

SUPER BLOOM PAINTS DESERTS

Record rains unleash a generational bloom in mountains and deserts

By **CAMILA A. GONZALEZ**

PHOTOS BY CAMILA A. GONZALEZ

“A flower blooming in the desert proves to the world that adversity, no matter how great, can be overcome.” — Matshona Dhliwayo

ANZA BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK —

Super blooms — the improbable blanketing of vibrant, brittle flowers over the unforgiving expanse of harsh desert — seem more rumor than real.

This month they are real.

From the sky scratching Grapevine mountain pass at Fort Tejon, to the high deserts of Lancaster, to the alluvial lowlands of Borrego Springs, flowers have shown themselves in planes of peach, valleys of vermilion and washes of wisteria.

Southern California’s record rains painted rainbows in the sky and the desert floor of Anza

Borrego Desert State Park. Nature lovers, Instagram models, locals and flower tourists often wait years between super blooms, but the wait is over. This year’s bloom may be one of the greatest ever seen.

Anza Borrego is only about 90 miles from Chula Vista, but it is a long and winding road. Bloomers should be prepared for heat and cold as Anza Borrego is fickle as a sleepy toddler. Local merchants get rich selling interlopers sun screen, hats, water, sports drinks, jackets and snacks in addition to scorpion pops, chocolate rocks and local delicacies.

Galleta Meadows on County Highway S 22, with its towering sculptures of rusty dragons, eagles, elephants, scorpions and other animal figures, is a beauty and the beasts visage straight out of “Lord of the Rings.” It is a triple digit Land of Oz with plenty of safe places to park that requires very little walking.

Sturdy hikers ought to enjoy the Cactus Loop Trail on Yaqui Pass Road, home to barrel cactus and devil chollas bursting forth with blooms the color of frozen Gatorade.

Southern California’s magnificent flowers can hide away for decades at a time, so procrastination is unwise. Mother Nature’s festival of flowers must close soon. ■

BORREGO BOUQUET

Normally dry and generally barren of color, the Anza-Borrego Desert is carpeted with flowers and cactus blooms that spread for miles in every direction.

