

Death Valley

NATIONAL MONUMENT • CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1970—392-712 / 34
REVISED 1970

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DEVA 36888

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 mimeographed sheet, *Hot Weather Hints*, at distribution boxes at any entrance to the national monument, at the visitor center, or at a ranger station.

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 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 are available in 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.

WHERE TO STAY

Campgrounds. The National Park Service maintains 12 campgrounds in the monument; 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, horses. Write to Fred Harvey, Death Valley, Calif. 92328. From April through October, write to Sequoia-Kings Canyon Co., Sequoia National Park, Calif. 93262.

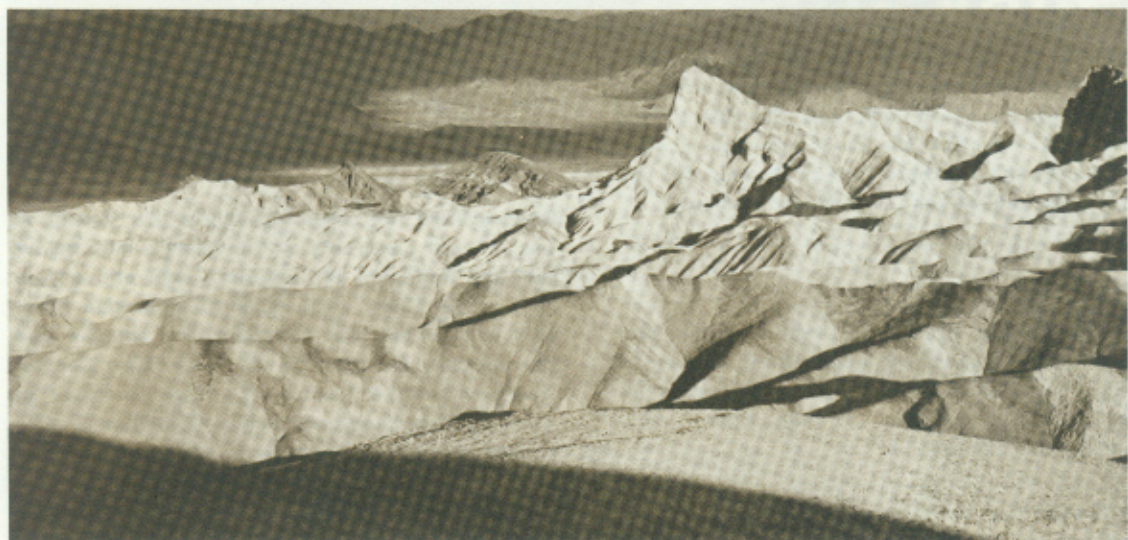
Scottys Castle. Open all year. Food service, service station, and tours of the castle.

Stove Pipe Wells Village. Open all year. Cabins, food, store, service station, swimming. Write to the village at Death Valley, Calif. 92328.

Wildrose Station. Open all year. Cabins, food service, store, and service station. Write to Wildrose Station, Box 397, Trona, Calif. 93562.

COMMERCIAL 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.



SOME REGULATIONS TO GUIDE YOU

Death Valley National Monument preserves an interesting and beautiful desert for you and future generations to enjoy. Use it wisely, and leave it 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.

Collecting plants or rocks, gathering or cutting of live trees or other plants, or disturbing any natural or historic feature is not allowed.

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 Village. Miles for individual places of interest are also given on the map. Follow road signs and drive carefully.

Salt Creek (22 miles round trip; 2 hours). A free-flowing stream having inch-long pupfish, descendants of a species that lived in the last great lake that filled the valley. Along the way you can see the *Devils Cornfield* (arrowweeds that look like cornstalks in a saltflat), and can take the turnout to the *Sand Dunes* on the north side of the road.

Mosaic Canyon (5 miles round trip; 1/2 hour). Drive to the end of the road and take a walk to get an intimate experience of a small canyon with interesting rock patterns.

Wildrose Station (63 miles round trip; 3 hours). Drive down Emigrant Valley with a choice of three side trips into the mountains. *Skidoo* (14 miles round trip; 2 hours from paved road) is the ruins of an old mining town. *Aguereberry Point* (13 miles round trip; 2 hours from paved road) affords a magnificent view of the valley and the east mountains. *Mahogany Flat* (16 miles round trip; 3 hours from paved road) takes you past the *Charcoal Kilns* up to Mahogany Flat Campground and the 7.6-mile trail to Telescope Peak, highest point in the national monument.

Titus Canyon (one way westward, 74 miles; 6 hours). You may want to take the short loop to the ruins of the old mining town of *Rhyolite*. Titus Canyon is an uphill drive through pale-colored hills to Red Pass, then down to Leadville ruins into and along the bottom of Titus Canyon, a spectacular example of erosion. This is a narrow, winding, steep, dirt road frequently closed by storms. Check with a park ranger before starting this trip.

Scottys Castle (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* (17 miles round trip and 1 hour from the castle) will let you see a volcanic crater one-half mile across and 800 feet deep. Near the crater is the road south to the *Race Track* (76 miles round trip; 6 hours). You drive through a back-country mountain valley to the mud-flat bottom of an old lake. Check with a park ranger before starting this trip.

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 (50 miles round trip; 2½ hours). A magnificent panorama of the valley a mile below and the Panamint Mountains a mile above you, across the valley. Side trips to: *Zabriskie Point* (0.4 mile round trip; 1/4 hour) for colorful and dramatically eroded hills; *20-Mule Team Canyon* (one-way road; 2.7 miles; 1/4 hour) to travel an old freight route into the valley; and *Ryan* (3 miles round trip; 1/2 hour) to see an old mining town.

Badwater Road to Ashford Junction (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, near the junction to Westside Valley Road.

Westside Valley Road (92 miles round trip; 6 hours). A beautiful scenic trip along the valley floor—the historic route of the 20-mule-team borax wagons. Turnouts to *Bennetts Well*, the ruins of *Eagle Borax Works*, *Shortys Well*, the *Bennett-Arcane Long Camp* at Tule Spring, and the *Dayton-Harris* grave.

The Badwater-Westside Valley round trip from the visitor center is about 100 miles, with side trips and turnout stops. You should allow 8 hours for the full trip—and take lunch.

Harmony Borax Works and Mustard Canyon (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 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 in the visitor center, 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 for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

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