

DEATH VALLEY

NATIONAL MONUMENT

CALIFORNIA · NEVADA





UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Historic Events

1844 Fremont party, following old Spanish Trail, camped within sight of south end of Death Valley.	1871 Further explorations for Government by Wheeler and Lyle.
1849 Jayhawkers, Georgians, Bennett-Arcane party, and others entered the valley through Furnace Creek on Christmas Day.	1872 Panamint mines discovered. Panamint booms in 1874.
1856 First General Land Office survey of Death Valley.	1873 First borax discovered in Death Valley.
1860 Darwin French and S. G. George prospecting parties explored Panamints and parts of the valley, giving many place names still in use.	1875 Further exploration by Lt. Rogers Birnie.
1861 Lieutenant Ives explored region for California Boundary Commission, using camels as pack animals. Prospecting parties active.	1880 Aaron Winters sold borax claims for \$20,000. Borax industry in Death Valley started.
1864 Jacob Breyfogle lost the famed Breyfogle mine.	1891 Biological expedition by Merriam, Palmer, Coville, and others.
1870 Bellerin Tex Bennett started Furnace Creek Ranch.	1904 Goldfield mining boom, resulting in to mining camps such as Rhyolite, Skidoo, and Greenwater.
	1926 Stove Pipe Wells Hotel and Furnace Creek Inn established. Eichbaum toll road built from Darwin. Beginning of tourist traffic to the valley.
	1927
	1933 Death Valley National Monument established.

DEATH VALLEY

NATIONAL MONUMENT

Open all year • Regular season, October 15 to May 15

DEATH VALLEY National Monument is distinguished by its desert scenery—a combination of unusual geology, flora, fauna, and climate. Famed as a scene of suffering in the gold-rush drama of 1849, Death Valley has long been known to scientist and layman alike as a region rich in scientific and human interest. The monument was established in 1933 and covers almost 3,000 square miles.

The monument is in the rugged desert region east of the Sierra Nevada in eastern California and southwestern Nevada. The valley itself is about 140 miles long, with the forbidding Panamint Range forming the western wall and the precipitous slopes of the Amargosa Range bounding it on the east. Running in a general northwesterly direction, the valley is narrow in comparison to its length, ranging in width from 4 to 16 miles. Nearly 550 square miles of the valley floor are below sea level. An area in the vicinity of Badwater is 282 feet below sea level—the lowest land in the Western Hemisphere. Telescope Peak, immediately to the west, towers 11,331 feet above the lowest point.

Death Valley is famous for its consistently fair weather, minimum rainfall, and low relative humidity. The average number of clear days in a calendar year is 283, although 351 clear days were once recorded. The average annual pre-

cipitation at headquarters during the past 15 years has been 2.03 inches.

Summer daytime temperatures in the valley itself are quite high. The maximum air temperature of 134° F. in the shade recorded in Death Valley was a world record until 1922 when 136.4° F. was reported from El Azizia, Libya. Higher locations on the mountains in the monument have comfortable daytime temperatures and cool nights.

From late October until May, the valley climate is usually very pleasant. Days are often warm and sunny, nights cool and invigorating, with the temperature seldom below freezing.

Before White Men Came

For centuries, the Death Valley region has been inhabited by the Panamint Indians, a small offshoot of the Shoshone Nation. Capable of great endurance, ingenious in the utilization of every edible or otherwise useful plant, eating any animals they could catch, following the seasons in incessant migration between valley floor and mountain crest, they managed to exist, but with a relatively simple culture. They called Death Valley "Tomesha," which means "ground afire." Since the coming of white men, the Indian population has

greatly diminished and aboriginal customs and arts have been largely lost. Before the Shoshone arrived, the valley was occupied by Indians who subsisted by hunting as well as by gathering edible plants. They used the spear and the atlatl rather than the bow and arrow. They were here when big game was plentiful and perhaps were hunting mammoths and camels at the end of the Ice Age (Pleistocene Epoch).

The Historical Drama

There is no record that the early Spaniards entered or explored Death Valley. In 1844, John Charles Fremont probably saw the southern end of the valley. The first scene in the recorded drama of the valley was written in 1849.

It remained for a wagon train of half-starved emigrants, pushing westward on a supposed shortcut to the newly discovered gold fields, actually to enter Death Valley in the winter of that year. They had deserted their guide and were lost in the wilderness, hungry and tired. The wide salt floor of the valley, with the towering Panamints beyond, was the last blow to their morale. The train separated into seven groups, each seeking its own escape. One group, known as the Jayhawker Party, abandoned almost all of its equipment, made its exit through a canyon later named the Jayhawker Canyon, and crossed Panamint Valley and the Mojave Desert. After suffering tremendous hardships, the Jayhawkers finally reached Sutter's Fort.

Another group, the Bennett-Arcane party, crossed the salt flats. They camped for 26 days at Tule Spring and nearly starved. William Lewis Manly and John Rogers were sent ahead in a

desperate attempt to find a way to civilization and to bring aid if possible. After a trip of terrific hardship, they finally returned and led their group to safety. Manly said that the weary emigrants looked back across the valley—the tremendous barrier that had caused so much privation and suffering—and cried, "Goodby, Death Valley." While several lives were lost along the trail, a "Captain" Culverwell was the only emigrant of 1849 to die within Death Valley. In the next few years some of the "Forty-niners," undaunted, returned as guides or on their own to prospect and search for the Lost Gunsight silver lode.

Gradually the country became better known. In the mountains around Death Valley, towns mushroomed. Panamint City and later Skidoo, Greenwater, Rhyolite, and Chloride City lived their short lives and died, leaving only tumbled shacks, weathered timbers, and broken bottles to mark their sites.

Occasionally, the prospectors found small amounts of precious metal in the rugged peaks and barren canyons which isolated the valley from the surrounding, less-forbidding desert. Itinerant prospectors prodded their burros from one waterhole to the next, following Indian trails or beating out new tracks. They crossed and recrossed the ranges from one end of the valley to the other. Some of them were careless or unacquainted with the country—they missed springs, lost their burros, or lingered too long on the floor of the valley in summer. Their remains, dried and picked clean by coyote and raven, were eventually found and buried beside the trail.

Borax was finally responsible for the partial taming of the valley. In the 1880's, "cottonball" borax (ulexite) was refined at the Harmony Borax Works and freighted over agonizing miles of



A 20-mule team.

Frasher's Photos, Pomona, Calif.

desert in huge high-wheeled wagons drawn by 20-mule teams. In 1907, the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad was built to the edge of the valley to carry out colemanite (another borax mineral), but was abandoned when a richer deposit of borax (kernite) was discovered in the Mojave Desert. Death Valley was also brought to the attention of the public through the exploits of Walter Scott, ex-cowboy of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, who became known as Death Valley Scotty. In time, adventurous visitors drove their cars into the valley, cursed its then abominable roads, but came again. With better roads, and all America on wheels, it was inevitable that Death Valley would come into its own.

Tales Written in Rock and Landscape

Death Valley is a vast geological museum. A tremendous span of geologic time is indicated in its exposed rocks. All of the great divisions of geologic time, called eras, and nearly all of their subdivisions, or periods, are represented. If the layers of rocks were pieced together and restored to their

proper sequence, their total thickness would probably exceed 12 miles. However, the strata have been so greatly distorted, broken, and jumbled that the story is difficult to read.

Over a period of time nearly as old as the earth itself, rock materials have been deposited by wind, water, and volcanoes, and rocks have been formed from masses of molten magma. The oldest rocks have been so greatly changed by heat, pressure, and deformation that little can be learned about their original form. These oldest somber-colored rocks are exposed in the Black Mountains east of Badwater, where they are in contact with younger and more highly colored rocks.

The alternating layers of light and dark rock, exposed particularly well in the Funeral and Grapevine Mountains, belong to the Paleozoic rocks of intermediate age. During this era, seas intermittently covered the land, allowing deposition of great thicknesses of lime, sand, gravel, and mud.

Granites, thought to have been formed during the next era (Mesozoic), are a source of the quartz grains which form the sand dunes.

Movements of the earth's crust during the first period (Tertiary) of the present

era of earth history (Cenozoic) formed basins that contained water, indicating a more humid climate. Animals, many species of which are now extinct in North America, came to these basins to feed and drink. Mastodons, camels, llamas, horses, cats, peccaries, and birds made tracks in the basin muds, possibly as long as 10 million years ago. These tracks, covered with sediments, and since transformed into stone, are now being exposed again as erosion strips away their cover of more recent rock layers.

Located in an area difficult to reach, the tracks of ancient animals will remain inaccessible to visitors until these fossils can be given proper protection. Federal laws provide heavy penalties for the disturbance of such exhibits.

Late in the Tertiary Period, Death Valley and its adjacent mountains took form. Folding (bending) and faulting (breaking and slipping) of the earth's crust are primarily responsible for the origin of the valley. It appears that a tremendous block of rock sank, leaving an elongated fault basin or trough like those typically formed by erosion. Sinking of this basin continued to deepen Death Valley, even in recent years. A fault scarp (cliff) can be seen on the gravel slope below Hanaupah Canyon. This result of relative movement of two great earth crustal blocks has taken place during the last century.

Also during the Tertiary Period, Death Valley was the site of extensive volcanic activity. Great thicknesses of volcanic rocks accumulated on the Black Mountains, at Artist's Drive, and on the east slope of the Panamint Mountains. Ubehebe Crater is the result of a series of explosive eruptions which built up a cone with a crater one-half mile wide and 800 feet deep. The eruptions, believed to have occurred from 1,000 to

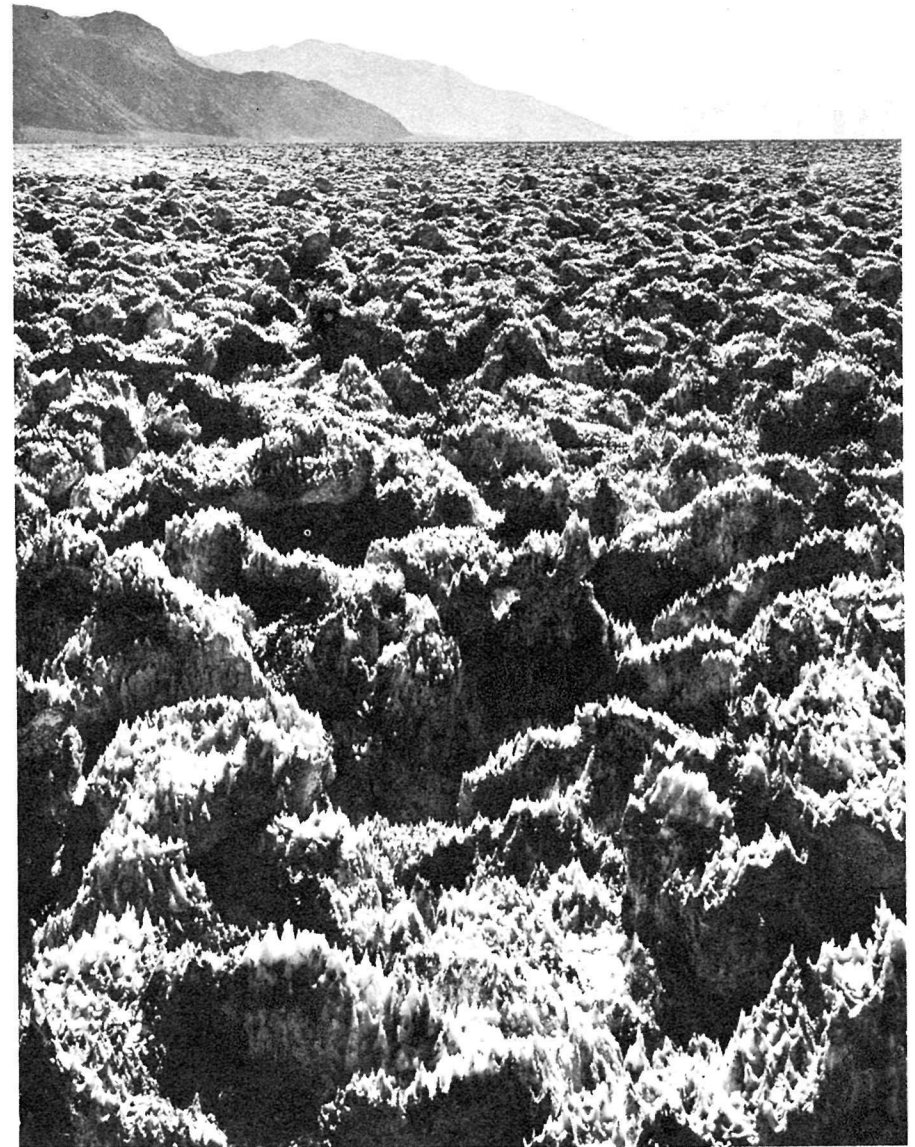
2,000 years ago, scattered volcanic ash for a radius of 3 miles from the crater. The smaller craters just south of Ubehebe are younger—perhaps only 200 or 300 years old.

The results of Ice Age glaciation are apparent in other parts of the country at high elevations and latitudes. Although, as far as known, no glaciers existed on the mountains of Death Valley, the local climate during the Ice Age was cool and moist. At one stage late in the Ice Age, Death Valley contained a lake 100 miles long and 600 feet deep. You can see the shorelines of ancient Lake Manly at various places: South of Badwater, on the north slopes of the Avawatz Mountains, south of Ashford Mill, at Shoreline Butte, and as you cross a gravel bar on the road to Beatty, 2 miles east of Beatty Junction.

As the Ice Age drew to a close, the climate of the world gradually became drier and warmer. As the Sierra Nevada was thrust upward, it became increasingly important as a barrier to wind-carried moisture. As the lake water evaporated, its salts became more concentrated.

Interbedded salt and water-bearing gravels are more than 1,000 feet thick on the Devils Golf Course. The salt probably cracked into irregular blocks during the drying process. The blocks were tilted and raised by the force of recrystallization of the salt. Wind-driven rains eroded these into sharp ridges, peaks, and pinnacles. Although only a few feet high, the roughness is extreme, presenting a barrier to man and beast.

The short but violent thunder-showers which occur during the summer are largely responsible for the rock-fragment cover that has greatly modified the appearance of the original fault



The Devils Golf Course.

Ansel Adams Photo.

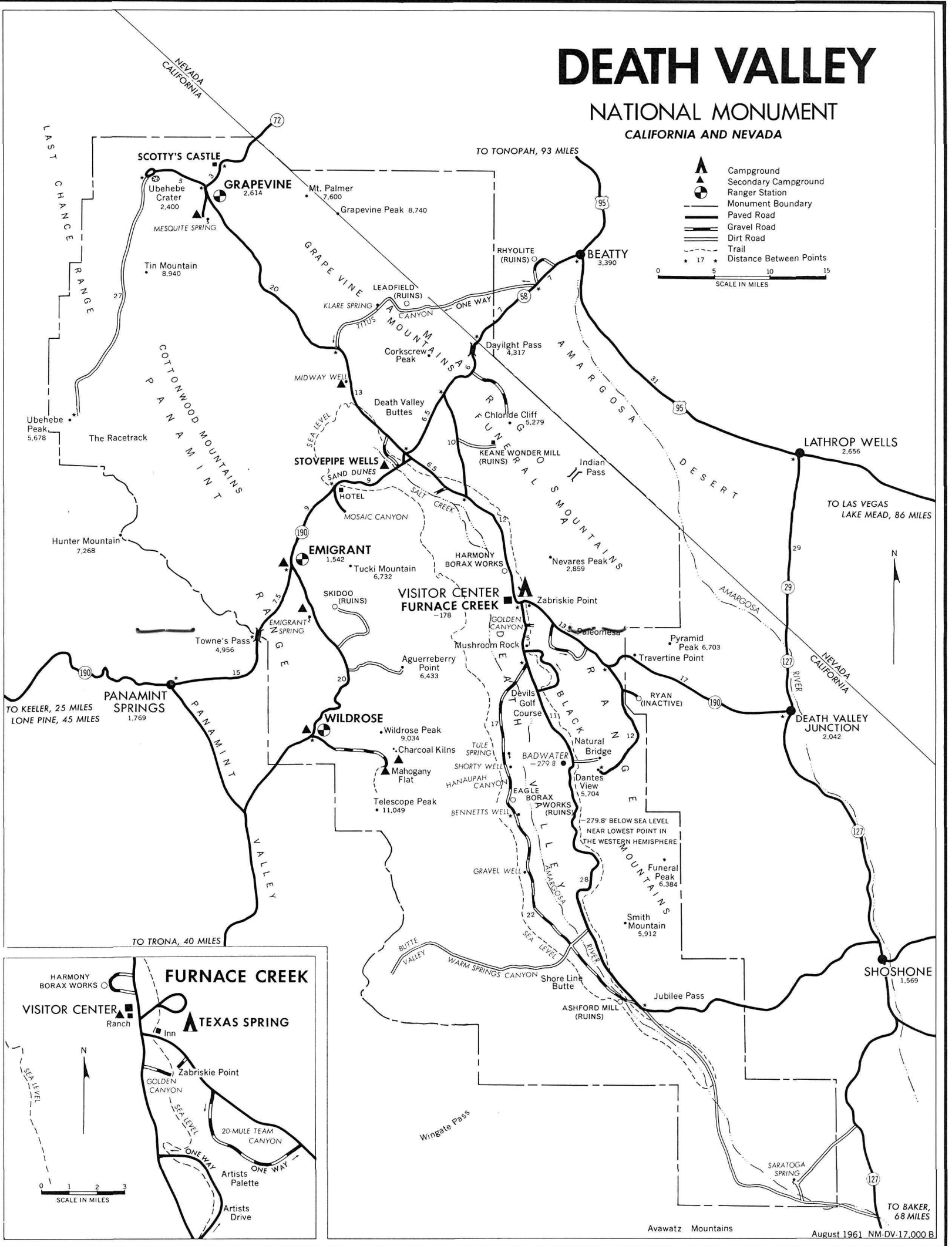
basin. Moisture brought in by winds is borne upward by hot air currents, where it cools, condenses, and then may drop rapidly. The rainfall is much greater in the mountains than in the valley where rain may evaporate before reach-

ing the ground surface. Sand, gravel, and boulders, washed in raging torrents from slopes at the wide upper ends of canyons, are funneled through deep, constricted gorges. As the debris-laden water breaks out of the confines of these

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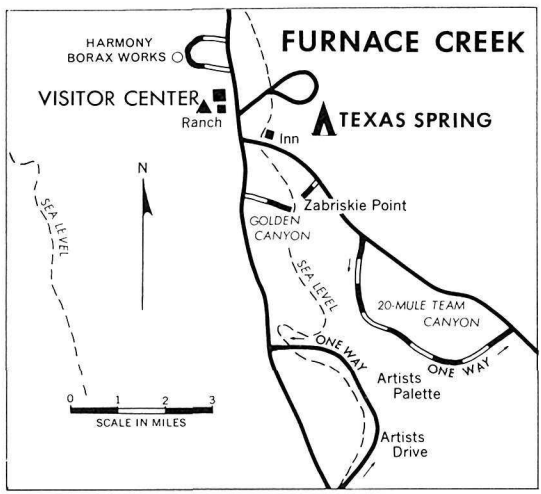
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Legend:

- Campground
- Secondary Campground
- Ranger Station
- Monument Boundary
- Paved Road
- Gravel Road
- Dirt Road
- Trail
- Distance Between Points

Scale in Miles: 0, 5, 10, 15



"hourglass" canyons, it spreads out, loses speed, and abruptly deposits the rock debris (alluvium) in the shape of fans. In this manner the large, gently sloping alluvial fans that flank the valley's sides have been formed.

The striking badland topography at Zabriskie Point and in Golden Canyon has been caused by rare torrential rains on Tertiary lake beds. The surface of these deposits is clay which, being nearly impervious to water, allows much of the rainfall to run off immediately. Eroding or wearing away of the clay by small rivulets has developed deep gullies. The more resistant layers of gravel and lava have eroded less rapidly and stand out prominently as ridges and layers of contrasting color.

Wind, as well as water, has been active in producing other Death Valley scenic features. Quartz, which largely forms the sand of the dunes, originated in granite bedrock now exposed in various places throughout the monument. Flowing water has carried the weathered granite particles from the mountains and spread them out on alluvial fans. As the softer material eroded away, the resistant quartz, left exposed to the wind, was reduced to sand particles and then blown into piles that eventually became large dunes. With every wind, the contour of the sand dunes is changed and the footprints of man are erased. Winds deflected by mountain ridges blow the sand in one direction, then another, trapping the dunes where they stand.

Death Valley, unique and beautiful, as we know it today, represents only one stage in the intricate geological story whose beginning was in the dim remote past. The varied geological forces, relentless in their action, but scarcely perceptible in the short span of man's life-

time, are still at work, writing the present chapter of a narrative whose end may be as far in the future as its beginning was in the past.

Desert Wildlife

Animal life is common in the monument, despite the popular belief that little lives or grows in Death Valley. A variety of habitats exist between Badwater and Telescope Peak, a vertical distance of more than 2 miles. True, few animals are seen by the casual visitor because almost all of them are shy and come into the open only after dark. Many are so adapted to desert conditions that they obtain from their food all the moisture they need; consequently, only the central salt flats, without vegetation, are barren of life.

Twenty-six species of mammals have been recorded on the valley floor and others live at higher elevations. The most commonly seen rodent is the antelope ground squirrel, but kangaroo rats, Thomas wood rats, and rabbits inhabit the mesquite thickets and even the scantily vegetated alluvial fans. The desert kit fox, desert coyote, and Bailey bobcat are occasionally seen along the roads in the evening. Inhabiting the rocky slopes and gorges are Nelson bighorn sheep. Wild burros frequent the Panamint Mountains.

Lizards of a dozen species are often seen except during a short period of hibernation in winter. They range in size from the large but harmless chuckwalla to the tiny, banded gecko. Snakes are comparatively rare, the valley floor being too hot for them during the summer.

More than 230 species of birds have



Charcoal kilns in Wild Rose Canyon.

Frascher's Photo, Pomona, Calif.

been recorded in the monument. Many are migrants or winter visitors and include a number of water birds. Fourteen species make the valley floor their permanent home, and others live all year in the adjacent mountains. The large, black, American raven is most frequently seen.

Even fishes are not left out of the faunal picture—three species of native cyprinodonts, or "desert sardines," live in the waters of the monument. Their ancestors lived in Lake Manly during the Ice Age.

Insects inhabit the valley, but rarely prove annoying.

Desert Plantlife

Within the boundaries of Death Valley National Monument, over 600 species of plants have been identified. Only the

salt flats are barren. Even there, at the very edge of the salt, is found the light-green pickleweed, a plant that is resistant to salts and alkali. This region, with adverse growing conditions, is famous for its number of new and rare species of plants.

Death Valley plants possess strange and marvelous mechanisms by which they keep alive in the burning heat and dryness of summer. Moisture is conserved by: Decreasing evaporation surfaces through reduction or elimination of leaves; development of varnished or fuzz-covered leaf surfaces; or summer shedding of leaves. Some plants combine two or more of these adaptations, and almost all of them have roots that either penetrate deeply or spread far from the plant base to tap a wide area.

When winter rains have been sufficient and the temperatures are favorable, the Death Valley spring flower show is

superb. Myriads of desert flowers transform the alluvial fans, washes, and canyons from dull gray and somber brown into a riot of color. Desert sunflowers rise gracefully and turn their golden heads to the sun; white and yellow primroses paint colorful patterns on the browned surface of the fans spreading lazily from mountains to salt beds; splashes of purple enhance the magnificence of the spring picture. Of breathtaking beauty are the poppy fields shining like minted gold, and the brilliantly colored blossoms of the cactuses delight the eye. Sturdy blossoms stand for days, but some fragile plants burst their buds in a blaze of splendor and are gone with the setting sun. Scattered seeds lie in the dust-dry soil to await the favoring rains of some following year.

The most common plants in the low country are desertholly, saltbush, and spreading creosotebush. Even these drought-resistant shrubs are widely scattered on the gravelly alluvial fans so that they do not use too much of the scanty water supply. The beautiful Death Valley sage, known only in this region, grows in shady, dry canyons. A dozen kinds of cactuses include the beavertail, pricklypear, cottontop echinocactus, and holycross cholla. Among the leafy perennial plants are the rare desert bearpoppy which has peculiar bluish foliage covered with long, white hairs, and the wetleaf spiderling whose leaves are always moist, even in the burning summer sun. Several species of mariposas bloom in the high country, along with mallows, lupines, and daleas, providing a flower show that lasts well into summer.

Among the dozens of varieties of annual plants to be seen are 14 species of astragalus, 16 evening primroses, 17 phacelias, 24 eriogonums, desertgold, and the exquisite desert fivespot.

The Visitor Center

Take time to visit here early in your stay; it is near Furnace Creek and is open daily. You will find the Death Valley story told in a most fascinating manner. The museum exhibits describe how Death Valley was formed and the plant and animal life to be found here. A park naturalist is on duty and will be glad to answer questions.

Daily, on the hour, a 20-minute illustrated program is given in the auditorium. During the winter season, illustrated talks are given nightly. The visitor center serves as monument headquarters and the offices are open weekdays.

What To See and Do

Below are listed a few trips which will permit you to see the most in a limited time. These trips originate at the visitor center and can be made in your car or by use of the sightseeing service from the hotels.

Dantes View. A ½-day trip, preferably in the morning. *Mileage:* 4.4, Zabriskie Point; 8.4, 20-Mule Team Canyon (one way); 17.5, Ryan Road; 25.5 Dantes View.

Badwater. A ½-day trip, preferably in the afternoon. *Mileage:* 3.1, Golden Canyon; 3.7, Mushroom Rock; 9.6, Artists Drive (one way); 12.3, Salt Pools Road; 14.4, Natural Bridge Road; 20.8, Badwater.

Eagle Borax Works. A ½-day trip. *Mileage:* 7.1, junction Badwater Road (turn right); 16.6, Tule Spring (Bennett's Long Camp); 23.4, Eagle Borax Works.

Sand Dunes and Mosaic Canyon. A ½-day trip. Sand Dunes are best at sunrise or sunset. *Mileage:* 1.2, Harmony Borax and Mustard Canyon; 17.9, Sand Dunes; 25.9, Mosaic Canyon.

Rhyolite (Ghost Town), Titus Canyon, Ubebebe Crater, and Scotty's Castle. A 1-day trip. The Titus Canyon Road is one way from east to west. Inquire about condition at visitor center. *Mileage:* 10.6, junction road to Beatty (turn right); 33.6, junction Titus Canyon Road; 35.9, Rhyolite. Return to Titus Canyon Road; 48.6, Leadfield (ghost town); 51.1, Klare Springs; 59.7, main road (turn right); 79.3, Scotty's Castle-Ubebebe junction. Left, 6 miles to Ubebebe Crater; right, 3 miles to Castle. Direct route to Scotty's Castle from visitor center, 53 miles.

High Panamint. A 1-day trip. *Mileage:* 15.9, junction California 190 and road north (keep left); 31.9, Emigrant Ranger Station; 43.2, Skidoo Road; 44.2, Aguerreberry Point Road; 52.9, Wild Rose Canyon; 60.1, charcoal kilns, 61.4,

Ubebebe Crater.

Mahogany Flat; 7-mile trail to Telescope Peak.

How To Reach Death Valley

By Automobile. From the south: U.S. 6 or U.S. 395, then northeast to Death Valley through Trona; or from U.S. 66 at Barstow, northeast to Baker on U.S. 91, north on California 127 to Shoshone and Death Valley Junction, then west on California 190 to Furnace Creek. Alternate: turn west at Shoshone through Jubilee Pass.

From the north: via U.S. 395 to Lone Pine and east on California 190 through Townes Pass; or from U.S. 95 via Nevada 72 to Scotty's Castle, or south to Beatty and west on Nevada 58 through Daylight Pass.

From the east: Las Vegas via U.S. 95 to Lathrop Wells, south on Nevada 29 and California 127 to Death Valley Junction, and west on California 190.

By Airplane. An asphalt-surfaced airstrip is located near Furnace Creek.

Frasber's Photos, Pomona, Calif.



Gasoline and oil are available. There is also an 1,800-foot, CAA-approved gravel-surfaced landing strip at Stove Pipe Wells Hotel.

By Railroad. A combination rail and motor tour is available for Union Pacific passengers, leaving the train at Las Vegas, Nev., and reaching Death Valley by Riddle, Tanner, and Death Valley Tours.

By Bus. Daily service from Las Vegas, Nev., via Las Vegas-Tonopah Stage Lines, October 15 to May 1.

Monument Season

Death Valley National Monument is open to travel all year. The regular season is from about October 15 to May 15.

Caution should be exercised while traveling through the monument in summer. Automobiles should be in good mechanical condition, and gasoline, oil and plenty of extra water should be obtained before entering the valley. *National Park Service rangers patrol only the main roads in summer.*

What to Wear

In the winter, everyone should bring clothing warm enough to withstand chilly night temperatures. Practical clothes and shoes are recommended for campers and hikers.

Accommodations

Campgrounds. The Furnace Creek Campground is adjacent to the visitor

center and is open to tenters only. Texas Spring Campground is about 1 mile east of the visitor center and is open for trailerites and tenters. Both camps have sanitary facilities, water, and a few tables and camp stoves. Firewood and other supplies may be purchased at Furnace Creek Ranch. Presto-Logs can be bought at Stovepipe Wells Hotel. Several secondary campgrounds at higher elevations are recommended for summer use (see map). Limit is 14 days during the busy season.

Hotels and Cottages. Facilities at Wild Rose Station are operated under franchise from the Government. It is a year-round operation and consists of a store, service station, eating facilities, and cabins. Further information may be obtained by writing Wild Rose Station, Trona, Calif. *All other hotels are situated on private land and the National Park Service has no control over them.* Operating dates are subject to change.

Fred Harvey Co., Death Valley, Calif., operates Furnace Creek Inn (American plan) and Furnace Creek Ranch (European plan), with cabins, store, service stations, saddle horses, golf course, and trailer court. Open about October to May.

Stove Pipe Wells Hotel is open October 1 to May 15; European plan with cottages and hotel rooms. The service station is open all year. In summer, sandwiches and beverages are available. Address: Death Valley, Calif.

Scotty's Castle has overnight accommodations, European plan. Open all year. Service station. Guide fee charged for tour of castle. Address: via Goldfield, Nev.

All-year accommodations are also available outside the monument at



Looking northwest from Dantes View.

Ansel Adams Photo.

Panamint Springs and Shoshone, Calif., and at Beatty, Nev.

Telephone and telegraph services are available only at Furnace Creek Inn and Furnace Creek Ranch.

Please Help Protect This Monument

Death Valley National Monument belongs to you and to future generations. Use it wisely and protect it so that everyone may enjoy its beauty as you have.

Please do not disturb, destroy, or deface the ruins, historical and archeological remains, geological formations, buildings, or signs.

Picking or injuring plants detracts from the natural beauty of the monument and is not permitted. Please leave all living things for everyone to enjoy.

Camp in designated localities. Receptacles are provided for the disposal of refuse; please use them. Trees planted in the campground are for shade and are not to be cut for campfires. Firewood may be bought at Furnace Creek Ranch.

Please carry refuse you may have in your car to a disposal can. Help keep the roadsides beautiful and clean.

Death Valley National Monument is a sanctuary for wildlife; therefore, carrying firearms, other than cased, sealed, or broken down, or otherwise packed to prevent their use, is not permitted.

Private notices or advertisements may not be posted or displayed in the monument, unless authorized by the superintendent.

Vehicular and other traffic within



The visitor center at Furnace Creek.

Death Valley National Monument is governed by the current State of California Vehicle Code.

Drive carefully. Report all accidents to the nearest ranger station.

A complete set of rules and regulations may be seen at monument headquarters.

There are penalties for the violation of any National Park Service regulation.

Park rangers are stationed at various points throughout the monument for the purpose of protecting it and giving information. They patrol the roads, enforce the rules and regulations, and render all possible aid to visitors.

Mission 66

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historical resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Administration

Death Valley National Monument is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The superintendent, whose address is Death Valley, Calif., is in immediate charge.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

