

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Death Valley National Park



# Scotty's Castle



# Treasure in Death Valley!

*Who was Scotty, and why would he build a Castle in Death Valley? Was Scotty “King of the Desert Mine,” or just a clever con-man? And where is all the gold?*



## The Cowboy and the Con

Death Valley Scotty was a nationwide celebrity through the first half of the 20th century. As a young man, Scotty—or Walter Scott as he was then known—was an entertainer: performing with other cowboys in Buffalo Bill’s “Wild West,” racing on a train from Los Angeles to Chicago in record-breaking time, and telling exaggerated stories about how he made his fortune.

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*People don’t want to know where I was born and all that stuff. They like mystery. They want to hear about gold. -Death Valley Scotty*

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Scotty’s biggest tall tale was about gold. Scotty told everyone that he had fallen on riches thanks to a gold mine he had found in Death Valley. All he needed were investors. Scotty traveled to New York, trying to drum up support for his mine. Those investors who gave Scotty money were promised a rich return on their investment.

One of Scotty’s investors was a Chicago businessman named Albert Johnson. Wanting to inspect Scotty’s mining operation in person, Johnson contacted Scotty to arrange a tour. Scotty invited Johnson to Death Valley and hatched a scheme involving a staged gunfight to scare the city-slicker away while keeping the investment money coming.

Scotty’s plan backfired, and Johnson quickly realized there was never a gold mine. Surprisingly, instead of being angry, the wealthy Albert Johnson became friends with Scotty, and remained Scotty’s source of gold for the rest of his life.

## The Chicago Millionaires

Although Albert Johnson had first been lured to Death Valley by promises of gold, he found other things of value. Death Valley’s dry, warm climate improved Albert Johnson’s chronic health problems, and he experienced cowboy-style adventures as he traveled the desert with Scotty. Albert’s wife, Bessie, was equally taken with the peacefulness and scenic beauty of Death Valley. After years of camping expeditions to Death Valley, the Johnsons began to build a grand vacation home in 1922.



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*Scotty and Al and I sit around a water hole, as quiet and undisturbed as though we were on another planet. -Bessie Johnson*

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## Springs in the Desert

Albert Johnson built his Castle in one of the harshest deserts in the world. Death Valley averages 2 inches (5 cm) of rain per year. Yet in Grapevine Canyon, a natural spring pours out more than 200 gallons (750 L) of water per minute—a true oasis! Generations of people have relied on this vital water for their survival. Besides providing essential drinking water to the Castle, Albert Johnson piped the water into man-made streams and planted trees and shrubs to create beautiful landscaping. Ingenious use of hydropower allowed the Castle to have electricity and refrigeration, making a comfortable home for everyone.



Large wrought-iron chandeliers dominate some rooms, while small features like indoor waterfalls with colorful tiles highlight Albert Johnson’s clever use of water in Grapevine Canyon.

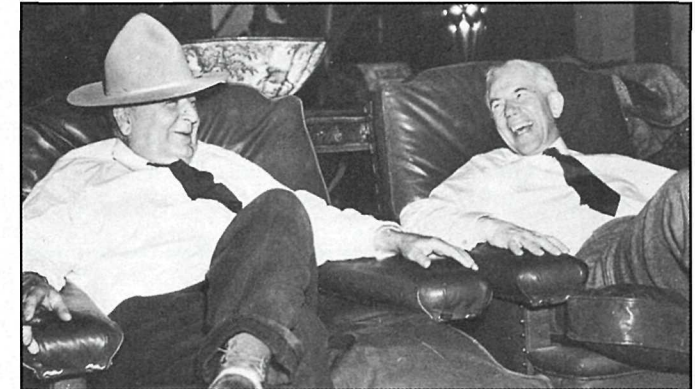
## The Treasure of Scotty’s Castle

Scotty’s Castle is a showpiece of the treasure that Scotty, Albert, and Bessie found in the desert. While Scotty’s gold mine was eventually exposed as a fraud, Albert and Bessie Johnson discovered other riches during their many years visiting Death Valley. They found luxury and comfort in their home, beauty and tranquility in the desert, and life-long friendships with the charismatic con-man, Death Valley Scotty.

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*We have been partners for a long time. Scott has a great appetite for money, and I like to feed it. He has always repaid me—in laughs. -A. Johnson*

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Today Scotty’s Castle is maintained and protected by the National Park Service to preserve not only the house, but also the stories and experiences of Death Valley Scotty, Albert and Bessie Johnson, and generations of Castle visitors, all finding their own riches in Death Valley.

Death Valley is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more, visit [www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva).



## Scotty's Castle Tours

Ranger-guided tours are the only way to see the interior of Scotty's Castle. Same-day tour tickets are sold at the Scotty's Castle Visitor Center, first-come, first-served. Avoid long waits by making reservations at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or by calling 877-444-6777 at least one day in advance.

### House Tour

Visit both floors of Scotty's Castle, and find out who built it and why. Learn about Scotty, the Johnsons, and their Castle in the desert. See the original furnishings, hand-carved red-wood beams, and European antiques. Hear the pipe organ. One flight of stairs; lift may be available. 50-60 minutes.

### Underground Tour

Visit the basement and tunnels under Scotty's Castle and learn about the innovative use of technology and resources that allowed Death Valley Ranch to be nearly self sufficient. See Albert Johnson's grand vision for his Castle. Many stairs; not accessible. 60 minutes. Not offered in summer.

### Lower Vine Hike

Visit Scotty's actual house at the Lower Vine Ranch. Learn about Albert Johnson's use of this land and how Scotty's humble residence compared to his great personality. Reservations recommended. Offered occasionally December-April. An easy 2 miles (3.2 km), 2.5 hours. Not accessible.

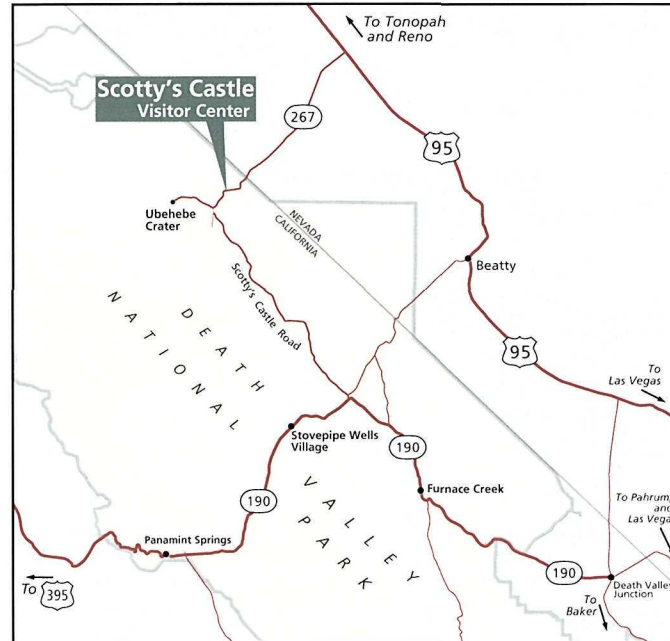
### Tour Tickets

	General Admission	Interagency Senior/Access Pass Holder	Youth (age 6-15)
House Tour	\$15	\$7.50	\$7.50
Underground Tour	\$15	\$7.50	\$7.50
Combination Tour (House and Underground)	\$25	\$12.50	\$12.50
Lower Vine Hike	\$20	\$10	\$10

NOTE: Tickets for children age 5 and under are free for all tours. The Senior Pass / Access Pass discount is valid for the cardholder only. Inquire at any Death Valley National Park visitor center about pass eligibility.

## Visiting Scotty's Castle

Scotty's Castle lies in Grapevine Canyon, in northern Death Valley National Park. At the Scotty's Castle Visitor Center, you can purchase tour tickets and explore exhibits about the buildings and the people involved in its construction. Sandwiches and snacks are available, but fuel is not. The nearest lodging, fuel and restaurants are located inside the park at Stovepipe Wells (44 miles) or Furnace Creek (54 miles). The town of Beatty, Nevada, (61 miles) also offers restaurants, fuel and lodging.



**From Las Vegas:** Take US 95 north to Scotty's Junction. Turn left onto NV 267, and follow it to the Castle. The drive from Las Vegas is approximately 185 miles (300 km), or just over three hours.

**From Southern California:** Take I-15 north to Baker, then continue north on CA 127 to Death Valley Junction. Continue west on CA 190, then turn onto Scotty's Castle Road (North Highway).

**Contact information**  
 Scotty's Castle  
 PO Box 569  
 123 Scotty's Castle Road  
 Death Valley, CA 92328  
 760-786-2392  
[www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva)

**Tour Reservations**  
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