

# Death Valley

NATIONAL MONUMENT • CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA



## LAND AND LIFE

Death Valley is a vast natural museum. All the great divisions of geologic time, the eras and most of their subdivisions, are represented in the rocks of the mountains bordering the great valley. These rocks and the land forms tell a story of endless changes in the earth's crust—vast depositions, contortions, tiltings, alternate risings and lowerings, faultings, and intense heats and pressures that changed the very nature of some of the rocks.

Climate, too, has played its part. In recent geologic time, powerful forces of water, wind, and gravity have sculptured much of the scenery that you see today.

In the harsh environment of the floor of Death Valley, plants and animals must inexorably adapt and specialize—or perish. The average yearly rainfall here is less than 50.8 millimeters (2 inches). Plants that do not grow near springs, pools, or other permanent water have developed specialized means to obtain and preserve water, or have adapted to quick growth and propagation through maximum use of the scant rains that fall upon them.

Between the valley floor and the mountain ridges, plant communities change in response to higher elevations that have lower temperatures, more rainfall, and snow.

Small animals in the dry valley, though largely dependent upon plants for survival, have made special adaptations that enable them to live on very little water. Larger animals are able to seek out water, and predators obtain some water from the bodies of their victims.

## MAN IN DEATH VALLEY

Evidence of the presence of man through hundreds of years is found in almost every part of the valley. Rock drawings, campsites, and foot trails remain as traces of the prehistoric hunters and gatherers.

When pioneer wagons entered the valley on Christmas Day 1849, the area was inhabited by Panamint Indians. This date marked the beginning of the turbulent modern history of Death Valley and its mountains. The Forty-niners were followed by successive invasions of prospectors and miners seeking to exploit deposits of silver and other precious metals. Each ore strike gave birth to a new short-lived settlement. Even the "white gold of the desert," borax, failed to support a permanent community. Today human presence is represented mainly by the half-million visitors drawn by the vastness of mountain panoramas, the pleasure of the winter climate, and the lore of frontier life.

## INTERPRETIVE SERVICES

The visitor center, the focal point for the Death Valley story, contains an information desk and exhibits on Death Valley's natural and human history. An illustrated slide program is given daily, and, during the winter season, naturalist programs are presented every evening. Guided walks are conducted daily and guided auto trips on weekends. Descriptions and schedules of the current program are available at ranger stations, campgrounds, and hotels in Death Valley. Many of the sights of interest in the park have interpretive signs that tell their story and explain their significance.

Self-guided auto-tour and trail leaflets can be obtained at the visitor center for the trip to Badwater and other points of interest. Also available are sales publications on the history and natural history of the park; write to the superintendent for titles and prices.

## VISITING THE PARK

This unique national monument is open all year, but winter is the best time to visit the points of interest in the valley. The long, hot summer—from May through October—is only for the hardy and venturesome. Many of the side roads from the valley are closed during this season, but you will find the higher and cooler Panamint Mountains quite comfortable.

If you travel to Death Valley in summer, pick up the information sheet, *Hot Weather Hints*, at distribution boxes at any entrance to the national monument, at the visitor center, or at a ranger station.

## ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES

**Campgrounds.** Four are at widely separated areas within the park—Furnace Creek, Grapevine, Stovepipe Wells, and Wildrose Canyon. Their locations are shown by symbols on the map. A Camping Information sheet is available at the visitor center and at all ranger stations.

**Furnace Creek Inn and Ranch.** Open from early November until Easter. Hotel rooms, cabins, food service, store, service station, garage, swimming, and horses. Write to Fred Harvey, Box 187, Death Valley, CA 92328. Limited services April through October.

**Scottys Castle.** Open all year. Food service, service station, and tours of the castle. No overnight accommodations.

**Stove Pipe Wells Village.** Open all year. Motel rooms, food, store, service station, swimming, and horses. Write to the village at Death Valley, CA 92328. Limited services May to October.

## TRANSPORTATION TO THE VALLEY

Las Vegas, Nev., is served by railroad and several airlines. From Las Vegas, commercial bus service to Death Valley is available from October 15 to May 1.





Manly Beacon, as seen from Zabriskie Point on the east side of the valley, stands out as a spectacular example of the forces of erosion. From Dante's View, at an elevation of more than 1,735 meters, the salt flats on the valley floor (below) appear to be smooth white swirls. But up close, you can readily understand why this area is called the Devil's Golf Course.

### **SOME REGULATIONS TO GUIDE YOU**

Use the park wisely, for others to enjoy.

Camp in designated localities. Camping regulations are posted in the campgrounds. Please use the receptacles provided for the disposal of trash.

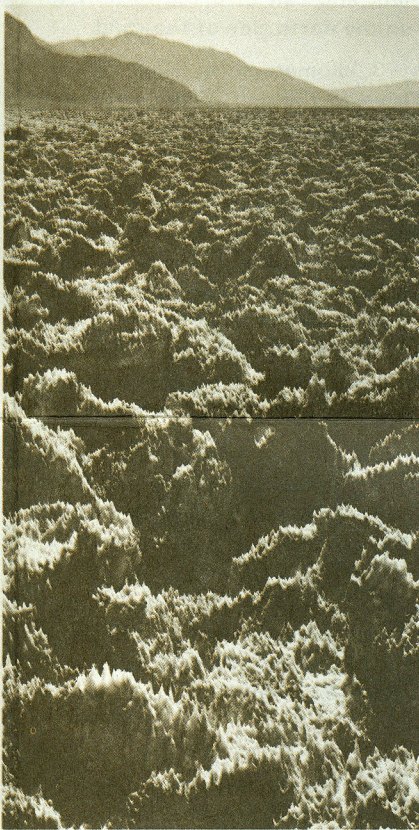
Driving off of established roads is not allowed. Maps showing location of jeep roads are available at the visitor center and at ranger stations. Report accidents as soon as possible to a park ranger.

Pets must be on leash at all times. They are not allowed in the visitor center or in any other public buildings.

Collecting plants or rocks, gathering or cutting plants, or disturbing any natural or historic feature is not allowed. Collecting firewood is prohibited.

Shooting, or carrying firearms that are not cased or otherwise rendered inoperative, is not allowed.

A complete set of regulations can be seen at the visitor center information desk.



Photos: Ansel Adams





## SIGHTS AND SIDE TRIPS

There are two main centers of visitor activity in Death Valley: Furnace Creek, the principal point of interest and most convenient start for trips to the southern half, and the Stove Pipe Wells area, which is the most convenient start for trips to the northern half, including the valley, and the mountains on both east and west.

### NORTH

Average driving time, plus visiting time, and round trip mileages are given from Stovepipe Wells. Miles for individual places of interest are also given on the map. Follow road signs and drive carefully.

**Salt Creek**—35 kilometers (22 miles) round trip, 2 hours—is a free-flowing stream through low, colorful hills. Along the way you can see the *Devils Cornfield* (arrowweeds that look like cornstalks on a saltflat), and can take the turnoff to the *Sand Dunes* on the north side of the road.

**Mosaic Canyon**—8 kilometers (5 miles) round trip, 1/2 hour. Drive to the end of the road and take a walk to intimately experience a small canyon with interesting rock patterns.

**Wildrose Canyon**—119 kilometers (74 miles) round trip, 5 hours. Drive south from Emigrant Ranger Station into the Panamint Mountains. Turn east at Wildrose Ranger Station and ascend Wildrose Canyon to the *Charcoal Kilns*. A strenuous all-day hike from above the Kilns takes you to *Telescope Peak*, highest point in the national monument.

**Scottys Castle**—138 kilometers (86 miles) round trip, 5 hours. This is the desert mansion of a millionaire and his friend, Death Valley Scotty. A 45-minute trip through the castle leaves at frequent intervals throughout the day. A trip to *Ubehebe Crater*, 27 kilometers (17 miles) round trip and 1 hour from the castle, will let you see a volcanic crater 0.8 kilometer (0.5 mile) across and 122 meters (400 feet) deep.

### SOUTH

Average driving time, plus visiting time, and round trip mileages are given from Furnace Creek. Miles for individual places of interest are also given on the map. Follow road signs.

**Dantes View**—80 kilometers (50 miles) round trip, 2-1/2 hours. A magnificent panorama of the valley 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) below and the Panamint Mountains a mile above you, across the valley. Side trips to: *Zabriskie Point*, 0.6 kilometer (0.4 mile) round trip, 1/4 hour, for colorful and dramatically eroded hills; *20-Mule Team Canyon*, one-way road, 4.3 kilometers (2.7 miles), 1/4 hour, to travel an old freight route into the valley; and *Ryan*, 4.8 kilometers (3 miles) round trip, 1/2 hour, to see an old mining town.

**Badwater Road to Ashford Junction**—170 kilometers (106 miles) round trip; 6 hours. *The Badwater Self-guiding Auto Tour* booklet describes

this trip from the visitor center to *Badwater*, including side trips to *Golden Canyon*, *Artists Drive*, *Devils Golf Course*, and *Natural Bridge*. Badwater is the lowest point to which you can drive in the Western Hemisphere. Beyond it, the road rises gently to *Ashford Mill*, the ruins of an old gold mill.

**Jeep Roads.** In addition to the automobile roads described in this folder, there is a network of primitive roads in Death Valley National Monument. These *Jeep Roads* are not recommended for sedans or oversize vehicles. Check at the visitor center or a ranger station for current conditions before venturing out onto any jeep roads. Light trucks can travel most Death Valley jeep roads. A few, however, are unsafe without the use of four-wheel-drive. Operation of conventional vehicles on these roads is not allowed. Major jeep roads are shown on the map.

**Harmony Borax Works and Mustard Canyon**—9.7 kilometers (6 miles) round trip, 1/2 hour. Inspect an old borax processing plant and drive through a colorful canyon.

### ADMINISTRATION

Death Valley National Monument, established on February 11, 1933, covers almost 7,770 square kilometers (3,000 square miles). It is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Death Valley, CA 92328, is in immediate charge. He and his staff have offices at park headquarters, which is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, park and recreation areas, and for the wise use of all those resources. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

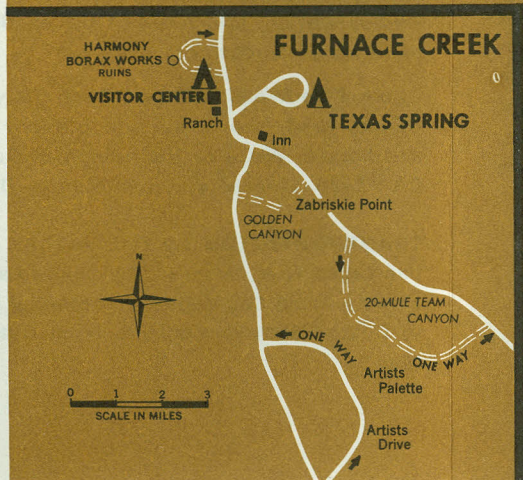
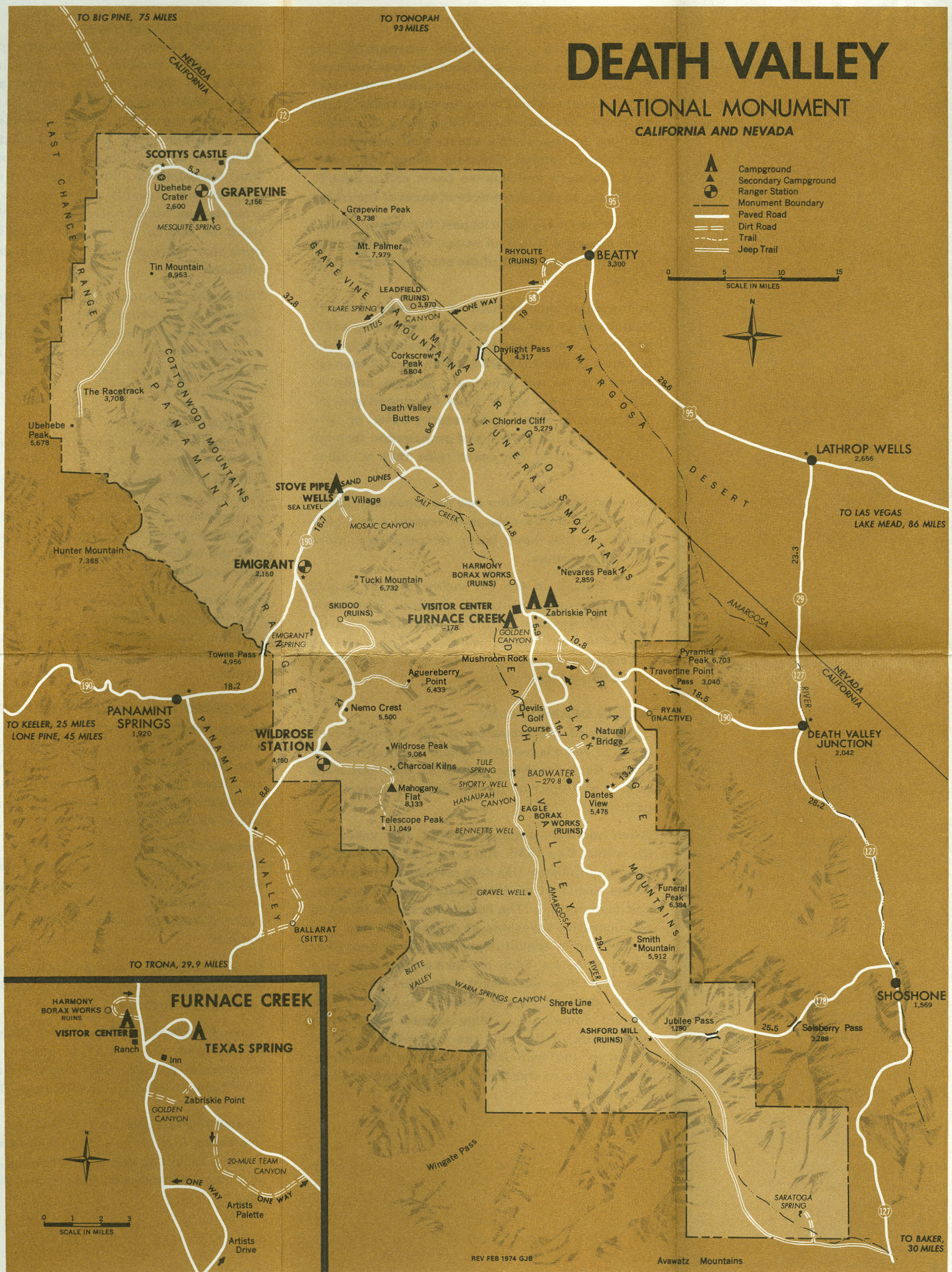
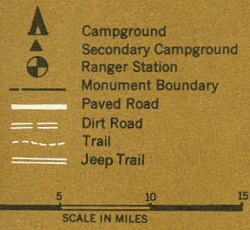
### WE'RE JOINING THE METRIC WORLD

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to improve interpretation for park visitors from other nations. From Badwater you can look west across the valley to Telescope Peak and witness a difference of 11,329 feet in elevation. Try to think of it as 3,453 meters, or 3.5 kilometers.



# DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL MONUMENT

CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA





## FOR YOUR SAFETY

- The desert can be dangerously hot in summer. Drive only on main roads in summer. Always carry water for you and your car. *In case of breakdown, remain with your car until help arrives.*
- Never enter mines or tunnels; abandoned shafts are often deep and old timbers rotten. Always keep children near you, especially in mine or or ghost town areas.
- Be alert for flash floods when it looks stormy. Do not ford low places when water is running. Flood waters can undercut pavement or sweep a car from the road.
- All animals are wild. They can bite or carry diseases. Never feed or molest them.
- Never travel alone. Always tell someone *where* you are going and *when* you expect to return. Death Valley remains untamed. Treat it as a wild area.

**National Park Service**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**