

Welcome to the
`Ehmuu-Morteros Trail

What is a mortero? It is Spanish for mortar. The *Kumeyaay* (KOO-mee-eye) word is `ehmuu meaning “bedrock hole.” Try to visualize a stone food processor! This gives you an idea of what you might expect to see on this short stroll through time.

As you begin, allow yourself to feel the magic in this special place. Lose yourself somewhere between 100 years ago and time immemorial. As you travel from station to station, imagine a hubbub of activity. Hear the conversation of women busy grinding seeds and the sounds of children playing. Can you see men bringing home game or fresh roasted Agave?

Kumeyaay people lived here seasonally and faced many of the same challenges we deal with today. Parents faced pressures of providing for family. The young experienced life lessons and made the wonderful discoveries of childhood. Families celebrated and worked together.

Explore and take time to allow the stories to unfold for you. This is a monument to the heritage of our unique past.

Please respect, preserve, and share this special place and its stories:

- **Take only photos**
- **Collect only precious memories**

Enjoy Your Journey!

1. An Agave Roasting Pit?

`Emally is the *Kumeyaay* word for Agave. Note the dark soil and scatter of rocks in this area. What do you think caused this? It could be the remains of an Agave-roasting pit. Unfortunately, we are not sure. This trail was created by someone unaware they might be disturbing an important clue from our past. However, roasting pits do look much like this. *Kumeyaay* men would dig a deep pit and line it with rocks and a layer of hot coals. Then Agave heads, stalks, and leaves were placed on the hot bed of charcoal and covered with sand. The recipe called for three days of roasting before digging them up and eating them. Notice the Yucca and Cholla cacti (**ta`kwits**) growing here now. They seem to enjoy this charcoal-enriched earth.

2. Juniper (`ishaa) Berries

You may notice plants and shrubs here that you do not see in the lower desert. This is a Juniper tree. Juniper, Pinyon Pine (**`ehwiiw**), Agave ( **`emally**) and Yucca (**shah`aa**) are a few of the plants you will find at higher desert elevations. They are important food sources for the *Kumeyaay* people. Juniper berries may be eaten ripe or dried and added to special dishes for flavoring.

3. Standing Still in Time

Look out across this valley. Allow your eyes to wander and your ears to take in any sounds. What do you see or hear? Or maybe we should ask, “What don’t you see or hear?” Do you see any power lines, people, or traffic? You are most likely observing a setting very similar to that which *Kumeyaay* people saw 1000 years ago. You are seeing it through

modern eyes, but how might they have observed this landscape? On your return journey, you’ll stop once again at this place. Will you be viewing the landscape with different eyes?

4. Cupules

Examine the “cupules”, or small ground-out holes, in the rock. There are many of these small holes located on both vertical and horizontal rock surfaces. Why are they here? What is their function or what do they represent? They could have ritual significance, but they remain one of many mysteries in the archaeological record. Cupules are found all around the world.

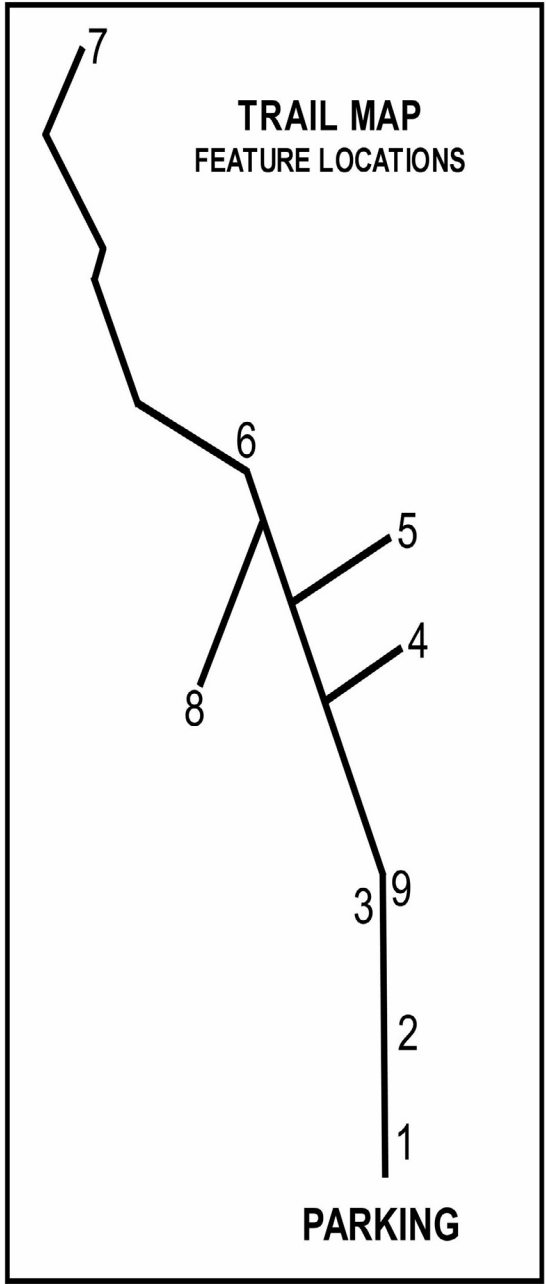
5. A Kumeyaay “Kitchen”

This is a food preparation area. See the difference in the depressions in the rocks. Some are deep, some shallow, some large, and some small. Each was used for a purpose best suited for its shape and size. There are a large number of these “kitchen appliances” on the large rocks of this area. At times, this must have been a very busy place. Imagine dozens of *Kumeyaay* women at these rock stations pounding, grinding, drying, mixing, or making cakes of the numerous wild foods gathered in this area. You might guess much of the daily news was shared here as well.

6. Walking Through an `Emally Forest

Look about on both sides of the trail and up the side of the hill to your left. You are surrounded by a large stand of Agave. Now look even closer. Do you also see a great variety in plant life? This is a virtual shopping center for a *Kumeyaay* family. The Agave (**`emally**), Yucca (**shah`aa**),

Creosote (**`epsii**), Jojoba ( **`ehchiw**), Ephedra (**`ehpiip**), cacti ( **`aanall**) and many other plants found here provided *Kumeyaay* residents with food, medicine, tools, shelter, and clothing.





7. The Pictograph

This is a clear example of Indian rock art. The *Kumeyaay* used plants and minerals for paint. Red and black are the most common colors. Black paint was commonly made by grinding up charcoal and adding oil from roasted Wild Cucumber seeds. Red paint is most often made from iron oxide. Paintbrushes were made from Yucca and Agave fibers. Fingers and sticks were also used to apply the paints. Many guess at the meanings of rock art. In truth, the stories behind most designs remain a mystery only the original artist could unravel.

8. The Rock Shelter

Kumeyaay people once used natural rock shelters like this for a number of purposes. They functioned as shelter, for food storage, or as sweathouses. Look about the hill above this village area and you'll find many rock openings used for shelter and storage. Do you see the small

basins or cupules located on the floor of this shelter? Is this a clue to its use?

9. A Place for Living

Look out once more across this valley. Do you see it any differently now? How might a *Kumeyaay* family see it? Do you see sources of water? Do you see food sources and potential shelter? Is there a greater variety of vegetation than you first noticed? We hope you enjoyed your short walk through nature and time. Please return in the future and allow the *`Ehmuu-Morteros* to share more stories with you.

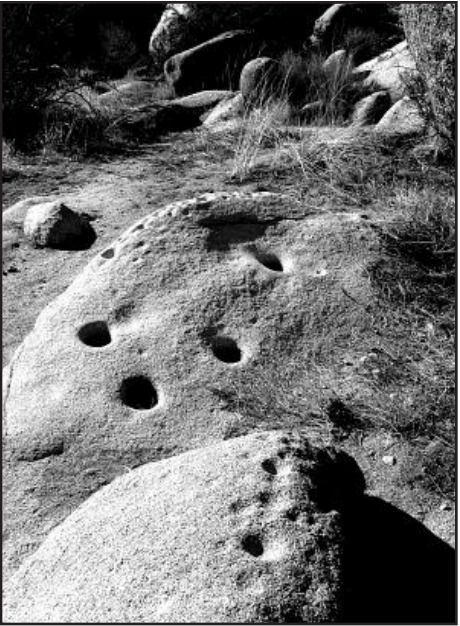
Preserving the Stories:

Now you have seen many of the natural and cultural features that make this area a valued resource. Any object, large or small, removed from this area takes away part of the story. How many stories are lost already?

Please leave every object in place so the *`Ehmuu-Morteros* can share their stories forever.

This truly is a window to past Native American lifeways and the cultural traditions that continue to be valued and practiced by the *Kumeyaay* people of today. For further information on Native American desert life and plants please visit the exhibits and desert garden at the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Visitor Center in Borrego Springs.

If you enjoyed this walk we also recommend the Pictograph Trail about 1.5 miles further along the road from the *`Ehmuu-Morteros* Trail.



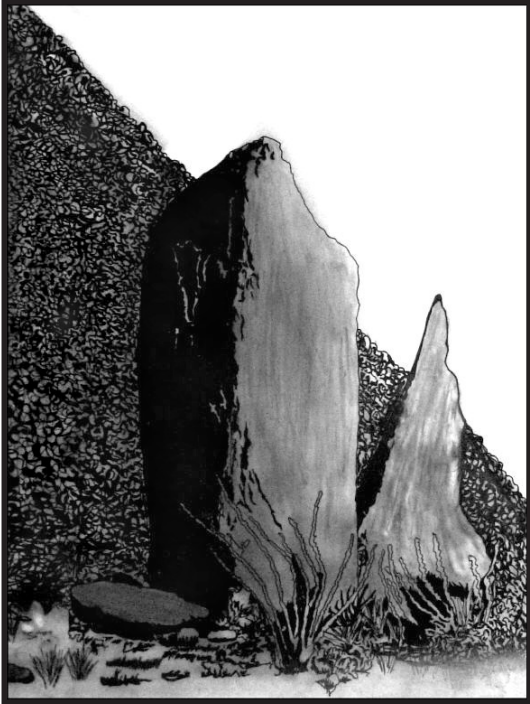
**ANZA-BORREGO
DESERT STATE PARK®**

Please keep this brochure as a souvenir or return it to the box for others to use.

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The *`Ehmuu-Morteros* Trail

Little Blair Valley Cultural Preserve



Artwork by Shot Linton

This short trail is less than one-mile round trip.

Plan at least 60 minutes for a full experience. Along the way you will pass through nature and time beginning to see the area as through the eyes of its Native People.