



# General Information



## Death Valley National Park

Death Valley. The name is foreboding and gloomy. Yet here in this valley—much of it below sea level—or in its surrounding

mountains you can find spectacular wildflower displays, snow-covered peaks, beautiful sand dunes, abandoned mines and industrial

structures, and the hottest, lowest spot in North America.

Great extremes haunt this hottest, driest, lowest national park. Extremes in temperature and elevation create scenic vistas and ecological niches that host startling biological diversity. This desert supports nearly 1000 native plant species and harbors fish, snails, and other aquatic animals found nowhere else. To the uninitiated, Death Valley National Park appears to be a vast, empty wasteland, but to the aficionado it is a place of wonder and endless stories. The colorful and rugged terrain shouts tales of cataclysmic forces that thrust rock layers upward and of opposing erosional forces battling to tear them down. Desert winds whisper romances of the past—of the '49ers lured by the glitter of gold and of Chinese laborers scraping borax-rich crystals from the valley floor. They spin dustdevil yarns of partnership between a teller of tall tales and his castle builders. And, throughout time and into the future, the Timbisha Shoshone people live sustained by their "valley of life."

Geology, climate and biology intertwine at Death Valley. Active earthquake fault lines riddle the park. Like a giant see-saw, the Panamint Range is one side of a tipping fault block that rises as the other side, Badwater Basin, falls. Erosion can not keep up with such active geology; the basin continues to drop below sea level despite millions of years of water-borne salt, silt, and gravel washing into it.

Mountains help generate Death Valley's extreme dryness by forcing

most of the moisture out of eastward-moving clouds before they reach the valley. Basking under sunny skies, the deep basins trap heat to generate record summer temperatures. The wide range of elevations—from mountains summits to salt flats—creates the many habitats that support the surprising variety of plant and animal species in this Mojave Desert park. Higher elevations are wetter and cooler than valley floors. Canyons provide shelter from sunlight and drain water from the mountains to lower elevations, creating moister microclimates. Isolated habitats such as dunes and springs allow endemic species—ones found nowhere else in the world—to develop. The nature of the landscape helps determine the climate, and, together, they give rise to the diversity of life.

### Your Visit

**Lodging** There are four resorts with lodging and dining within the park: Furnace Creek Inn and Ranch Resorts (760) 786-2345, Stovepipe Wells Village (760) 786-2387, and Panamint Springs Resort (775) 482-7680.

**Camping** There are nine campgrounds in the park. Those in the low elevations of the valley are too hot in the summer to sleep comfortably, even at night. Likewise, the campgrounds high in the mountains can be very cold in the winter. Campsite reservations for Furnace Creek Campground (April to October only) can be obtained by calling 1-877-444-6777.

**Driving** The park's size and distances make the use of an automobile essential. Please make sure that your vehicle is in good mechanical condition and that your fuel tank is full before you begin each day's tour.



MONTH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Year
Average Maximum Temp. (C)	18°	22°	27°	32°	37°	43°	46°	45°	41°	33°	24°	18°	32°
Average Minimum Temp. (C)	4°	8°	12°	17°	22°	27°	31°	29°	24°	17°	9°	4°	17°
Record Maximum Temp. (C)	31°	36°	39°	44°	49°	53°	57°	53°	49°	45°	36°	31°	57°
Record Minimum Temp. (C)	-9°	-3°	-1°	2°	6°	9°	11°	18°	5°	0°	-4°	-7°	9°
Average Rainfall (cm)	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.5	4.7

Within the park, gasoline is sold only at Furnace Creek, Stovepipe Wells and Panamint Springs. Park roads are designed for your enjoyment of the scenery—not for speed. Please observe posted speed limits.

**Car Problems** In the summer, check your vehicle gauges frequently. If the car's temperature starts to rise, turn off the air conditioning, especially while driving uphill. Radiator water is available from storage tanks along park roads. If your vehicle breaks down, stay with it until help arrives.

## What To See

**Touring By Car** The road to Badwater is a "must see" for visitors to the park. The vast salt flats at **Badwater** is the lowest elevation in North America at 282 feet (86 m) below sea level. North of Badwater a short dirt road leads to the strange salt pinnacles at the **Devil's Golf Course**. A bit further on is the one-way loop through colorful badlands and canyon country on **Artists Drive**.

For two of the park's most famous viewpoints, take the drive to **Dante's View**. Perched atop a mountain ridge high above the valley floor, this view provides a dramatic panorama. Along Highway 190 is **Zabriskie Point** overlooking golden-colored badlands. It is best viewed at sunrise or sunset.

In the central part of the valley near Stovepipe Wells, the **Sand Dunes** predominate. Easily visible from Highway 190, they appear barren, yet are one of the best places in the park to see signs of wildlife.

An hour north of Furnace Creek is **Scotty's Castle**, an elaborate vacation home built by a millionaire couple in the 1920s. Today rangers in period costume lead guided tours of the interior. Not far from the castle is **Ubehebe Crater**, a large volcanic crater that may have erupted as recently as 300 years ago.

The western side of the park is less developed, but no less beautiful than

the main valley. **Father Crowley Point** is an easy stop on Highway 190 for views into Rainbow Canyon. A side road leading to remote Saline Valley passes through an impressive forest of Joshua trees in **Lee Flat** only 8.5 miles (13 km) from the main road.

To escape from the summer heat, visit the Panamint Mountains. The **Wildrose Charcoal Kilns** are a row of 10 stone beehive-shaped structures built in the late 1880s to fuel a silver/lead smelter. They are surrounded by a woodland of piñon pines and juniper trees. **Aguereberry Point** is 1000 feet (300 m) higher than Dante's View across the valley and is accessed by high-clearance vehicle over a gravel road.

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**Death Valley National Park belongs to you and future generations. Use it with respect and protect it so all can enjoy its beauty as you have.**

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**Exploring On Foot** A few points of interest are easily accessible for the casual or seasoned walker. Although formal trails do not always exist, it is fairly easy to find your way. The **Harmony Borax Works** lies about 1.2 miles (2 km) north of Furnace Creek. Harmony dates from 1883 and was the first successful borax plant in Death Valley. **Golden Canyon** is about 3 miles south of Furnace Creek and winds through colorful badlands similar to those seen from Zabriskie Point. **Mosaic Canyon** can be reached from Stovepipe Wells by a 2 mile (3 km) dirt road. Just beyond the trailhead begins a stretch of polished marble narrows. The **Sand Dunes**, east of Stovepipe Wells, offer abundant opportunities for a casual stroll or an all-day jaunt. Photographers will

find the lighting on the dunes at its best at dawn or in late afternoon. During the hotter months, a hike in the mountains is best. The trail to **Wildrose Peak** starts at the Charcoal Kilns and climbs steadily through the woods to a spectacular view. **Telescope Peak** is the highest spot in the park and home to ancient bristlecone pines, some of which are thousands of years old. The road to this trail is rough.

For more information on hiking ask at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center.

## Regulations

**Vehicles** must remain on established roads. This includes motorcycles, bicycles, and four-wheel-drive vehicles. **Collecting** or disturbing any plant, wood, animal, rock or any other natural, historical, or archeological feature is prohibited. **Do not feed wildlife** including coyotes, roadrunners, and ravens. **Hunting** and use of firearms in the park is illegal. **Pets** must be leashed or confined. Pets are allowed only in developed areas and along roads. **Camping** is limited to developed campgrounds and some backcountry areas. Ask at a visitor center for backcountry camping details and permits. **Campfires** are allowed only in firepits provided in developed campgrounds. **Do not litter.**

## Safety

**Heat and dehydration** are your biggest dangers in Death Valley. Drink at least four liters of water per day if you are active. Carry plenty of extra drinking water in your car. Avoid activity during the hottest parts of the day. Stay on paved roads and hike only in the high elevations during summer. **Flash floods** are possible in stormy weather. Be alert for flooded roadways and do not enter canyons if it is raining. **Wild animals** can bite and should not be approached. **Automobile accidents** are the number one cause of death here. Observe speed limits and use lower gears when descending into the valley.