

Devil's Postpile  
National Monument  
Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River

Devil's Postpile is located on the middle fork of the San Joaquin River. Foreign governments and scientific institutions from all over the world send their experts to study the splendid tower of long, dark columns of basalt. The Postpile is a mile long, a half mile wide and 400 feet high. The elevation is 7,500 feet above sea level. The President of the United States set this wonderful landmark aside as a National Monument in 1911. The Monument is set between two well known mountains, Mammoth Mountain to the east and Ritter Range to the west. The Devil's Postpile is located within the territory of the North Fork Mono Tribe. However, the landmark is revered by both the Mono and the Paiute of Mono Lake and Bishop.

There are legends regarding the origin of Fingal's Cave, on the Island of Staffa, Scotland, and the Giant's Causeway, in County Antrim, Ireland, Europe's basaltic wonders comparable to the Devil's Postpile located in Inyo County, California.

It is written that an old Paiute Indian stated that, "far, far in the dim past there came among his people a very wicked spirit who sought to subjugate them and become master. The "heap big boss" devil met an old spiritual Indian and [the old spiritual Indian] saw in him (the Devil Spirit) a dangerous and powerful rival so he cast him into a deep hole and drove the posts after him to make certain he'd remain there. He's still sputtering down there and this makes the water come up hot, accounting for the nearby boiling springs.

A young Mono boy put the subject in a different light. "All mountains," he said, "rest on posts - how else could they be held up?" "Here one slipped off!"

Of course the scientist have different theories. The presence of the postpile lava may account for an abnormal temperature gradient that gives rise to the heated water and the bicarbonated springs, and some experts point to the combination of recent volcanic activity as evidence to their theories. These theories question the pile's extreme age. Other conclude that the columns rose before those in the ruins of the temples of Athens, Pompeii, Nenevah and Nippar, dating from the beginning of things terrestrial.