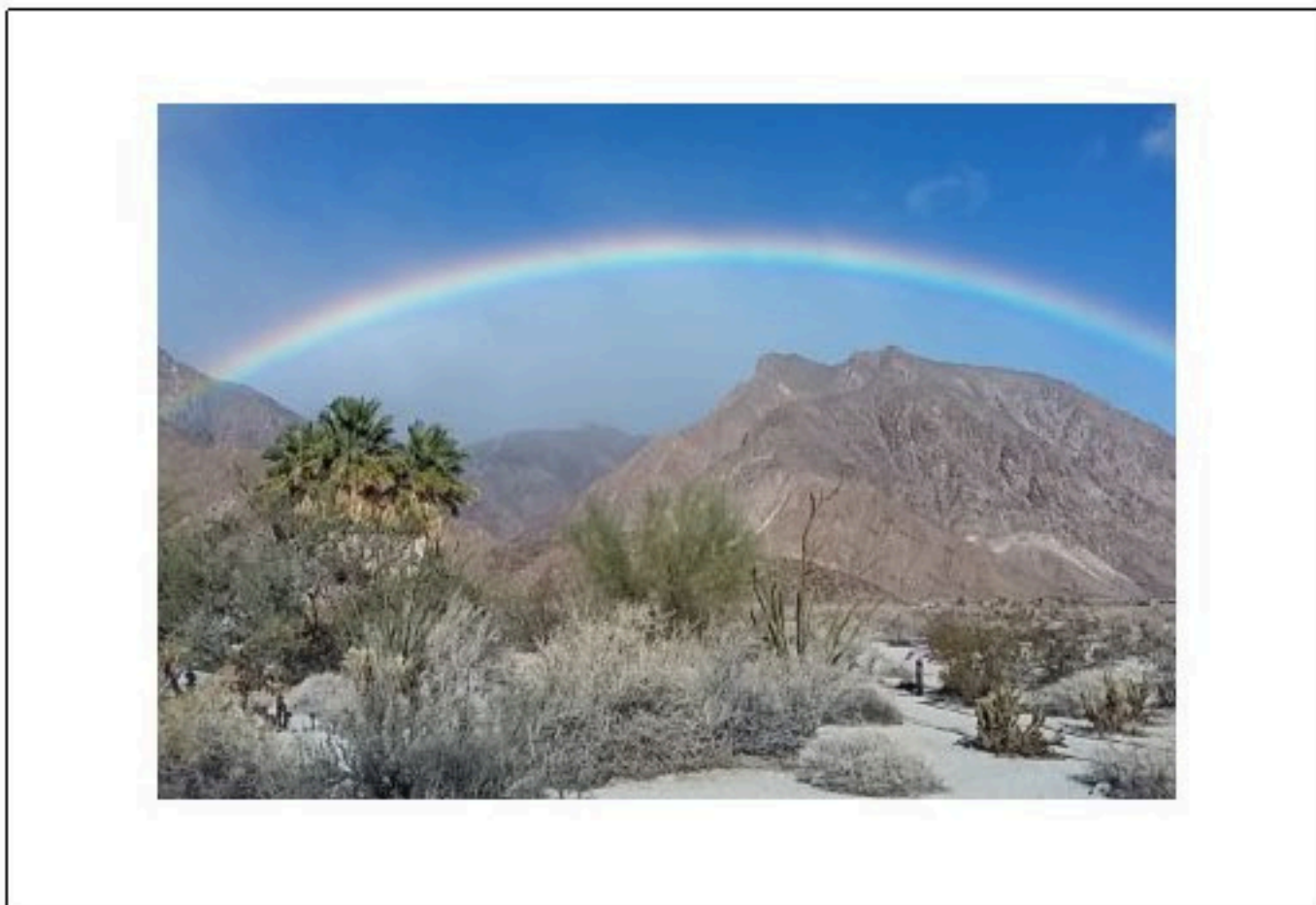
Examples of Correct and Incorrect Mounting Methods:



This is good! ↑



This is NOT OKAY! ↑
(border around photo)



This is good! ↑



This is NOT OKAY! ↑
(black foam core)



This is good! ↑



This is NOT OKAY! ↑
(identifying signature)

Submission Instructions Continued on Next Page...

Read all information below carefully! Submissions not following this format will be disqualified.

For questions, please contact Briana at briana@theabf.org.

Submission Deadline:

Your properly mounted photo and \$5/photo submission fee must be received in the ABF office or submitted to Watts Printing no later than January 12, 2027 at 5:00 p.m. By submitting mounted photos, photographers give Anza-Borrego Foundation permission to sell the print, with all proceeds to benefit ABF programs.

Submission Guidelines (see examples above):

- Each photograph must be attached to a **white 11" x 14"** foam core or mount/matte board, no thicker than 3/16" (available at most craft/art/photography stores). No metal mounts.
- The photograph itself may be any size, up to 11" x 14", color or b/w, vertical or horizontal.
- Each photo must have the [Entry Form attached to the back](#).
- If the photo includes identifiable people, you must attach a Model Release Form signed by all those in the photograph, or their legal guardians if under the age of 18.

Things that will get you DISQUALIFIED:

- Frames, mattes, glass or plastic covers of any kind. ABF will insert all prints into protective sleeves upon arrival in our office.
- Signatures, writing or other identifying information on the front of the images. This ensures that participants remain anonymous during the Final Judge Review.

Submitting your Photo(s):

- Mail your photo(s) to: Anza-Borrego Desert Photo Contest:
Anza-Borrego Foundation
587 Palm Canyon Dr. Suite 122
P.O. Box 2001
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
- Hand deliveries are also accepted at ABF's Administrative Office, open Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.:
Anza-Borrego Foundation
587 Palm Canyon Dr. Suite 122
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
- All materials will be handled with reasonable care. However, ABF assumes no responsibility for the safety of any photos.

Return of Photos:

Unsold entries may be picked up in person at the ABF Administrative Office starting March 8, 2027. ABF is unable to return photos by mail. ABF is not responsible for any submissions not claimed by June 1, 2027. Any photos left after June 1, 2027, become the property of Anza-Borrego Foundation and can be sold in the State Park Store with all funds benefitting ABF programs.

CONTEST TIMELINE

1. **Round 1 - Online Submission:** November 1 - December 13, 2026. All photos must be digitally submitted through www.theABF.org/PhotoContest by December 13, 2026. You can submit up to 10 photographs per person.
2. **Initial Judge Review:** December 14 – December 20, 2026. Our panel of judges will review all submissions and decide which photographs will move on to Round 2. Those selected will be notified on December 21-22, 2026.
3. **Round 2 - Print Submission** (invite only): December 22, 2026 - January 12, 2027. We must receive your printed photograph, which must adhere to our guidelines, and your \$5/photo submission fee, by January 12, 2027, for it to be considered in Round 2 of the judging.
4. **Final Judge Review:** January 23, 2027. Printed photos will be used for judging in Round 2 and if it is awarded a prize, it will be hung in the gallery at Borrego Art Institute from January 30 - February 21, 2027.
5. **Online People's Choice Voting:** December 14, 2026 – January 6, 2027. The public will be able to vote for their favorite submissions during this time.
6. **Finalist Notification:** January 25-26, 2027. Anza-Borrego Foundation will notify, via email, those photographers whose photographs received first, second, third, and honorable mention awards.
7. **Opening Reception and Gallery Show:** January 30, 2027. Join us for the opening of the Gallery Show at Borrego Art Institute. The photo contest winners will be on display from January 30 - February 21, 2027.

Questions? Please email Briana at briana@theabf.org!

