

# CELEBRATING AND PROTECTING DESERTS TOGETHER





# Welcome to the World Desert Day movement!

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World Desert Day is a global celebration dedicated to raising awareness, inspiring action, and cultivating appreciation for the world's desert ecosystems and the communities, plants, and wildlife that call them home.

This toolkit provides everything your organization needs to plan, promote, and host your own World Desert Day celebration — whether you're a zoo, botanical garden, museum, or conservation organization.





## PURPOSE & GOALS

World Desert Day serves to remind us that deserts are not barren landscapes, but thriving ecosystems full of life, wonder, and hope. Your active participation in this movement is pivotal. Together, we can ensure these incredible ecosystems continue to thrive for generations to come.

### GOALS:

- **Celebrate** the beauty and biodiversity of deserts around the world.
- **Educate** communities about desert ecosystems, wildlife, and conservation challenges.
- **Inspire** sustainable actions that protect desert habitats and species.
- **Unite** organizations globally under a shared mission of desert conservation.

### WHEN TO CELEBRATE

World Desert Day is observed annually on the second Saturday of January. It is recognized as an official day in the state of California.





# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

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This guide includes:

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Conservation Leaders,

I'm reaching out with an invitation I hope you'll join: a collaborative effort among zoos and conservation organizations to promote World Desert Day (annually the second Saturday in January) and elevate desert conservation in a big, public-facing way.

Deserts cover roughly one-third of the Earth's land mass. Too often, deserts are portrayed as empty, harsh, and lifeless. You and I know the truth: deserts are not deserted.

In fact, the deserts of North America include some of the highest biodiversity on the continent, with remarkable plant and animal communities found nowhere else. Species that are increasingly pressured by climate change, development, invasive species, and water scarcity. These ecosystems deserve attention proportional to their importance, and zoos are uniquely positioned to help our communities understand why.

## What we're proposing

A simple, coordinated campaign around World Desert Day that any institution can plug into:

- **Unified messaging** (social posts, on-site interpretation, hands-on activity stations)
- **A shared call-to-action** to learn, engage, and support desert wildlife and habitat work
- **Cross-promotion** among participating organizations to amplify reach

## How you can participate (easy options)

- Utilize the World Desert Day toolkit to join the effort online or at your organization
- Share a small set of co-branded social posts during the week of World Desert Day
- Feature a desert species spotlight (native or global deserts) on-site and online
- Add a short desert conservation moment to an existing program or talk
- Encourage members and visitors to take a simple action (learn, donate, advocate, plant native, reduce water waste). Become a Desert Defender.

Even one post or one program helps—our collective voice is what makes us powerful. Your leadership in this effort would send a powerful message about the importance of environmental stewardship and global collaboration. Would you be open to joining the effort? If so, email [outreach@livingdesert.org](mailto:outreach@livingdesert.org) with the best contact on your team for education/communications, and we'll make it as turnkey as possible.

Thanks for all you do for wildlife and wild places—and for helping ensure deserts get the respect they've earned.

Warm regards,



Allen Monroe, President/CEO





## KEY MESSAGES

Use these themes across your programming and communications:

1. **Deserts are alive** – full of resilient and diverse plants, animals, and cultures.
2. **Deserts need our care** – fragile ecosystems face threats from climate change and human impact.
3. **Deserts sustain us** – through biodiversity, clean air, and cultural heritage.
4. **Everyone can act** – Be a Desert Defender! Small, local actions make a collective difference.

Examples of calls to action that you can use include:

- A. Plant Native** – planting native is an actionable way to provide healthy habitats for wildlife and to conserve water.
- B. Eat Like a Giraffe** – swapping out one meal a week for a plant-based option reduces your environmental impact.
- C. Share the habitat** – people and wildlife thrive together when we coexist and protect natural spaces.
- D. Manage Your Mess** – Leave no trace by properly disposing of waste and sorting recyclables and compostables.



# PROGRAM IDEAS

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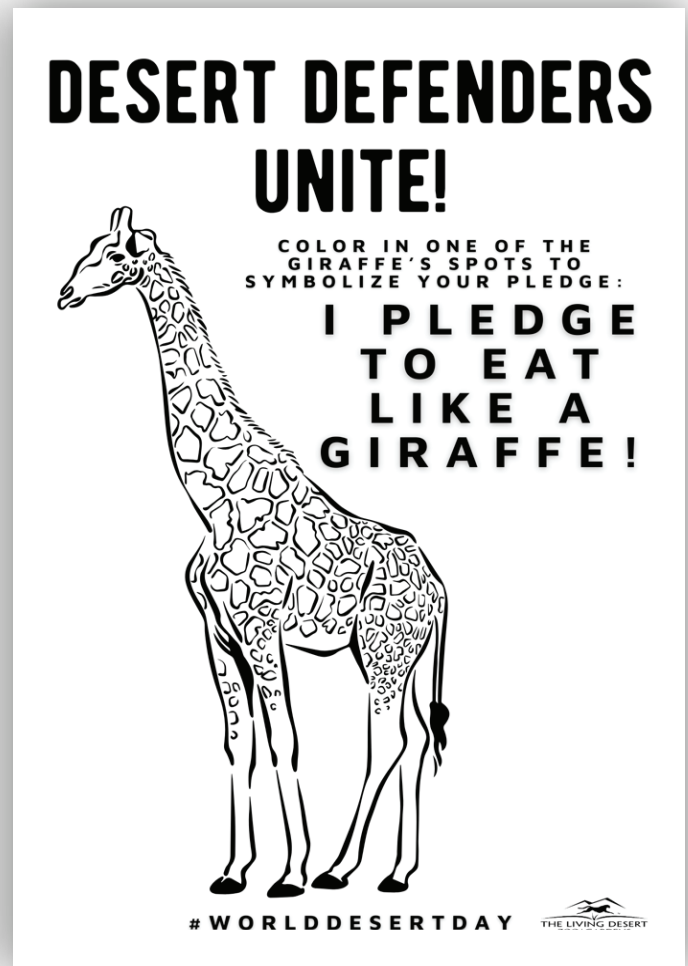
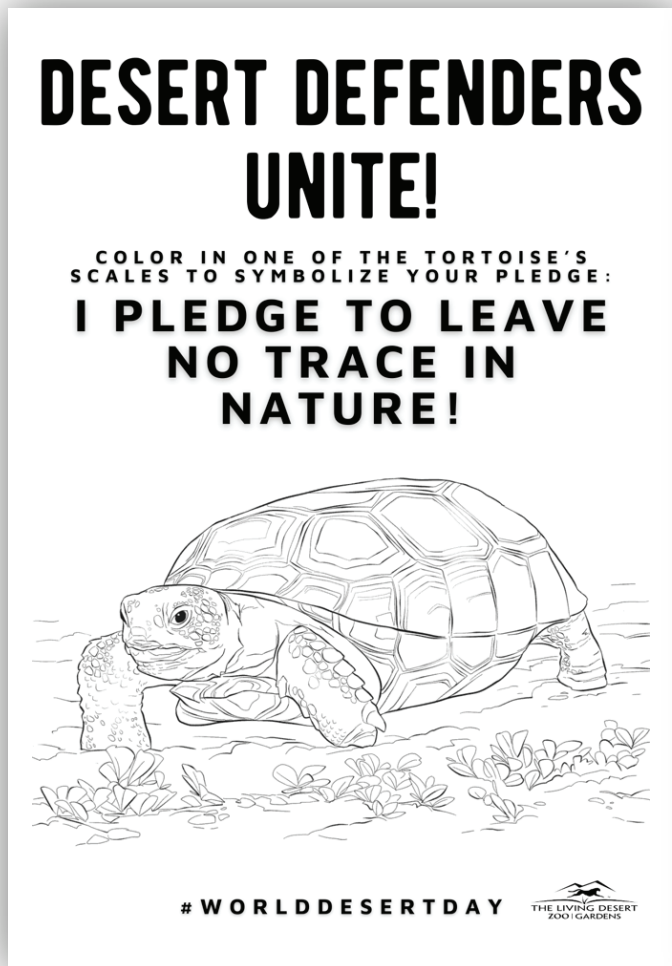
## On-site Programs

- **Passport:** Create a fun ‘Desert Passport’ card that encourages guests to visit each station. They can collect stamps or stickers as they complete activities, fostering engagement, and providing a tangible takeaway.
- **Activity Stations:** Offer hands-on activity tables featuring desert adaptations, animal tracks, and soil textures to help guests discover what makes desert life so unique.
- **Call to Action tables:** Invite guests to take part in simple conservation pledges or activities—such as planting native seeds, purchasing native plants, or choosing bird-friendly coffee. Offer small giveaways, such as stickers, bookmarks, or trading cards, that highlight desert species and inspire continued action.
- **Information Booths:** Invite local partners to share messages about their involvement in deserts and their conservation.
- **Art:** Invite visitors to create desert-themed art from natural or recycled materials. Host a chalk artist or chalk art activity with guests.
- **Wildlife Encounters:** Feature desert animal ambassadors with conservation messaging.
- **Native Plant Sales:** Partner with local nurseries to distribute drought-tolerant plants in desert climates and native plants in other climates.
- **Tours:** Provide guided tours through desert themed gardens or habitats.
- **Scavenger hunt and quizzes:** Provide a desert themed scavenger hunt for guests.
- **Presentations/Demonstrations:** Host a native gardening session or cooking class.
- **Prizes and Raffles:** Raffle off tours, special experiences, or animal art. This can be coupled with evaluation as an incentive for participation.
- **Specialty drinks and food:** Highlight food from desert regions, such as prickly pear flavored items

## In the Community

- **Community Science Projects:** Host a mini BioBlitz or wildlife observation challenge.
- **Desert Clean-Up Day:** Engage volunteers in restoring local desert habitats.
- **Pollinator Garden Planting:** Engage volunteers in establishing a drought-tolerant, desert native pollinator garden.

### Example Call to Action pledges





Example Call to Action activity sign



# ADVOCACY: Inspiring Action for Desert Conservation

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World Desert Day is not just a date on the calendar; it's a pivotal moment for policy and community change. Your organization's involvement, along with the active participation of the community, can inspire civic leaders, legislators, and the public to recognize and protect desert ecosystems locally and globally. Your actions can make a significant difference. Use this section as a starting point, adapt and personalize it for your own community.

## How to Get Started

- **Raise Awareness:** Share why deserts matter in your region by linking biodiversity, water conservation, and cultural heritage to local relevance.
- **Engage Leaders:** Encourage your mayor, council members, state representatives, and federal representatives to issue a proclamation. California has already formally recognized World Desert Day, and a federal resolution to designate National Desert Day is now in development. Your local advocacy can help build nationwide recognition. Customize this to include your region's desert landscapes, regional species, and community priorities.
  - **Tip:** The Living Desert is currently working with **Congressman Raul Ruiz, M.D.**, and other partners to establish National Desert Day at the federal level. Invite your own congressional representatives to express support or co-sponsor the national resolution — every letter and endorsement helps advance this effort.
- **Mobilize Your Community:** Host a postcard or letter-writing station where guests can send messages to elected officials in support of desert protection and sustainability.
- **Partner for Impact:** Collaborate with AZA institutions, conservation groups, tribal partners, and community organizations to strengthen our collective advocacy. Together, we can make a significant impact on desert conservation.



## Postcards & Letters

**Create a station where guests can write messages to local, state, or federal leaders.** Check the AZA Legislative Education Center for current wildlife or conservation priorities that align with your mission.

### **Print your own postcards or letters:**

- The postcards can be printed double-sided in-house utilizing Avery #8386 (4x6 matte white) printable postcards, or professionally printed

### **Message ideas:**

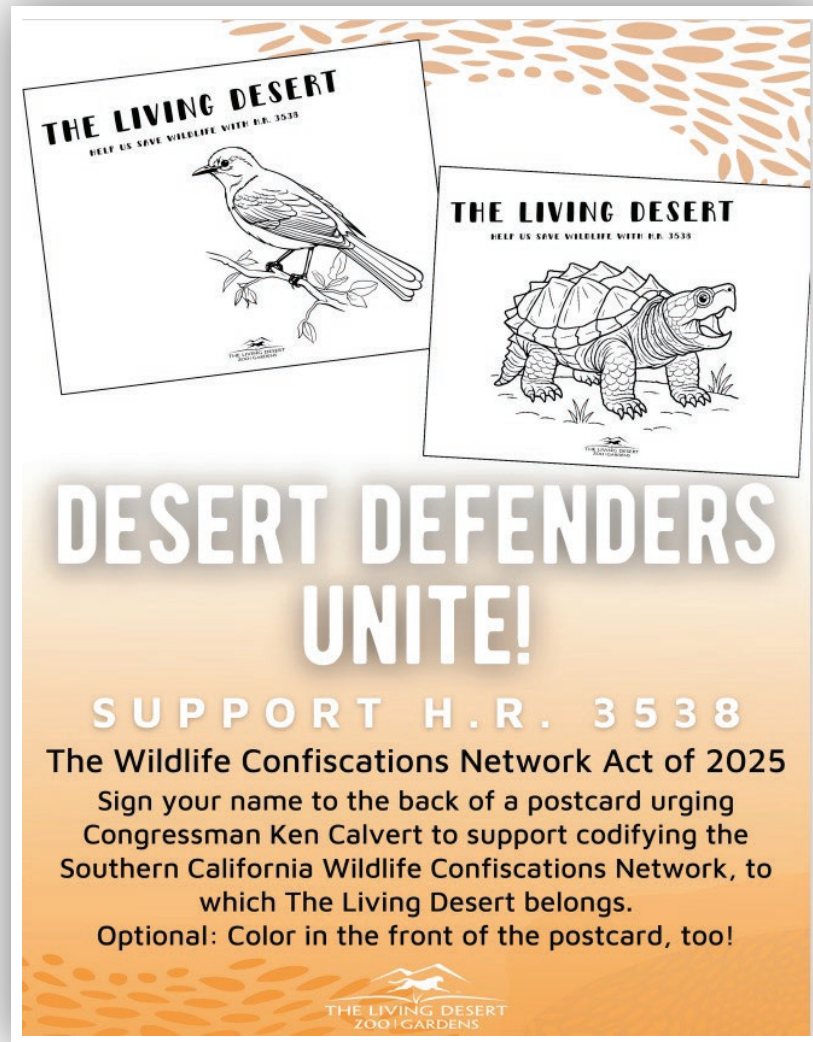
- “Dear [elected official], Please support the Wildlife Confiscations Network Act of 2025. H.R. 3538. Let’s protect and provide care for victims of wildlife trafficking, like our recently rescued [insert species your facility has rescued]. See below for an example image.
- “Protect Our Deserts, Protect Our Future.”
- “Deserts Sustain Life, Let’s Keep Them Thriving.”
- “Join me in celebrating World Desert Day, recognize and protect desert ecosystems today!”

Encourage guests to write about why deserts matter to them; personalization helps every message resonate more effectively and shows that their unique perspectives are valued in this advocacy effort.

### **Example Postcard**



## Example Instructional Signage



### Invite Local Officials

Inviting elected officials adds visibility and credibility to your event. Encourage them to:

- Issue a World Desert Day proclamation or resolution.
- Attend and make brief remarks at your event.
- Share your event or photos on their social media channels.



## Editable Invitation Example

**Dear [Name],**

On behalf of [Organization Name], I am delighted to invite you to join us in celebrating World Desert Day on Saturday, January 10th, at [location]. The event, which runs from [start-end time], offers an inspiring opportunity to celebrate the beauty and significance of desert ecosystems and highlight the importance of their conservation.

We would be honored if you could share a few remarks about your commitment to preserving and celebrating desert environments. Your leadership and insights are deeply valued, and your presence will underscore the importance of collaboration in protecting these vital landscapes, inspiring our community to take meaningful action.

The event will feature engaging presentations on the state of desert ecosystems, interactive exhibits showcasing conservation efforts, and opportunities to meet conservationists who dedicate their lives to protecting desert habitats worldwide. As always, [Organization Name] is proud to serve as a campus for education and action, and we are excited to share this special day with our supporters and leaders like you.

Please RSVP by [date] to [contact email], including the names and contact information of any staff members attending.

Thank you for your continued support of [Organization Name] and for championing the causes that shape a sustainable future for our deserts, our communities, and our planet.

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

[Title]

[Organization Name]

[Phone / Email]

# Proclamation Template (Editable)

Encourage your mayor, council, or state representative to issue a proclamation. California has already formally recognized World Desert Day, and a federal resolution to designate “National Desert Day” is now in development. Your local advocacy can help build nationwide recognition. Customize this to include your region’s desert landscapes, regional species, and community priorities.

## Sample Format

- Recognition that deserts cover one-third of Earth’s landmass.
- Acknowledgment of their biodiversity, cultural heritage, and economic importance.
- A call to celebrate World Desert Day annually on the second Saturday of January.

## Or use this editable example:

**WHEREAS** deserts cover nearly one-third of the Earth’s land surface and are home to diverse plants, wildlife, and cultures uniquely adapted to thrive in arid conditions; and **WHEREAS** [Your Region/State] is home to remarkable desert landscapes, such as [insert local examples], that support biodiversity, tourism, and scientific discovery; and **WHEREAS** community organizations like [Your Organization Name] educate and inspire action to protect these ecosystems.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** I, [Mayor/Official Name], on behalf of the [City/County/State], do hereby proclaim the second Saturday of January as **WORLD DESERT DAY**

And encourage all residents to celebrate, learn about, and take action to protect desert ecosystems for the benefit of people and wildlife everywhere.

**Signed this [Day] of [Month], [Year]**

[Signature Line / Seal]

## Advocacy Tips

- **Be Local:** Connect desert protection to native plants, pollinators, or regional wildlife corridors.
- **Be Positive:** Inspire hope and collaboration, not despair.
- **Be Visual:** Use desert imagery, youth art, or short stories from your community.
- **Be Consistent:** Tag #WorldDesertDay and share highlights with The Living Desert for global amplification.

Every proclamation, postcard, and partnership brings us closer to a world where deserts are understood, respected, and protected. Your advocacy ensures deserts have a seat at the conservation table, today and every day.



# MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

The World Desert Day logo represents a global movement to celebrate, protect, and elevate desert ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. Consistent and thoughtful use of the logo ensures that all communications reflect a unified, professional brand. To keep our message strong and consistent worldwide, all partners, collaborators, and advocates should follow these guidelines when using the logo.



## Download World Desert Day Assets

**Use the logo whenever possible, especially for:**

- Print materials (flyers, posters, brochures)
- Press releases and media kits
- Event signage and banners
- Digital communications (email, websites, presentations)
- Merchandise (shirts, stickers, pins)

The toolkit includes logo files optimized for specific uses:

Type	Format	Best Use
Vector	AI, Vector	Large print, signage, templates, professional design work
High-Res Raster	PNG	Digital use, presentations, web graphics
Print Raster	JPG	Standard print materials when vector is not possible

**Need photos or videos?** Visit [LivingDesert.org/WDDAssets](https://LivingDesert.org/WDDAssets) to download assets from The Living Desert. Please credit images/videos to The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens for any external use.

## On-Site Promotion

On-site promotion should focus on creating a cohesive and highly visible experience through branded banners, signage, and staff apparel placed throughout the grounds. QR codes can be integrated across these touchpoints to direct guests to pledge forms and social media channels, making engagement quick and intuitive. Dedicated photo stations with desert-themed backdrops will encourage guests to capture and share their experience, extending the event's reach beyond the Zoo through social media.

### Example Staff Shirts



### Example Signage





We recommend a coordinated PR approach that begins with issuing a press release to local and regional media outlets to establish awareness and credibility. This should be followed by targeted pitches to environmental blogs and community newspapers to secure feature coverage that provides deeper storytelling. You can also offer interviews with your team's conservation experts to radio and television outlets to expand reach, add authority, and reinforce the organization's leadership in conservation.

### **CELEBRATING WORLD DESERT DAY: HONORING THE BIODIVERSITY AND COMMUNITIES OF THE WORLD'S DESERTS**

**[City, State] — [Date]** — On World Desert Day, organizations across the globe unite to celebrate and raise awareness for the planet's desert ecosystems—extraordinary landscapes that cover roughly **one-third of Earth's land surface**, support **around one billion people**, and sustain a remarkable diversity of wildlife and cultures. However, deserts need our help. Threats like rising temperatures and habitat loss are making survival increasingly difficult for the species who have spent thousands of years adapting to the desert's unique conditions.

Established in 2024 by The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, World Desert Day highlights the essential role deserts play in global ecological health. From **hot and dry deserts** to **semi-arid, coastal, and cold deserts**, these regions are defined not by emptiness, but by resilience, adaptation, and interconnected life. Most deserts receive **about 10 inches of rain per year**, yet they remain home to species uniquely evolved to thrive in extreme conditions.

World Desert Day invites organizations, communities, and individuals to:

- **Educate** audiences about the diversity and importance of desert ecosystems
- **Celebrate** the plants, animals, and people who call deserts home
- **Support** conservation initiatives protecting desert landscapes worldwide
- **Connect** others to the wonder and significance of desert environments

**[Organization Name]** encourages partners and community members to join in this year's celebration **[INSERT INFORMATION ON EVENT]**.

Together, we can elevate a global understanding of deserts and inspire actions that protect these remarkable ecosystems for generations to come.

## Sample Social Media Posts

We recommend launching social content four weeks prior to your event, beginning with light, engaging countdown posts to build early awareness. As the event approaches, incorporate short-form videos highlighting desert species and conservation tips, alongside interactive polls that invite audience participation. Throughout the campaign, encourage user-generated content by prompting visitors to share their own photos using #WorldDesertDay. Posting frequency should gradually increase, with the highest cadence during the event week to sustain momentum and maximize engagement.


### POST 1

#### Did you know...?

- 🌱 Deserts make up one-third of Earth's land mass.
- 🌱 Not all deserts are hot—but they are all dry.
- 🌱 Deserts are home to around 1 billion people and countless species uniquely adapted to thrive in extreme conditions.
- 🌱 Deserts are home to many iconic species found nowhere else on Earth!

Join us in celebrating #WorldDesertDay by exploring a desert near you, visiting **[Insert organization]**, or supporting our conservation programs **[Insert program info]**.

### POST 2

Deserts are full of life, and giraffes are one of their most iconic residents. 

#### **This #WorldDesertDay, you can make a difference:**

Eat Like a Giraffe and choose a plant-based meal today.  
Small choices = big impact for desert wildlife!

### POST 3

Deserts aren't deserted—they're full of life! 

Sometimes it feels like one person can't make a difference, but together we can protect these incredible ecosystems. To celebrate #WorldDesertDay, we're hosting **[Name of Event]!**

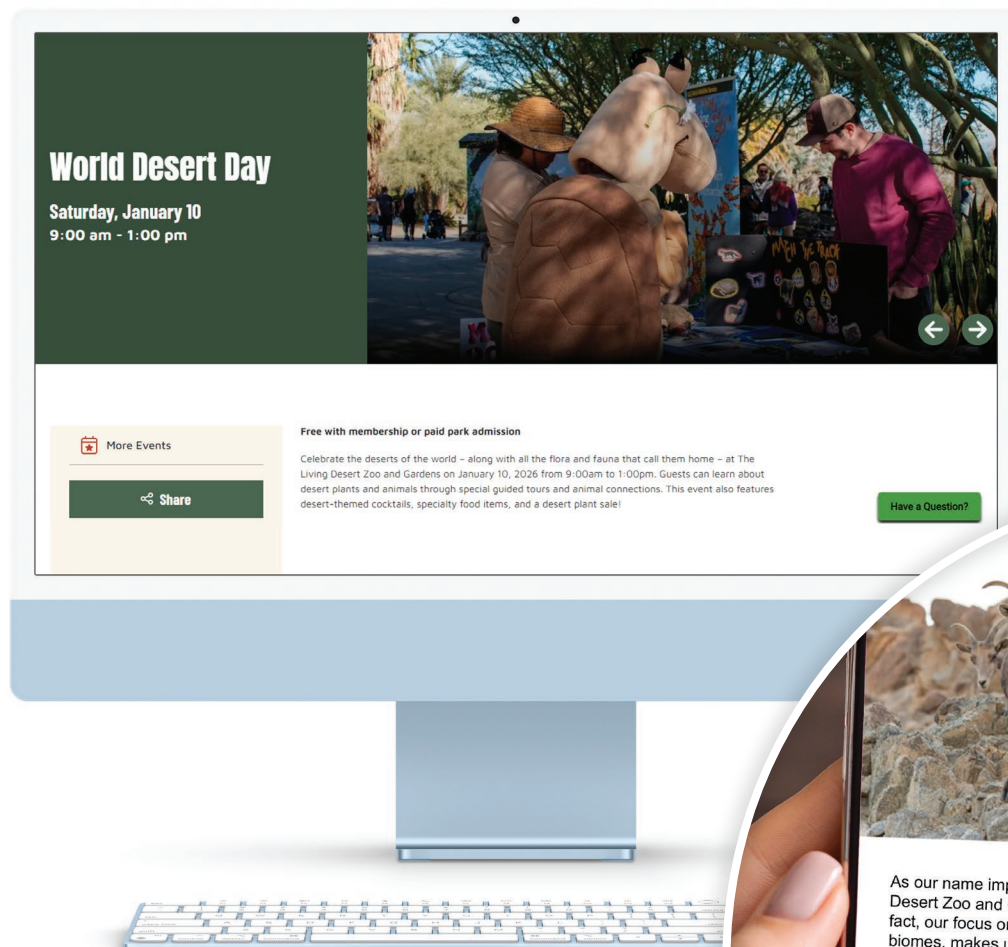
**[Add details about the event — date, time, location, activities.]**

Join us to explore, learn, and take action for deserts and the wildlife that call them home.

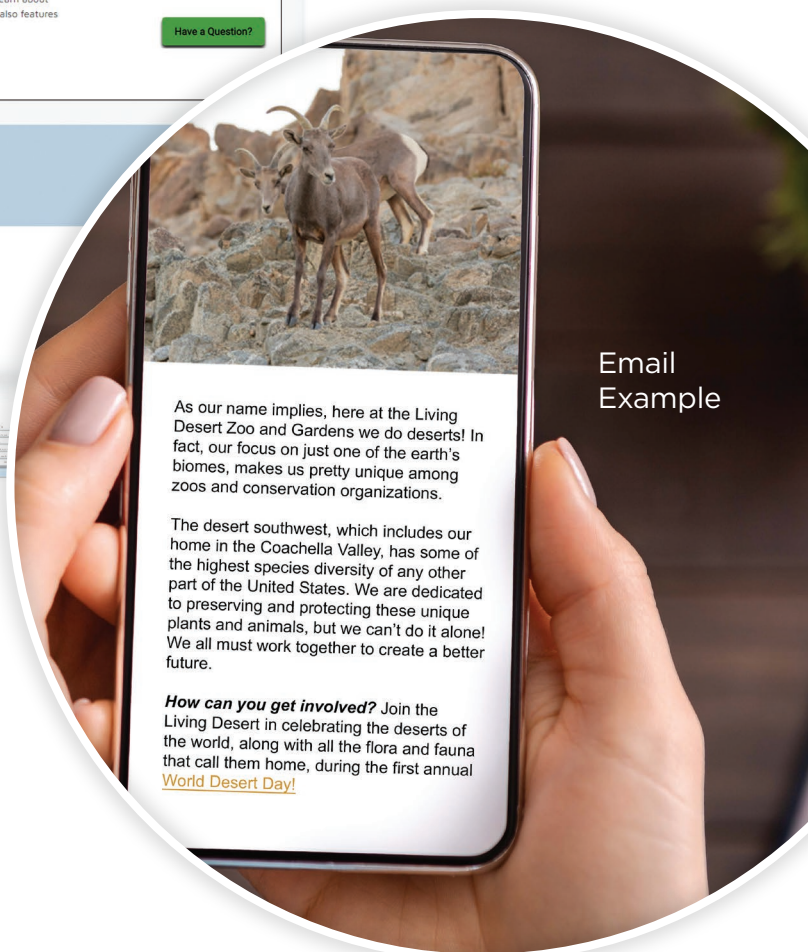


## Website and Email

Website and email efforts should be anchored by a dedicated landing page that clearly outlines event details and strong calls to action. This should be supported by a concise email cadence of two to three messages: a “Save the Date” email sent four weeks in advance to build awareness, an event highlights email one week prior to drive attendance, and a post-event “Thank You” message that shares outcomes and impact to reinforce engagement and support.



Website Example



Email Example

# EVALUATION

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## **Evaluate your success and share outcomes. Metrics can include:**

- Number of participants or visitors
- Social media engagement metrics
- Conservation pledges made or actions taken
- Stories of impact (photos, quotes, feedback)
- Survey results

## Surveys

Increase collective evaluation impact by utilizing the same questions as other facilities. Using a retrospective post-then-pre survey method, ask attendees to answer the following questions:

- Compared to before attending World Desert Day, I know more about how I can help deserts
- Compared to before attending World Desert Day, I care more about protecting deserts
- Compared to before attending World Desert Day, I'm more likely to take action to protect deserts
- Compared to before attending World Desert Day, I appreciate deserts more

Answers can range from Strongly Disagree (1) to Neutral (3) to Strongly Agree (5) and can be collected via a post-visit email using SurveyMonkey, Google Forms, etc.; or collection can take place on site using a fun voting method, such as placing stickers on posters or beads in labeled buckets. Open ended questions can also be used, such as “What do you appreciate most about the desert?”

### Example surveying using beads and buckets



## Sample Open-Ended Survey Question Signage and Display





# Theory of Change Surveys

You can also evaluate how likely guests are to complete a specific behavioral action, or you can assess what the barriers and/or benefits are to them completing that action. The Living Desert has mapped responses to the following questions onto behavior change theories like the Transtheoretical Model and Community-Based Social Marketing. For more information on doing the same at your facility, email [outreach@livingdesert.org](mailto:outreach@livingdesert.org).

## **How likely guests are to complete an action example:**

What do you think about planting native?

- Not interested in doing it
- Never thought about doing it
- Thinking about doing it
- Going to do it at the next chance
- I already do it
- I can't do it

## **Assessing barriers example:**

What's your top reason for not planting native yet?

- I can't find native plants at the store
- I don't know which plants are native
- I wouldn't know how to take care of native plants
- It's not for me
- I don't have the space
- I don't have the time
- My community makes all landscaping decisions
- Other (optional)
- I already plant native plants

## **Assessing benefits examples:**

What motivates you to eat like a giraffe?

- It's more affordable
- I enjoy the taste of plant-based foods
- It's better for my health
- It reduces my carbon "hoofprint"
- Compassion for animals
- Religious or spiritual beliefs
- Friends, family, or community influence me
- It's fun

## Example Barrier/Benefit Surveying and Instructional Signage

Tell us what you think!

### What's your top reason for not planting native yet?

Choose the bead color that best represents your answer and put it in the bin to earn a wildlife trading card!

Your answers will help us design materials to help more people plant native!

- I can't find native plants at the store
- I don't know which plants are native
- I wouldn't know how to take care of native plants
- I don't have the space
- It's not for me
- My community makes all landscaping decisions
- Other
- I already plant native plants!



Tell us what you think!

### What motivates you to eat like a giraffe?

Choose the bead color that best represents your answer and put it in the bin to earn your Eat Like a Giraffe stamp!

Your answers will help us design materials to help more people Eat Like Giraffe!

- It's more affordable
- I enjoy the taste of plant-based foods
- It's better for my health
- It reduces my carbon "hoofprint"
- Compassion for animals
- Religious or spiritual beliefs
- My friends, family, or community influence me
- It's fun to try new things



# SHARE YOUR SUCCESS

Join the global conversation!

After your event, share photos, highlights, and stories with The Living Desert to be featured on **our website** and AZA communications.

## Email

The Living Desert Community Outreach Team  
[outreach@livingdesert.org](mailto:outreach@livingdesert.org)

## Website

[LivingDesert.org/WorldDesertDay](http://LivingDesert.org/WorldDesertDay)

## Tag Us

@TheLivingDesert #WorldDesertDay



## World Desert Day Toolkit