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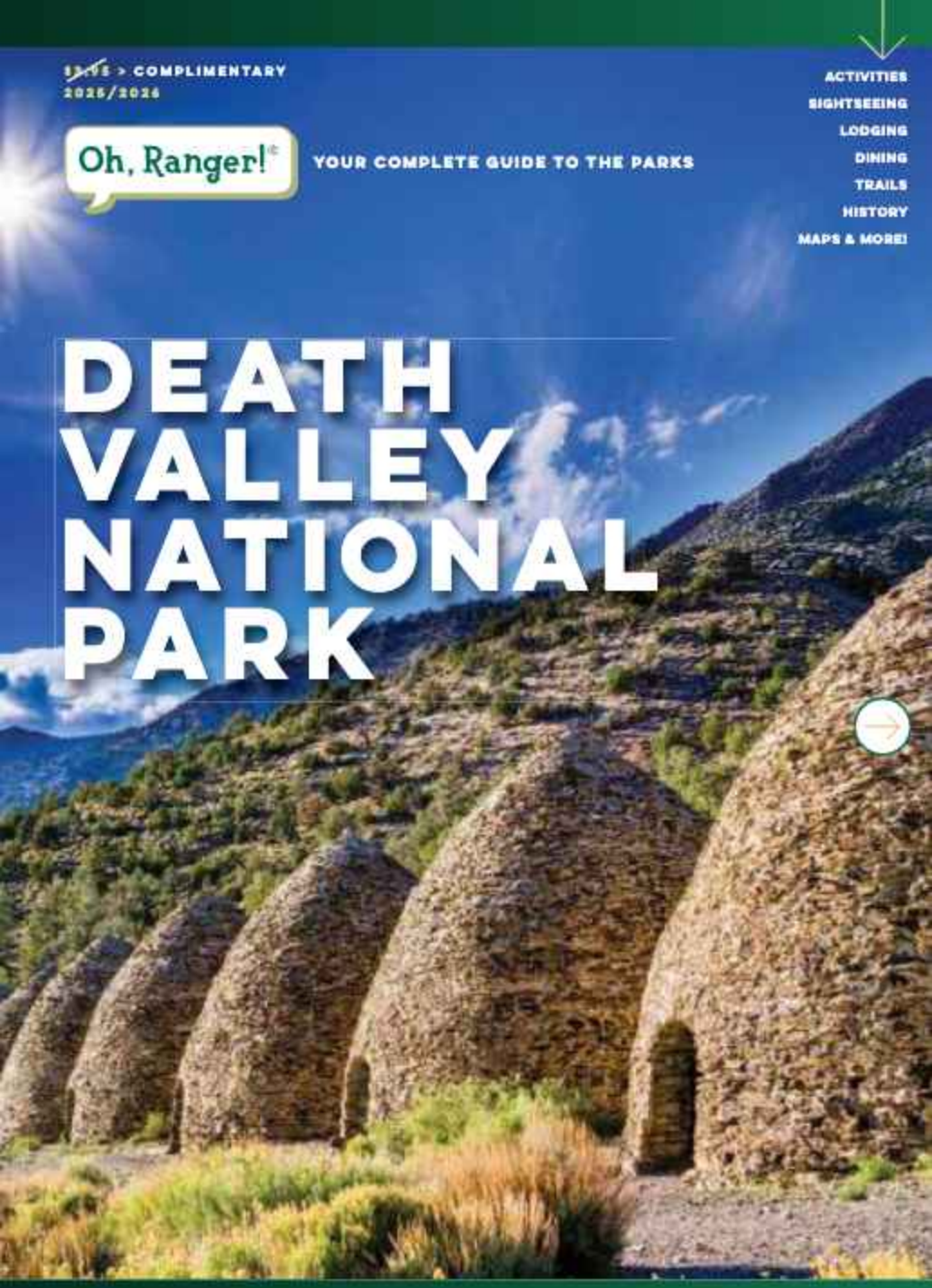
DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK



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Welcome

In 1994, Death Valley National Monument was expanded by 1.3 million acres and redesignated as a national park by the California Desert Protection Act. One of the largest national parks, second to several in Alaska, this designation helped focus protection on an iconic landscape known around the world. In 2018, nearly 1.7 million people visited the park, a new visitation record.

Death Valley is renowned for its colorful and complex geology. Its extremes of elevation support a great diversity of life and provide a natural geologic museum. This region is the ancestral homeland of the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe. The Timbisha established a life in concert with nature.

Ninety-three percent of the park is designated wilderness, providing unique opportunities for solitude, primitive adventure, and uninterrupted views, though with extreme conditions. The Furnace Creek Visitor Center is a great place to ask about the many historic properties in the park.

This guide to Death Valley is provided by Death Valley Lodging Company, Xanterra Parks & Resorts®, and American Park Network, and aims to foster an appreciation and respect for the park, while also providing information needed to make your visit smooth and enjoyable. The National Park Service is charged with preserving this country's national spirit. We recruit you to help care for the places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage for many years to come.

FUN FACTS

Established: Death Valley became a national monument in 1933 and is famed for being the hottest, lowest, and driest location in the country. The parched landscape rises into snow-capped mountains and is home to the Timbisha Shoshone people.

Land Area: The park's 3.4 million acres stretch across two states, California and Nevada.

Elevation: The top of Telescope Peak is 11,049 feet high. The lowest elevation is -282 feet at Badwater Basin.

Plants and Animals: Death Valley is home to 51 mammal species, 307 bird species, 36 reptile species, two amphibian species and five fish species. In a place with little water, smaller species tend to thrive over larger ones.

Popular Activities: Visitors can take a self-guided hike, go backpacking or birdwatching, and rent a Jeep to explore the backcountry.

Bicycling: Bikes are allowed on all park roads that are open to public traffic.

Hiking: Constructed trails are rare in the park. There are 12 popular routes and three additional self-guided trails (see the Walking and Hiking chapter).

Camping: There are nine main established campgrounds run by the park. Many of the 800-plus miles of backcountry dirt roads are open to camping.

Lodging: The Stovepipe Wells Lodging Company, Panamint Springs Resort, and Xanterra Parks & Resorts offer multiple hotel options in the park.

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American Park Network® publishes Oh, Ranger! ParkFinder™, OhRanger.com, and Oh, Ranger!® guides—a collection of visitor guides for public lands all across America—and operates Oh, Ranger! Wi-Fi in parks and public lands. American Park Network is an official partner of the National Forest Foundation, National Parks Conservation Association, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, American Hiking Society and the Student Conservation Association.

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Cover: **Wildrose Charcoal Kilns produced charcoal from pine and juniper trees to use in nearby smelters. Credit: Sundry Photography**

FOR ANSWERS TO ALL YOUR QUESTIONS, GO TO
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What's New!

The Truth About America's Public Lands

"No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong."

– Albert Einstein

I think everyone can agree that Albert was a pretty smart guy. His quote suggests he was also quite open to being proven wrong. Einstein set the bar for both genius and humility by his unyielding embrace of the scientific method.

In a world where information is often clouded by personal perspective, it's crucial that we follow Einstein's lead and proceed with care when it comes to facts and truth. Facts, by definition, are verifiable, objective data – things we can observe, measure and ultimately prove. In the absence of new learning, facts are grounded in evidence that remains constant despite opinion or belief. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines truth as "*being in accord with fact or reality.*" One person's reality may be quite different from another's. Truth, therefore, requires context. If we're open, it's not that hard to see how different life experiences may provide us with wildly different (and subjective) realities.

America's public lands are steeped in both facts and truth. From the geology of the Grand Canyon to the biodiversity in Yellowstone, facts about these places are backed by years of research and scientific study. But the truth of these lands is more complex. It's about the cultural significance they hold, the stories they tell, and the way they connect us to the past and to each another. The truth includes understanding the important role these lands play – for future generations, to native communities, with regard to preservation, as engines of economic development and so much more. 'Truth' may lead one person to favor mining while another's truth may dictate conservation above all else.

As with many issues, we won't all agree on how to balance facts and truths. Different perspectives exist on how to best utilize public lands. We need to resist the urge to simply dismiss the opinions of others whose views don't align with our own. Facts provide a foundation for understanding. Truth is shaped by personal and collective values. It's essential that we utilize facts in decision-making while, at the same time, embrace the truth in its full complexity. There's never been a better time to commit to listening, remaining open and considering different experiences and values. Only then can we have constructive dialogue that leads us to common ground. The Organic Act of 1916 created the National Park Service and placed equal weight on conservation as it did recreation, which are often in direct conflict. More than a century later, it's still hard to reconcile such opposing goals… and that's a fact!

Let's approach the stewardship of our public lands with an acknowledgement of facts, a respect for truth and an openness to understanding each other's perspectives, especially when we disagree. Together we can ensure that America's public lands remain a rich resource and a legacy for generations to come!

Founder & Editor-in-Chief
mark@americanparknetwork.com

At A Glance

Death Valley is the largest national park in the contiguous United States at nearly 3.4 million acres. The valley is bound on the west by the towering 11,049-foot **Telescope Peak** and on the east by the 5,475-foot **Dante's View**. This fabled park features spectacular desert scenery, unusual wildlife, and a rich human history. Also something for the record books: The Badwater Basin salt pan, at 282 feet below sea level, is the lowest point in North America.

A DIVERSE ECOSYSTEM

Death Valley National Park is open all year, but since summer temperatures frequently soar above 120°F (48.8° C), winter visits, November through April, are strongly encouraged. In fact, in 1913, **Furnace Creek** recorded a temperature of 134°F (56.6°C), the hottest temperature ever recorded in the world.

While most visitors come to Death Valley National Park to experience desert desolation and walk on North America's lowest point, the park also boasts a sparse, but thriving ecosystem. Careful examination will reveal that this seemingly barren landscape is home to a variety of remarkable plants and animals, a natural world that has adapted successfully to a land of brutal environmental extremes. In Death Valley, you will find–among other species–drought-resistant **desert holly**, stands of salt-resistant **pickleweed,** and tiny **pupfish** that flourish in salt-encrusted streams.

EARLY RESIDENTS

Anthropologists estimate that roaming humans first settled in Death Valley roughly 10,000 years ago. These early residents were hunters, and judging by the size of their tools, they hunted big game. Over 1,000 years ago, the Timbisha Shoshone lived along the edge of a 30-foot-deep lake, hunting smaller game, and gathering seeds. In 1849, a group of gold rush pioneers entered the valley, thinking it was a shortcut to California. After barely surviving the trek across the area, these pioneers named the spot **Death Valley.**

In the late 1880s, native peoples were increasingly pushed out of the area by mining companies who sought the riches of gold, silver, and borax within the valley's parched hills. Most of Death Valley's mining operations failed within a few years of opening, leaving eerie ghost towns and crumbling mines in their wake. Despite briefly successful borax mines that used the famed **20-mule teams**, low yields and a tumbling economy caused the industry to dwindle. By 1910, most mining operations had ceased.

Today, it is the uncompromising severity and extraordinary geology of the desert that continues to draw visitors to Death Valley. Within the park, you will find some of the most surreal landscapes on the globe, including sinuous sand dunes that ripple into the horizon, shimmering white salt flats, intricately contoured badlands carved by rushing water, striking copper-colored canyon walls, and even a massive hydrovolcanic blast crater. You can enjoy all these sights from the window of your automobile, or if you're more adventurous, get out of your car and explore the park on foot.

NPS HISTORY

Death Valley's outstanding natural beauty and scientific importance were first brought to the attention of the National Park Service in the 1920s. With the support of National Park Service Director **Horace Albright**, the spot's national significance was recognized, and the area was proclaimed a national monument on February 11, 1933 by President Herbert Hoover. With the passage of the California Desert Protection Act on October 31, 1994, Congress added 1.3 million acres and designated it a national park. Today, Death Valley National Park is made up of nearly 3.4 million acres, 93 percent of which is Congressionally designated wilderness for visitors to explore.

Park rangers at Death Valley lead a variety of **tours** that explain the area's unusual landscape, as well as its colorful history. The park concessioner offers a variety of first-rate services in the valley that include gift shops, a pool, fine dining, and more. When the rains cooperate, this seemingly barren landscape is transformed into an extraordinary knee-high carpet of **wildflowers**. Death Valley National Park–home to North America's highest temperatures and lowest point below sea level–offers plenty of adventure and a wealth of diversity.

In March 2019, approximately 35,000 acres of land from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was transferred to Death Valley National Park. Part of the transfer is a 6,369-acre lollipop-shaped section of land in the northern part of the park containing the Crater Mine and the 28,923-acre "Bowling Alley," a long, narrow swath of land on the northern border of Fort Irwin National Training Center, which includes a section of the Quail Mountains.

Plan Your Visit

Here's a quick rundown of the basics you need to know when planning a visit to Death Valley National Park.

SIZE AND VISITATION

Death Valley National Park is comprised of 3.4 million acres. Visitation is highest from February through mid-April and during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Visitation is generally lowest in October and January. The park regularly receives nearly 1.7 million visitors per year.

ENTRANCE FEES

Death Valley National Park is open every day of the year. For $30 passengers in noncommercial vehicles (cars, trucks, and vans) can leave and re-enter the park as many times as they wish for seven days. The cost for the same pass per motorcycle is $25, and $15 for those traveling on bicycle or foot. Visitors under 16 do not need an entrance pass. For $55, frequent visitors may purchase the Death Valley Annual Pass and get unlimited entry of a noncommercial vehicle to the park for one year. Seniors are also eligible for a $20 annual pass. Visitors can purchase park passes in person at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or Stovepipe Wells Ranger Station, at various fee machines around the park, or online at **recreation.gov/pass**. Due to flash flooding and road damage from Hurricane Hilary in 2023, several roads in Death Valley National Park remain closed. For the most up-to-date conditions, visit **nps.gov/deva/planyourvisit/conditions.htm** or refer to the gatefold map. ***Note:*** *As of June 1, 2023, the National Park Service will only accept credit or debit card payments for all transactions. Visitors can still use cash to purchase vehicle entrance passes at several partner locations including Charles Brown General Store, Death Valley Natural History Association, Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, and Panamint Springs Resort. Alternatively, passes can be purchased ahead of time online by visiting* ***recreation.gov/sitepass/deathvalley***.

NATIONAL PARKS AND FEDERAL RECREATIONAL LANDS PASSES

A federal recreation pass is helpful if you plan to visit many national parks, forests or other federal lands. For information, call **(888) 275-8747** or visit **store.usgs.gov/pass**.

Type	Cost	Availability	Details
Annual Pass	$55	General Public	This one-year pass is available on site, by phone, or online (see above).
Senior Pass	$20/$80	U.S. residents age 62+	Senior annual or lifetime passes are available on site, via mail order, or online. ID required.
Military Pass	Free	U.S. military members and their dependents, Gold Star families, and veterans	This one-year pass is available on site or online. ID (CAC Card or DD Form 1173) required. As of 2022, veterans also qualify for a free lifetime pass to all national parks. Visit **nps.gov** for more information.
Access Pass	Free	U.S. residents with permanent disabilities	This lifetime pass is available on site, via mail order, or online. ID and documentation required.
Volunteer Pass	Free	250 cumulative volunteer service hours	Inquire with volunteer coordinator to obtain information about this one-year pass.

EVERY KID OUTDOORS

To help engage and create our next generation of park visitors, the Obama Administration partnered with the Federal Land Management Agencies to launch the **Every Kid Outdoors** initiative. The immediate goal is to provide an opportunity for every fourth grade student across the country and their families to experience their federal public lands and waters in person and discover our wildlife, resources, and history for free. All fourth-graders have access to an Every Kid Outdoors pass at **everykidoutdoors.gov**. This pass admits the pass owner and accompanying passengers in a private noncommercial vehicle to the park. Obtain and print the pass on **everykidoutdoors.gov** and present it at the park. The Every Kid Outdoors pass is valid until August 31, 2025.

PERMITS

Permits for commercial filming and other special uses are available at Death Valley National Park. Filming is allowed in areas open to the public without a permit and without advance notice to the NPS if your activity meets ALL of the following requirements:

- Takes place outdoors
- Is outside of areas managed as Wilderness
- Involves fewer than eight people
- Only uses equipment that will be carried at all times.

If your filming activity doesn't comply with the requirements above, please reach out to **DEVA_Permits@nps.gov** far in advance of your anticipated dates and consult with the permit office staff about whether you need a permit. Fees may vary based on your activities and the number of people in your group. For further information, contact **(760) 786-3241**.

GETTING TO DEATH VALLEY

Car: Death Valley National Park is transected from east to west by California State Route 190. On the east, in Nevada, U.S. Route 95 parallels the park from north to south with connecting highways at Scotty's Junction (Nevada State Route 267), Beatty (Nevada State Route 374), and Amargosa Valley (Nevada State Route 373). At Amargosa Valley, turn onto Nevada State Route 373, and then take California State Route 190 at Death Valley Junction. To the south of the park, Interstate 15 passes through Baker, California, on its way from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. State Route 127 travels north from Baker to Shoshone and Death Valley Junction, with connections to the park on State Route 178 at Shoshone and California State Route 190 at Death Valley Junction.

Air: The closest major airport is Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas, which is 120 miles southeast of the park. Call **(702) 261-5211** for flight and rental car information. There is a small airport at Furnace Creek (personal planes only), but it does not have a direct line, so please call the NPS at **(760) 786-3200** for more information.

Public Transportation: Although there is no public transportation in the park, commercial airlines and interstate buses serve Las Vegas, Nevada. Amtrak and Greyhound busses also service Barstow, California. Cars may be rented in both cities, but advance reservations are advised, especially in the summer. Guided bus tour trips also depart from Las Vegas.

CLIMATE

Death Valley is the hottest and driest place in the United States. A temperature of 134°F, the highest ever recorded in the world, occurred here. The valley receives less than two inches of rain per year.

WHY IS DEATH VALLEY SO DRY?

Winter storms moving inland from the Pacific Ocean must pass over a number of mountain ranges as they travel east. As the clouds rise with the mountains, they cool and the moisture falls as rain or snow on the western side of the mountains. By the time the clouds reach the mountains' east side, most of the moisture has already precipitated, leaving a dry "rainshadow." Four major mountain ranges lie between Death Valley and the ocean, each one adding to the intensity of the rainshadow effect. In total, rainfall averages less than two inches per year. During some years, there is no rain at all in the park.

WHY IS DEATH VALLEY SO HOT?

The depth and shape of Death Valley contribute to the hot summer temperatures. The valley is a long, narrow basin 282 feet below sea level, yet walled by high, steep mountain ranges. The clear, dry air and sparse plant life cover allow sunlight to continuously heat the desert surface. Heat radiates back from the rocks and soil and becomes trapped in the valley's depths. Summer nights provide little relief. Often, overnight lows may only dip to 90°F.

Heated air rises, but it is trapped by the high valley walls and is cooled and recycled back down to the valley floor. Those pockets of descending air are only slightly cooler than the surrounding hot air. As they descend, they are compressed and heated even more by low elevation air pressure. These moving masses of super-heated air blow through the valley–creating the extremely high temperatures and contributing to areas of high wind.

WEATHER FACTS

- The ground temperature can be 80°F hotter than the air temperature. A ground temperature of 201°F was once measured in Death Valley. Ground temperature on the valley floor is about 40 percent higher than the surrounding air temperature.
- The lowest temperature ever recorded on the valley floor was 15°F in 1913.
- Higher elevations are cooler than the low valley. Temperatures drop 3° to 5°F with every 1,000 vertical feet.
- Comfortable clothing that provides ample sun protection–along with a broad-rimmed hat to shield the face–are recommended in the summer months. Make sure to wear a sturdy pair of walking shoes year-round!
- On average, Death Valley is the hottest place in the world. July is characteristically the hottest month with an average temperature of 116°F.

TRANSPORTATION INSIDE THE PARK

The massive size of Death Valley National Park (about twice the size of the state of Delaware) and the vast distances between its major features make the use of a motor vehicle essential. Be sure your car is in good mechanical condition and that you have ample fuel each day. More than 800 miles of roads provide access to wilderness hiking, camping, and historical sites, but some are unpaved or four-wheel-drive only. Within the park, gasoline is sold only at Furnace Creek, Panamint Springs Resort, Stovepipe Wells Village, The Oasis at Death Valley, and Shoshone Village, so plan accordingly. Diesel is available only at Furnace Creek, Panamint Springs Resort, and The Oasis. Carry extra drinking water, especially when hiking.

FURNACE CREEK VISITOR CENTER

The Furnace Creek Visitor Center is the main visitor information source for Death Valley. It provides general information and backcountry camping and hiking information and permits. The Death Valley Natural History Association updates a well-stocked bookstore curated toward the natural and cultural history of the locale. The center features geology, climate, wildlife, and natural history displays, as well as an orientation film *Seeing Death Valley*. The film is shown every half hour, with the last screening at 4:00 pm. In 2021, the center upgraded its thermometer display, which now features a beautiful tile mosaic. The center now also features a new exhibit, "Women of Change." It tells the story of various women who shaped the history of Death Valley National Park and influenced its future. The visitor center is located in the Furnace Creek area on California Highway 190–30 miles from Death Valley Junction to the east, and 24 miles from Stovepipe Wells Village to the north and west. During the winter season (November through mid-April), rangers present a wide variety of walks, talks, and evening programs about Death Valley's cultural and natural history. This visitor center is open from 8 am to 5 pm. For more information, call **(760) 786-3200**. Ranger programs are listed at **nps.gov/deva**.

SCOTTY'S CASTLE VISITOR CENTER

Scotty's Castle, a Spanish-style mansion built in the 1920s, is currently closed due to severe damage caused by floodwaters in 2015. *All entry is currently prohibited except on guided tours, which can be booked*

at **dvnha.org/program-events/scottys-castle-flood-recovery-walking-tours.** *The reopening date is unknown at this time.*

KIDS

There is plenty for kids to do at Death Valley National Park, including the Junior Ranger Program. For more information, please see the "Just for Kids" chapter.

PARK NEWSPAPER

Pick up or download the free park newspaper, *Death Valley Visitor Guide*, which offers information on camping, hiking, backpacking, events, safety and other park news. You can access it at **nps.gov/deva/learn/news /newspaper.htm**.

RANGER STATIONS

Stovepipe Wells Ranger Station: Stovepipe Wells Ranger Station provides general information and backcountry camping and hiking information and permits. A branch outlet of the Death Valley Natural History Association also provides useful books and maps. Hours vary. Stovepipe Wells is located in the center of Death Valley, 24 miles from The Oasis at Death Valley to the south and 80 miles from Lone Pine, California, on Highway 395. For more information, call **(760) 786-2342**.

VISITOR SERVICES

Despite Death Valley's fearsome reputation and famously barren landscape, the National Park Service, hotel operators, and a number of recreation companies have taken steps to ensure that your trip is as smooth as it is inspiring. The Death Valley infrastructure includes all necessities that make planning a trip easy.

AUTOMOTIVE SERVICES

There are filling stations at Shoshone Village **(760) 852-4335,** Stovepipe Wells Village **(760) 786-7090** or **(833) 778-9290,** Death Valley Auto Repair **(970) 623-2083**, and Panamint Springs Resort **(775) 482-7680**. The latter three stations sell diesel fuel. Gas is only available at Panamint from 7 am to 9:30 pm.

BANKING SERVICES

ATMs are located in the general stores of The Oasis at Death Valley **(760) 786-2345**, Stovepipe Wells Village **(760) 786-7090** or **(833) 778-9290**, Shoshone Village **(760) 852-4335**, and the Panamint Springs Resort **(775) 482-7680**.

EMERGENCIES

Call **911** in case of emergency.

FOOD AND SUPPLIES

The Oasis at Death Valley **(760) 786-2345,** 7 am to 7 pm; Shoshone Village **(760) 852-4335**, 8 am to 9:30 pm; Panamint Springs Resort **(775) 482-7680**, 8 am to 8 pm; and Stovepipe Wells Village **(760) 786-7090 or (833) 778-9290**, 7 am to 10 pm; all have general stores with varying degrees of camping supplies and food. Call ahead.

FIRST AID

For emergencies, call **911** for 24-hour ranger dispatch.

GIFT SHOPS

Gift shops are available at: The Oasis at Death Valley **(760) 786-2345**, Shoshone Village **(760) 852-4335**, Panamint Springs Resort **(775) 482-7680**, Stovepipe Wells Village **(760) 786-7090**, and the Furnace Creek Visitor Center and Museum **(760) 786-3244. Shop hours may vary.**

MEDICAL SERVICES

- Beatty Clinic: Beatty, NV **(775) 990-1414**
- Desert View Hospital: Pahrump, NV **(775) 751-7500**
- Southern Inyo Hospital: Lone Pine, CA **(760) 876-5501**

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

General Park Information	**(760) 786-3200 or nps.gov/deva**
Commercial Permits	**(760) 786-3241**
Lodging within the Park	
The Oasis at Death Valley	**(760) 786-2345**
Stovepipe Wells	**(760) 786-7090/(833) 778-9290**
Panamint Springs	**(775) 482-7680**
Camping	**(877) 444-6777 or recreation.gov**
Emergencies	**911**
National Park Service (NPS)	**(760) 786-3200**
Cassell Enterprises LLC	**(775) 482-7680**
Death Valley '49ers	**deathvalley49ers.org**
Death Valley Lodging Company	**(760) 786-7090/(833) 778-9290**
Death Valley Conservancy	**dvconservancy.org**
Death Valley Natural History Association	**(800) 478-8564/(760)-786-2146**
Ridgecrest Area CVB	**(760) 375-8202**

Park Regulations & Safety

SAFETY TIPS

Water: Death Valley is extremely hot and dry. During the heat of summer, drink at least a gallon of water per day to replace loss from perspiration. Carry extra drinking water in your car and while hiking.

Heat and Dehydration: If you feel dizzy, nauseous, or get a headache, move out of the sun immediately and drink plenty of water. Dampen clothing to lower your body temperature. Heat and dehydration can kill.

Hiking: Do not hike in the low elevations when temperatures are hot. The mountains are cooler in summer, but can have snow and ice in winter.

Desert Driving: Stay on paved roads in summer. If your car breaks down, stay with it until help arrives. Be prepared and carry plenty of extra water. Do not depend on GPS devices, as they can show roads that are not open. Always carry up-to-date road maps and get information from park staff before embarking for the day.

Flash Floods: Avoid canyons during rainstorms and be prepared to move to higher ground if necessary. While driving, be alert for water running in washes and across road dips.

Mine Hazards: STAY OUT–STAY ALIVE! Do not enter mine tunnels or shafts. Mines may be unstable, have hidden shafts, pockets of bad air, and poisonous gas.

Drones are prohibited throughout the park.

In Case of Emergency: Dial **911** from any telephone or cell phone. Note: Cell phones may not work in many parts of the park.

Dangerous Animals: Never place your hands or feet where you cannot see first.

Rattlesnakes, scorpions, or black widow spiders may be sheltered in hidden spots. See the "Nature & Wildlife" chapter for more information.

PACKING ESSENTIALS

Don't hit the trail without:

- Topographic map and compass + GPS
- Whistle/Signal mirror
- Flashlight or head lamp
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, and hat
- High-energy food
- Plenty of water
- Appropriate clothing and extra layers
- Fire-starting equipment
- Insect Repellent
- First-Aid Kit
- Sturdy footwear with good socks
- Multi-tool/Knife
- Power Bank/Extra batteries
- Cell phone with satellite connectivity

PARK RULES

Overnight Camping: Camping is permitted in developed campgrounds and some backcountry areas. To obtain a backcountry permit, visit the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or Stovepipe Wells Ranger Station or download one online. Please note that permits are now mandatory for: Echo Canyon, Hole in the Wall, Cottonwood Canyon, Marble Canyon, and Greenwater Valley.

Driving off roads: Off-road driving is strictly forbidden to protect the extremely fragile desert ecosystems. Please help keep the park's wilderness free of vehicle tracks.

Fires: Campfires are allowed in fire pits in developed campgrounds. Backcountry fires are prohibited. Gathering wood is against the law. Anything you pack in, you must pack out.

Weapons: Firearm regulations vary by state. Check with the National Park Service or the park you plan to visit before your trip for the most current information.

Pets: Pets are only permitted along roads and in developed areas. Pets must be leashed at all times, and pet waste must be removed.

Horses: Horses are not permitted in developed campgrounds or on many of the trails. Travel by horseback is not recommended in steep mountainous areas. Travelers must carry certified weed-free feed.

Metal Detectors: Metal detectors may not be used in the park. The collection of historic objects is prohibited.

Private Property: Please respect private property in the park.

Wildlife: Please enjoy wildlife from a safe distance. Do not feed, approach, or disturb any of the park's wildlife. When wild animals are fed by humans, they tend to depend on this unnatural food source rather than forage for their natural diet. Feeding also creates nuisance animals, which can endanger drivers on the highway. If you see sick, dead, or erratic behaving wildlife notify a park employee.

DESERT DRIVING TIPS

We recommend that you remain on paved roads, especially during the summer. If you do venture into the backcountry, heed these important tips:

- Make sure your car is in good working order. Service stations are few and far between. **Carry a spare tire, a jack, flares, and boards** to place under the tires in case you hit a sandy trap.
- Carry plenty of extra **water**. Bring at least one gallon per person for each day. It is a good idea to have a two- or three-day stock of water in case of car trouble.
- Bring a map so you'll always know where you are in the backcountry. It's smart to carry a topographic map, compass, and cell phone as well (although it is unlikely to work outside the Furnace Creek area). Always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Dress for desert success. Shield yourself from the sun's glare by wearing a hat with a brim and light-colored, lightweight clothes. Make sure to pack a blanket, sunglasses, sunscreen, and wind-proof clothes just in case you need to leave your car to seek help.
- Wear a seatbelt at all times and make sure it is properly adjusted.
- Be on the lookout for **washouts**, especially on unpaved roads. Check for conditions before traveling on these roads.
- Drive the posted speed limits. The number one killer of visitors is single car rollover accidents. Narrow shoulders and speeding are the primary causes of vehicular accidents.

Preservation

Although the **California Desert Protection Act of 1994** formally protects millions of acres in Death Valley National Park, its unique biologic and geologic assets continue to face degradation from numerous sources.

INVASIVE PLANTS

Plants imported from elsewhere in the world now flourish in Death Valley. and disrupt ecosystems. The salt cedar tree, for example, is replacing native cottonwood and willow trees. **Tumbleweed** has also rolled into the park to displace native vegetation. In Eureka Dunes and park locations, biologists are developing plans to control invasive plant species, while restoring native populations.

AIR AND LIGHT POLLUTION

You might think that the remote location of Death Valley National Park would help keep its air pure and pristine, but winds still carry pollutants from urban centers and industrial areas that lead to acid rain. The park's air quality monitoring station near Furnace Creek measures ozone; a system for forecasting high ozone days is in development. Death Valley is also affected by Las Vegas and central California's light pollution. The NPS is reducing light pollution from within the park by changing current lighting techniques and studying night sky conditions. For their efforts, Death Valley National Park was named an **International Dark Sky Park**, as a result, it is one the best places to stargaze in America. Visitors can see the stars at Death Valley anytime, but have a special opportunity to do so each year during the annual Death Valley Dark Sky Festival. Visit **nps.gov/deva/planyourvisit** for news about the festival in 2025 and a complete schedule of events.

WATER MINING

Many of the larger cities within the boundary of Death Valley's regional ground water flow system are experiencing rapid population growth in the United States. Today's climate is hotter and drier than it was thousands of years ago, and it does not provide enough precipitation to recharge the aquifer at the rate the water is being withdrawn.

DEVILS HOLE PUPFISH

These tiny inch-long fish have managed to survive in the high heat and warm, mineral-rich water with limited food sources for more than 20,000 years. Human interference has at times reduced their numbers to fewer than 50, yet the **pupfish** have bounced back, showing that they have much to teach scientists about adaptation to adverse conditions. They continue to swim and breed within the turquoise aquifer that rises to the surface at Devils Hole. The park's pupfish counting program began 50 years ago, in 1972.

OVERGRAZING BURROS

Beginning in the late 1800s, a small number of **burros** escaped or were turned loose by prospectors. The burros quickly adapted to the desert conditions and flourished, reaching a population of nearly 10,000. They gather in large herds and overgraze the scant plant resources, pushing out the native bighorn population. The National Park Service has embarked on a program to reduce the number of burros, which now number more than 4,000.

Sights To See

There is a lot to do and see in Death Valley–just make sure you have access to a car because you will want to cover a lot of ground! The park's long list of attractions includes mysterious **sliding rocks**, a massive **blast crater**, **ghost towns**, remnants of **gold** and **borax mines**, and other natural and historical points of interest. Nature lovers can savor stunning **wildflowers**, see fascinating wildlife, and observe unusual desert ecosystems. Geology buffs can tromp through glistening **sand dunes**, brightly-colored badlands, and eerie **salt deposits**. For history lovers, there are old charcoal **kilns** and interpretive exhibits about Death Valley's rough-and-tumble past. In the largest park in the contiguous United States, there is something for everybody.

FURNACE CREEK AREA

View aprons of pink, green, purple, brown, and black rock at **Artist's Drive**, a visual feast and a geologic tour of one of Death Valley's most explosive volcanic periods. Artist's Drive is a dipping, diving, curving, one-way road that weaves through striking ravines and colorful rock formations. The highlight of the nine-mile loop occurs at the **Artist's Palette** where sea green, lemon yellow, periwinkle blue, and salmon pink mineral deposits are splashed across the barren background like brilliant dabs of paint from a giant's brush. The effect is most intense during the evening as the colors change rapidly with the setting sun. Artist's Drive is off of Badwater Road, located 10 miles south of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center.

BADWATER BASIN

With the Black Mountains in the background, visitors can stroll through a shimmering expanse of nearly pure white table salt in **Badwater Basin.** At 282 feet below sea level, it is the **lowest point in North America**. Two to four thousand years ago the basin was the site of a 30-foot-deep lake that evaporated and left a one- to five-foot layer of salt in its wake. A briny pond, four times saltier than the ocean, still remains in the basin during the cold of winter, yet it shrinks to little more than a puddle during the hot summer months. Visitors are asked to stay on the boardwalk to avoid crushing the tiny Badwater snails, a species that lives under the salt crust and feeds on algae. Badwater basin is located 18 miles south of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center.

DANTE'S VIEW

Dante's View, a popular unworldly lookout point, offers a striking example of the distinctive basin and range topography that extends from Eastern California to central Utah. The steep, elongated mountain ranges alternate with flat, dry, desert valleys–the result of an intense stretching of the crust that has culminated into a series of north-south faults. These faults separate the basins from the ranges. Dante's View is more than **5,000 feet above the valley floor**. At this high altitude, amid the dry desert air, you can see across most of the 110-mile-long stretch. At Dante's Peak, a short hike north, the views up and down the landscape offer an unparalleled vantage point. The white salt flats that live far below make up Badwater Basin–at 282 feet below sea level. Dante's View is certainly one of the most extraordinary sights anywhere in California. It is located on Dante's View Road off

Route 190, 26 miles southeast of Furnace Creek. The parking and viewing platforms at Dante's View received a facelift in 2018. *The Dante's View restroom is closed.*

DEVIL'S GOLF COURSE

The floor of Death Valley is a vast evaporating dish covering more than 200 square miles. It is crusted over with a variety of salts; nowhere is this more apparent than at **Devil's Golf Course**. Here, gnarled crystalline salt spires dot the landscape and look like a coral reef run amok. The lumpy salt pinnacles are the residue of Death Valley's last significant lake, which evaporated 2,000 years ago. Though there is no official hiking trail, visitors can hike through this strange and rugged terrain for a closer look at the spectacular formations. As you do, however, be careful not to hurt yourself on the jagged structures and make sure not to damage the crystals. During the summer, listen for tiny pops and pings as billions of the salt crystals contract and expand due to fluctuations in temperature. Devil's Golf Course is located 15 miles south of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center. Note: the road leading to Devil's Golf Course is often closed after rain.

HARMONY BORAX WORKS

Wander between the rusting remains of buildings, machinery, tanks, and piping at Harmony Borax Works, a mining operation that dates back more than 120 years. After prospectors found borax in 1881, **William Tell Coleman** built the Harmony plant and began to process ore in late 1883 or early 1884. Operating at capacity, the Harmony Borax Works employed 40 men who produced three tons of borax daily. Learn how early miners used those famed **20-mule teams** to haul borax 165 miles to the railroad town of Mojave. The teams averaged two miles an hour and required about 30 days to complete a round-trip. The Harmony plant went out of operation in 1888, after only five years of production, when Coleman's financial empire collapsed. The Harmony Borax Works is located just off Highway 190, one mile north of the visitor center. The Borax Museum is located at The Ranch at Death Valley, two miles south of Harmony Borax Works.

ZABRISKIE POINT

Peer from one of the park's most popular lookouts at **Zabriskie Point** for an unforgettable view of Death Valley's wildly eroded and vibrantly colored badlands. A short uphill hike from the parking area is all that's required to enjoy a panoramic view of golden-brown mudstone hills. These hills are riddled with rills and gullies from the occasional yet intense times when water rushes down the bone-dry slopes. The desolate, unearthly landscape surrounding Zabriskie Point is ideal for viewing sunrises and sunsets, so bring your camera! Zabriskie Point is located five miles south of Furnace Creek on Highway 190.

STOVEPIPE WELLS AREA

Don't leave Death Valley until you have explored the **Mesquite Flat Dunes**! Located near Stovepipe Wells Village, these 150-foot dunes are nearly surrounded by mountains on all sides. The primary source of the sands is the **Cottonwood Mountains**, which lie to the north and northwest. The tiny grains of quartz and feldspar that make up the dune field were once larger pieces of solid rock. Over time, through erosion, they became sand-sized. The dunes can be explored on foot. Like many of Death Valley's geologic highlights, the colors and

contours of the Mesquite Flat Dunes are especially spectacular at sunset. The most popular place to access the sand dunes is about two miles east of Stovepipe Wells Village—23 miles northwest of Furnace Creek—on Highway 190. Mosaic Canyon, which is located just west of Stovepipe Wells, is considered to be a geologic wonder and is a moderate one- to four-mile hike.

PANAMINT SPRINGS AREA

Marvel at beehive-shaped kilns at the **Wildrose Charcoal Kilns**, erected by the Modock Consolidated Mining Company in 1877. The well-preserved kilns—each standing about 25 feet high with a diameter of approximately 30 feet wide—were used to convert **pinyon** and **juniper logs** to charcoal for two silver mines located 25 miles away in the Argus Range. Each kiln held 42 cords of pinyon pine logs and, after burning for a week, would produce 2,000 bushels of charcoal. The Wildrose kilns are considered to be the best surviving examples of charcoal kilns found in the western states. They owe their longevity both to fine workmanship and to their limited use. The kilns can be reached via Wildrose Canyon Road and are four miles east of the intersection with Emigrant Canyon Road, which was recently re-opened after a flash-flood in 2023. *Please note that Lower Wildrose Road is closed and likely will not reopen until Summer 2026.*

RACETRACK PLAYA

The mysterious sliding rocks of the famed **Racetrack Playa** are an amazing sight. This dried lakebed, which is nestled between the Cottonwood Mountains to the east and the Last Chance Range to the west, contains boulders that have puzzled geologists for decades. Furrows in the mud indicate that these boulders have wiggled, jiggled, slipped, and slid their way across the perfectly flat bed in what is truly one of the strangest rock dances of all time. Long-term studies of the "**sailing stones**" show that most move in a northeast direction.

However, scientists have found some treading south and west, carving zigzag paths along the playa. Recent observations using GPS and time-lapse photography suggest that rocks move when razor-thin ice sheets start to melt during periods of light wind. These ice panels can move the rocks at up to five meters per minute. The Racetrack Playa is located 27 miles southwest of Ubehebe Crater on an unpaved road. High-clearance vehicles with heavy-duty tires are recommended. Ask about road conditions before visiting.

UBEHEBE CRATER

Hike to the heart of **Ubehebe Crater**, a 770-foot-deep steam-explosion crater, and imagine the instant when water suddenly flashed to steam—shattering the rock above and ejecting a cloud of debris at speeds of up to 100 miles per hour! Remember to bring plenty of water with you: The climb out is grueling. Ubehebe Crater is located eight miles west of Scotty's Castle.

GHOST TOWNS

No trip to Death Valley is complete without visiting one of the many ghost towns. The conditions of the towns themselves vary, but all are reminders of Death Valley's history. Every piece of rusting machinery and bit of wood represents a part of the past. Do not remove, burn, or disturb any of the remains.

BALLARAT

A gold mine camp and home to 400 people in 1898, Ballarat is now the site of several adobe dwellings located off the Panamint Valley Road, west of Death Valley.

LEADFIELD

All that remains of Leadfield are the skeletons of wood and tin buildings, a dugout, and cement foundations of the mill. The town failed in 1927. This former lead mine is located on **Titus Canyon Road**. *Titus Canyon Road is currently closed due to flood damage and is not likely to reopen until 2026.*

PANAMINT CITY

Called the "toughest, rawest, most hard-boiled little hellhole that ever passed for civilized," Panamint City boomed in 1874 with a population of 2,000 people. In 1876, a flash flood destroyed the town, leaving little more than the chimney from the mine's smelter. The town is accessible via a five-mile hike from **Chris Wicht's Camp**, located six miles northeast of the ghost town of Ballarat.

RHYOLITE

The largest ghost town near Death Valley, Rhyolite boasted a population of nearly 10,000 people during its peak between 1905–1911. At its height, the town contained two churches, 50 saloons, 18 stores, two undertakers, 19 lodging houses, eight doctors, two dentists, a stock exchange, and an opera. Many ruins of the town remain, including the Bottle House, the train depot, the remains of a three-story bank building, and the jail. Rhyolite is located just four miles west of Beatty on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property. The location is approximately 35 miles from the Furnace Creek Visitor Center, outside the park.

History & Culture

Along with its stunning natural splendor, Death Valley can lay claim to a rich and colorful human tale that begins at least 10,000 years ago.

ARCHEOLOGY

The archeological record indicates that American Indians have lived in Death Valley for the last 10,000 years, a period known as the **Holocene**. Four distinct American Indian cultural stages emerged during this time frame.

Archeologists estimate the first stage occurred approximately 9,000 years ago. The **Nevares Spring** people hunted game and used scrapers and knives made of **chert**, a unique rock that flakes easily and was fashioned into projectile points. The next stage was a hot and dry period that lasted roughly 4,000 years; sometime during that era the **Mesquite Flat** people replaced the original inhabitants. The presence of grinding tools in their toolbox, however, suggests that human subsistence was shifting from hunting animals to the gathering of seeds, nuts, and berries.

In the third stage, commencing about 2,000 years ago, the **Saratoga Spring** people evolved into what had become a dry, hot desert. These were more advanced hunters and gatherers who brought the bow and arrow and left mysterious, meticulously crafted stone patterns in the valley. The people of the fourth stage, which began around CE 500, were directly related to some of the Shoshone-speaking tribes who still inhabit the valley and are responsible for introducing pottery to the region.

THE DEATH VALLEY WAGON TRAIL OF 1849

The first white men to enter Death Valley were a group of pioneers associated with the **Death Valley Wagon Train**. Many gold seeking pioneers arrived at Salt Lake City and were told not to continue on (as the Donner Party had done before them), since it was too late in the year. The cautious advisors suggested they wait till spring. Nevertheless, the pioneers became restless and organized a wagon train of over 125 wagons with **Capt. Jefferson Hunt** as their guide. The first two weeks of travel were slow and many impatient pioneers decided to take a shortcut toward **Walker Pass**, hoping to cut some 500 miles off the journey.

The point where these wagons left the trail is near the present-day town of **Enterprise**, **Utah**, where a monument commemorates the historic departure. Within a few days, the wagon train came upon a major cliff extending several miles in both directions. After about a month of slow progress through central Nevada, the pioneers reached the borders of Death Valley in December.

They traveled along the same route followed by Highway 190, and in December 1849, arrived at Travertine Springs, located near Furnace Creek. The lost pioneers had now been traveling across the desert for about two months since leaving the trail. They sent two young men to look for help and waited 26 days for them to return empty-handed. Once reunited, the group headed north near present-day Stovepipe Wells, but discovered it, too, was impassible. They decided to leave their belongings behind and walk to

TIMBISHA SHOSHONE

Few people realize that an American Indian tribe currently lives and thrives in Death Valley National Park. For thousands of years, the Timbisha Shoshone have resided in Southeast California and Southwest Nevada. In 1936, the tribe established a tribal center on a 40-acre tract at Furnace Creek. The tribe achieved federal recognition in 1983 as the Death Valley Timbisha Shoshone Band of California, but did not have a land base until the passage of the Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act on November 1, 2000. This act transferred over 7,000 acres of trust lands to the tribe both in the park and adjacent to its acreage.

The traditional ancestral homeland of the Timbisha covers approximately 11 million acres within the Mojave Desert. The Timbisha began to be displaced in the mid-19th century when miners, ranchers, and homesteaders moved into the region. Between the mid-1920s and 1936, they were forced to move four times.

At their Furnace Creek site, the tribe is developing new homes, some limited commercial activity and building single family residences, a tribal community center, an inn, a tribal museum, and a cultural center with a gift shop. The Homeland Act allows tribal access to traditional use resources and sacred sites and mandates that park lands used for traditional practices must be cooperatively managed under a mutually agreed plan with the NPS.

civilization, using wood from their wagons to cook the meat of several slaughtered oxen. The place today is referred to as "**Burned Wagons Camp**," located near the Mesquite Flat sand dunes of Death Valley.

After crossing the mountains and down into Panamint Valley, they turned south, climbed a small pass into Searles Lake Valley, and made their way into Indian Wells Valley, which is near the present-day city of Ridgecrest. It was here that they got their first look at the Sierra Mountains, and turning south, followed a trail that brought them to Walker Pass, which would finally lead them back to civilization.

MINING

The most profitable and longest-sustained mining activities in the region centered on talc and borate. Borax deposits, discovered in 1873, were first successfully promoted by **W.T. Coleman.** He built the Harmony Borax Works and developed the famous system of 20-mule team wagons that hauled the mineral 165 miles across the desert to the railroad at Mojave. The Harmony plant went out of operation in 1888 when Coleman's financial empire collapsed, after only five years of production. By the early 20th century, most of the other mining operations followed suit.

TOURISM

The first tourist facilities in Death Valley were tent houses built in the 1920s at the site of today's Stovepipe Wells. **Herman "Bob" Eichbaum** began building a toll road in the 1920s and opened the Stovepipe Wells Hotel in 1926. In 1927 the Pacific Coast Borax Company opened the Inn at Furnace Creek which was inspired by the Spanish Missions that dotted Coastal California. Although the Inn was located in one of the hottest and lowest points in the hemisphere, it was an immediate success. In the early 1930s, they converted the working ranch into what is now known as the The Ranch at Death Valley.

Nature & Wildlife

Surprisingly, Death Valley–the hottest and driest place in North America–is home to an abundance of uniquely adapted life forms. A total of 1,042 plant species, 51 species of native mammals, 346 types of birds, 36 species of reptiles, six types of fish, and five species of amphibians live here.

DESERT ECOSYSTEM

If you were to travel from briny Badwater Basin to the tip of **Telescope Peak**, you would cross four distinct ecological zones, each determined by climate and elevation. At Furnace Creek on the valley floor, precipitation averages a mere 1.9 inches per year, while the highest peaks receive about 15 inches annually.

The **Lower Sonoran**, which covers the lowest 4,000 feet, is dominated by desert holly and creosote bush that grow in gravelly alluvial fans. The **Upper Sonoran** extends to an elevation of 8,500 feet and consists of sagebrush, other desert shrubs, **pinyon pine**, and **juniper**. Pinyon pine and juniper give way to sierra juniper and mountain mahogany in the transition zone. The **sub-alpine zone** begins at an elevation of 9,000 feet where limber pine and bristlecone dominate. Differences in vegetation are primarily due to the precipitation gradient.

Death Valley's plants supply themselves with water in one of two ways. **Xerophytes** generally have short roots and depend on ephemeral water that is above the water table. As a result, these plants are able to survive periods of protracted drought. **Phreatophytes** have longer roots and tap a perennial water source from the top of the underground saturated zone. Desert holly is a xerophyte and the most drought-resistant plant in Death Valley. It grows on the hottest, driest, and saltiest parts of the gravel fans where the ground is too dry and salty even for **creosote bush**–another xerophyte and the most common plant in the lower Sonoran zone. **Desert holly** is more abundant on the east side of the park, due to the dry, saline fans that are found there. **Pickleweed**, a curious sprawling succulent shrub, is a phreatophyte that is extremely salt-tolerant and grows near the edge of the salt flats. Other phreatophytes common in Death Valley include **salt grass**, **arrowweed,** and **honey mesquite**.

WILDFLOWERS

Spring wildflowers are one of Death Valley's top attractions–when they come. Early abundant seasonal rains combined with warm, windless days yield **superblooms**, painting the land in color. These blooms are the exception rather than the rule. If you are lucky to see wildflowers, remember that you are in a national park and must heed its rules and regulations. Picking flowers is strictly prohibited.

PEAK BLOOMING PERIODS

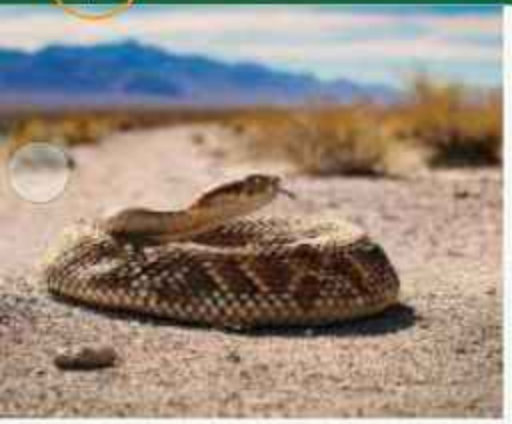
Rainfall: The best time to see a spring floral display is in years of high rainfall, when precipitation has exceeded the Death Valley annual average of only about 1.9 inches. Flowers usually begin blooming at the end of February and continue to impress through April. Be sure to call the park before visiting. In general,

years that see heavy rains in late October with little rain through the winter months will not produce flowers as well as years that witness evenly-spaced precipitation throughout the winter and into the spring.

Valley Floor and Alluvial Fans: Best in mid-February to mid-April. Look for desert star, blazing star, desert gold, mimulus, encelia, poppies, verbena, evening primrose, phacelia, and various species of cacti.
2,000 to 4,000 feet: Best in early April to early May. The prime spot for viewing is the Panamint Mountains. Look for desert paintbrush, Mojave Desert rue, lupine, Joshua tree, bear poppy, cacti, and Panamint daisies.

Above 4,000 feet: Best in late April to early June. As with lower elevations, the ideal viewing area continues to be the Panamint Mountains. Look for **Mojave wildrose**, rabbitbrush, Panamint daisies, mariposa lilies, and lupine. No matter what season you come to view the flowers, be sure to bring a camera!

SNAKE BITE PREVENTION TIPS



- Always wear shoes or boots and long pants.
- Stay on trails when possible.
- Be cautious when approaching rocks, bushes, or other objects—or areas where a snake may be hiding. Avoid old mining tunnels, a favorite place for snakes in the park, and heavy underbrush.
- Use a flashlight at night to avoid stepping on snakes.
- Set up your campsite in an open area.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A RATTLESNAKE:

- Stay calm and try to locate the snake's position before moving away in a slow and steady manner.
- Back away slowly, giving the snake plenty of room. They only can strike a distance equal to half their own length.
- Do not try to kill or move the snake; 75 percent of snakebites occur when people try to capture or kill snakes.

IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A RATTLESNAKE:

- Stay calm. According to the FDA, of 8,000 people who suffer venomous bites in the U.S., only 9 to 15 die. Furthermore, 25 percent of adult rattlesnake bites are dry (no venom is injected).
- Wash the bite with clean water and soap.
- Immobilize the bitten area and keep it lower than the heart.
- If the bite is on the hand or arm, remove any rings, watches, or tight clothing.
- Seek immediate medical attention.

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE






BOBCAT
(Lynx rufus)
Perhaps the bobcat's most recognizable feature is its ears, which are pointed with black hair tufts spiking upward. Named for its stubby, bobbed tail, the bobcat is most active at twilight and dawn. It keeps a diurnal schedule in the winter to sync with the activity of its prey. • **Weight** 20 pounds • **Length** 2-3.5 feet • **Tail** 4-7 inches • **Active** year-round.

DESERT IGUANA
(Dipsosaurus dorsalis)
More heat tolerant than any other reptile in North America, this species is widely distributed throughout the Mojave, Sonoran, and Colorado deserts. Primarily an herbivore, it eats flowers, buds, fruits, and leaves (especially creosote!). It's found mostly on sandy flats and in rocky, hilly areas. • **Length** 16 inches • **Hibernates** in winter.

KIT FOX
(Vulpes macrotis)
The kit fox is adapted to the desert and semi-arid regions of the western U.S. They're nocturnal hunters, moving in irregular patterns through vegetated desert areas. They're primarily carnivores, but when food is scarce, kit foxes can be omnivores. They do not need to drink water, as their prey provides them with adequate hydration.• **Length** 2-2.8 feet, including tail • **Height** 1 foot at shoulders • **Weight** 3-4 pounds • **Active** year-round.

DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP
(Ovis canadensis nelsoni)
These bighorns reside throughout the southwestern region of the country and have adapted to extended periods of time without water. They have unusual padded hooves, allowing them to climb steep, rocky terrain. Soon after birth, they develop horns that grow for life. • **Height** 3 feet (at shoulder) • **Weight** 150-200 pounds • **Active** year-round.

KANGAROO RAT
(Dipodomys californicus)
At first, the kangaroo rat appears to be like any number of small rodents with golden-brown fur, shiny bulbous black eyes, and whiskers atop a tiny nose. With the right diet, it can go without water completely, due to kidney and metabolic processes structured to efficiently retain water. • **Weight** 2-5 oz. • **Length** 12-14 inches • **Active** year-round.

MULE DEER
(Odocoileus hemionus)
The naturally timid mule deer can be found in the pinyon/juniper associations of the Grapevine, Cottonwood, and Panamint Mountains. Mule deer may appear tame and even approach you, but they're wild animals and may charge if they feel threatened. Always keep a safe distance. • **Weight** 70-250 pounds • **Length** 4-7.5 feet • **Active** year-round.

Things To Do

Regardless of the season, there's always a lot to do in Death Valley—not surprising when you consider the park includes a 156-mile stretch between two mountain ranges, numerous archeological and historical treasures, and the single lowest point in North America. Here are just some of the most popular activity options:

SAND BOARDING

Didn't have time to hit the slopes or not interested in paying for a lift ticket? Head to Mesquite or Saline Sand Dunes where you can partake in the ultimate desert extreme sport and sand board, ski, or sled in a novel way. The action is best in spring, winter and fall, when temperatures are cooler. You'll need to hike about a mile to the closest dunes and bring your sled/board, sunscreen and plenty of water. Please note that Eureka, Hidden, Panamint Valley, and Ibex Sand Dune Systems are closed to sand riding to protect sensitive flora and fauna.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET

For many, the most extraordinary time to experience the desert landscape is when the sun is close to the horizon. Bring a camera and a tripod and arrive approximately one hour before sunset or sunrise. Enjoy the sunrise at Dante's View, Zabriskie Point, and Badwater. Prime spots to see the sunset are Artist's Drive, Mesquite Flat Dunes, and Ubehebe Crater.

HORSEBACK RIDING

Many visitors enjoy the beauty of Death Valley from a saddle. Both one- and two-hour or moonlight horseback rides are available. For those who savor a truly romantic treat, you can even ride in a horse-drawn carriage while sipping champagne! For more information, contact Furnace Creek Stables. Visit their website **furnacecreekstables.com** or call **(760) 614-1018**.

BIKING

Biking is permitted at Death Valley, and many seasoned riders enjoy the challenge of the park's rugged terrain and sizzling temperatures. When cycling, remember to always keep bikes on roads used by cars—never take them onto hiking trails or cross-country. During the warm-weather months from May through October, avoid biking in the lower levels of Death Valley during any hours other than early morning, as the heat can rise to dangerous levels. Avoid biking in canyons if there is a storm approaching. To ensure a safe trip, pack sunglasses, a first aid kit, proper clothing, and extra food and water to take with you. If you do not bring your own bike, The Ranch at Death Valley offers road and e-bike rentals at half and full day rates. More information can be found at **oasisatdeathvalley.com**.

RANGER PROGRAMS

Throughout the year, park rangers offer a number of programs. Visitors can go stargazing, experience the desert environment, or explore geology. Programs are presented at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or in various locations throughout the park. For more information, visit **nps.gov/deva**.

BEYOND THE MAIN ROAD

Much of Death Valley's beautiful scenery is located beyond the park's main roads. More than 800 miles of unpaved, **backcountry roads** provide access to wilderness hiking, camping, and historical sites. You'll need a licensed, street-legal vehicle with high clearance for all backcountry roads, some of which may also require four-wheel drive to traverse.

If you've rented a vehicle, be aware that most **rental agreements restrict vehicles to paved roads**. Your rental company can charge you for damage to the vehicle if it appears that you've driven off-road. Be sure that your rental vehicle has a good spare tire, that the tire is accessible and not "locked" into a keyed holder, and that the tools to change the tire, including jacks and wrenches, are in the vehicle and accessible.

Farabee's Jeep Rentals, located across from The Inn at Death Valley, offers daily rentals of Jeeps outfitted for rugged backcountry road use. Visitors can take vehicles out and explore more remote areas of the park. For more information or reservations, please call **(760) 786-9872**, or visit **farabeejeeps.com.**

If you decide to travel into the backcountry on your own, make sure you have a detailed backcountry road map, as many remote roads do not appear on the official park map. Inquire at the visitor center about availability of maps. Backcountry roads are susceptible to washouts after storms and may close or require chains in the winter. Always check for current road conditions at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or other ranger stations. Backcountry camping is restricted to certain areas, so please check in at a visitor center before planning an overnight trip, and fill out a backcountry camping permit. Remember to carry plenty of water, and never rely on backcountry water sources.

Do not depend on GPS devices, as they may show roads that have been closed in recent years.

Lodging & Dining

There are a variety of dining and lodging options in Death Valley and beyond. Within the park, Destination Death Valley LLC manages park concessions at Stovepipe Wells. Xanterra Parks & Resorts®, the nation's largest park management company, operates the historic The Inn at Death Valley, as well as The Ranch at Death Valley. Panamint Springs Resort is a private entity offering reasonably-priced services on the west side of the park.

The Inn at Death Valley Built in 1927, this AAA four-diamond resort is surrounded by the Panamint and Funeral Mountains and Death Valley National Park. The Inn at Death Valley features a natural spring-fed swimming pool, cascading palm gardens, tennis, massages, hiking, touring, and fine dining. For more information or to make a reservation, call **(760) 786-2345** or visit **oasisatdeathvalley.com**. The **Inn Dining Room** features fireplaces, beamed ceilings, and spectacular views, which provide a visual feast to match the Inn's ambitious menu. "Resort attire" is required for dinner service (t-shirts and tank tops are not appropriate) and reservations are required. You can reach the restaurant directly at **(760) 786-3385** or make a reservation at **oasisatdeathvalley.com/dine/the-inn-dining-room**. B D

The Ranch at Death Valley This newly improved 275-room hotel is complimented by several restaurants, a general store, the Borax Museum, and an airstrip. Recreational opportunities include a spring-fed swimming pool, golf course, putting green, basketball, volleyball, tennis, hiking, seasonal horseback riding, horse-drawn carriage rides, and a 3,040-foot airstrip. Call **(800) 236-7916** or visit **oasisatdeathvalley.com** for reservations. The Ranch at Death Valley is also home to **The Last Kind Words Saloon** which brings the West of old to Death Valley. Featuring relics of the past such as movie posters, "Wanted" fliers touting the misdeeds of outlaws, antique firearms, and taxidermied game animals, The Last Kind Words Saloon is a testimony to the days of a bygone era. The saloon serves lunch and dinner and it is recommended that guests make reservations in advance by calling **(760) 786-3335**. L D

Stovepipe Wells Village Located in the heart of Death Valley National Park, Stovepipe Wells Village offers a relaxing and refreshing atmosphere. Accommodations can be somewhat pricey. The village boasts a pool, limited WiFi, a gift shop, general store, restaurant, and saloon. It is a 30-minute walk or short drive to the sand dunes and within easy driving distance to Furnace Creek, Mosaic Canyon, Rhyolite ghost town, Aguereberry Point, the Charcoal Kilns, Dante's View, and Badwater. Open year-round. Call **(760) 786-7090, (833) 778-9290,** or visit **stovepipedeathvalley.com** to make a reservation. Found in the Stovepipe Wells Village, the **Toll Road Restaurant** and **Badwater Saloon** were built with timbers from an old Death Valley mining operation. Toll Road Restaurant offers a full service menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrees range from $11 to $25. Badwater Saloon offers a great selection of draft beer, cocktails, and delicious appetizers in a unique western atmosphere. For more information call **(760) 786-7090** B L D

Panamint Springs Resort (PSR) is a rustic western-style resort located in Panamint Valley inside the western edge of Death Valley National Park. Outstanding views of distant sand dunes and the Panamint Mountains complete the setting for leisure, dining, and relaxation. Panamint Springs offers a campground, motel, restaurant, gas station, and small store (all open year-round). The resort currently offers breakfast burritos in its gift shop. Lunch and dinner are served daily and an offering of Angus beef burgers, chicken tenders, fish and chips, and more are available. Reservations are available but not required. For more information call **(775) 482-7680** or visit **panamintsprings.com**. B L D

Amargosa Opera House and Hotel Located in Death Valley Junction, a few miles west of the California-Nevada border near Death Valley National Park, the Amargosa boasts a unique old-western and Spanish atmosphere with weekly shows at the on-site opera house from October–May. Many of the rooms are painted by Marta Beckett, the hotel's former proprietor. For more information, call **(760) 852-4441**, or visit **amargosaoperahouse.org**.

Stagecoach Hotel and Casino Located in nearby Beatty, Nevada, the Stagecoach has 80 rooms equipped with a refrigerator, satellite tv, and air-conditioning. The on-site restaurant offers 24 hour food service. For more information, call **(775) 553-2419**, or visit **stagecoachhotelandcasino.com**. B L D

Lodging Beyond the Park To the west of Death Valley, lodging is available in the towns of Bishop, Big Pine, Independence, Lone Pine, Olancha, Ridgecrest, and Inyokern. To the east, there are accommodations in Tonopah, Goldfield, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, Death Valley Junction, Pahrump, Shoshone, and Tecopa.

KEY					
B	Breakfast	L	Lunch	D	Dinner
	Reservations required		Open in winter		

Walking & Hiking

Hiking in Death Valley is uniquely rewarding, but harsh terrain and extreme temperatures demand careful preparation. Before venturing out on a hike, it is vital to pack sunscreen, food, foot protection, and plentiful amounts of water. Be prepared for significantly cooler weather at higher elevations. Avoid hiking alone, and always let someone else know your planned route.

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Water is a necessity. Bring at least two liters for a winter-day hike and four liters or more if you plan to venture out in summer. Always bring extra supplies.

Constructed trails are rare in the park. Trails are provided in places that are heavily used and sensitive to damage. If a trail is there, please use it. Most hiking routes in the park are cross-country, up canyons, or along ridges. Footing will likely be rough and rocky.

Hiking the low elevations can be dangerous when it's hot. The best time to hike in Death Valley is November through March. When temperatures are above 100°F, visitors are advised not to walk away from their vehicles onto the salt flats (or anywhere below sea level). There is no shade to protect hikers from blazing reflected sunlight, and summer ground temperatures can exceed 200°F.

Flash floods are a possibility at all times. In Death Valley, storms can form suddenly. Even if it's not raining where you happen to be hiking, torrential rain on higher ground can fill washes and canyons quickly. Be aware of weather conditions; if it begins to rain, get out of a wash or streambed and onto higher ground. Be aware of flash flood channels when you park for a day hike to ensure that your car will remain where you left it. Remember that dogs and bicycles are not allowed on any of the trails or in the wilderness.

HIKING TRAILS

Trail *Destination*	Description	Round Trip Distance *Time*	Difficulty *Elevation Gain*
BADWATER SALT FLAT			
Badwater parking area, 17 miles south of Hwy 190 on Badwater Road	Level walk across lowest place in NA. Temporary lake may cover salt crust after rain. Don't hike in hot months. No trail. Hiking full length strongly discouraged.	Half-mile to edge. 5 miles across	Easy *Level*
DANTE'S RIDGE			
Dante's View parking area	Follow ridge north of Dante's View for spectacular vistas. First summit at ½ mile. No trail for last 4 miles, one way. ***Hiking not advised after 10 am in the summer.***	4 miles to Mt. Perry 2-3 hours	Moderate 1,200 feet
DESOLATION CANYON			
Parking area at end of ½ mile dirt road off Badwater Road, 3.7 miles south of Hwy 190	Narrow canyon through badlands. Follow old road, then main wash east toward cliffs. Then follow the wash draining from south. Hike up canyon, keeping to the right at the forks.	3 miles 2 hours	Moderate 600 feet
GOWER GULCH LOOP			
Golden Canyon parking area, 2 miles south of Hwy 190 on Badwater Road	Colorful badlands, canyon narrows, old borax mines. Hike up Golden Canyon, then follow trail over badlands to Zabriskie Point or down Gower Gulch (no trail).	5 miles *half day*	Moderate 700 feet
LITTLE HEBE CRATER TRAIL			
Ubehebe Crater parking area, 8 miles west of Scotty's Castle	Volcanic craters and elaborate erosion. Hike along west rim of Ubehebe Crater to Little Hebe. Continue around rim for 1.5-mile loop hike.	1 mile *1-2 hours*	Moderate 300 feet
MESQUITE FLAT SAND DUNES			
2.2 miles east of Stovepipe Wells on Hwy 190	Graceful desert dunes, numerous animal tracks. Walk cross-country to 100 ft. high dunes. Good for full moon hikes. No trail.	2 miles to highest dune 2.5 hours	Easy to moderate Varies
MOSAIC CANYON			
Mosaic Canyon parking area, 2 miles from Stovepipe Wells Village	Popular walk up a narrow, polished marble-walled canyon. Requires scaling some dry falls at the upper end.	1 to 4 miles 1 hour-half day	Moderate 1,200 feet
TELESCOPE PEAK TRAIL			
Mahogany Flat Campground, 9 miles east of Wildrose Campground off Route 178, often impassable to passenger cars.	Steep trail winds through pinyon and juniper to the highest point in the park, Telescope Peak, which offers breathtaking views of Death Valley to the east and Panamint Valley to the west.	14-mile *all day*	Strenuous 3,000 feet
NATURAL BRIDGE CANYON			
Natural Bridge parking area, 1.5 miles off Badwater Road	Gradual uphill walk past unique geological features and a bridge.	½ mile 1 hour	Easy 185 feet
TITUS CANYON NARROWS			
Titus Canyon Mouth parking area, 3 miles off Scotty's Castle Road	Easy access to lower Titus Canyon. Follow gravel road up wash 1.5 miles through narrows or continue to Klare Springs petroglyphs at 6.5 miles. ***Only Lower Titus Canyon to Fall Canyon Trailhead open.***	2 to 11 miles *2 hours-all day*	Easy to difficult 750 feet
WILDROSE CHARCOAL KILNS			
7 miles east of Wildrose Campground	Features beehive-shaped kilns formerly used to produce charcoal for ore smelters in the Argus Range.	0.125 mile *15 mins*	Easy *Level*
WILDROSE PEAK TRAIL			
Charcoal Kilns, 7 miles east of Wildrose Campground	Moderately steep trail winds through pinyon and juniper to sweeping views of Death Valley. Best in the afternoon.	8.2 miles 4-6 hours	Strenuous 2,200 feet

SELF-GUIDED WALKS AND HIKES

Trail *Destination*	Description	Round Trip Distance *Time*	Difficulty *Elevation Gain*
HARMONY BORAX			
Highway 190, two miles north of the visitor center.	Hard-surfaced trail circles adobe dwellings, equipment, and a 20-mule-team wagon from the 1880s. *Hiking not advised after 10 am in summer.*	¼ mile *20 mins*	Easy 50 feet
SALT CREEK INTERPRETIVE TRAIL			
1 mile off Hwy 190, 13.5 miles north of Furnace Creek	Boardwalk along small stream. Good for viewing rare pupfish and other wildlife. Best in late winter/early spring. **Note:** CLOSED DUE TO FLOOD DAMAGE.	½ mile *1 hour*	Easy *Level*
UBEHEBE CRATER LOOP			
The paved lot directly overlooks the crater and is large enough for buses and large RV's. 8 miles (13km) west of Scotty's Castle.	The hike is commonly done in a counter clockwise direction where hikers begin with the uphill section first. Within 0.5 mi (0.8km) Little Hebe Crater comes into view and is a common destination for those looking for a shorter trip.	*1.5 miles 1.5-2 hours*	Moderate 500 feet
SIDEWINDER CANYON			
Open gravel area large enough for buses and RV's. Same location as Willow Canyon.	An unmarked gravel access road is located on Badwater Road 31.5 miles south of CA-190 between mile markers 31 and 32. The access road is less than 0.5 miles (0.8km) long and is typically passable to a sedan.	*5 miles 2-3 hours*	Moderate 1,580 feet

Camping

Visitors can experience desert grandeur up close in Death Valley National Park's public campgrounds. The park has nine public campgrounds that vary in size, amenities, and price. Only the Furnace Creek Campground campground takes reservations, the rest operate on a first-come, first-served basis. For more adventurous visitors, Death Valley offers more than 3 million acres of pristine desert wilderness for backcountry camping. Plan ahead and consult with a ranger because desert conditions can be harsh.

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

At Death Valley National Park, there are more than **3 million acres** of wilderness and over 800 miles of backcountry dirt roads open to camping. The park has implemented a free permit system for all overnight camping. In some areas permits are optional, but starting in late April 2024, a reservation is required for roadside camping along Echo Canyon, Hole in the Wall, Marble Canyon, and along Greenwater Valley Rd through recreation.gov. Permits for all other regions of the park are optional and may be picked up at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center, Stovepipe Wells Ranger Station, or downloaded online. For more information call **(760) 786-3200**. Backcountry camping is not permitted within one mile of any developed area, paved road, or "day use only" area. Use preexisting campsites whenever possible to minimize impact. Due to rough dirt roads at Death Valley, backcountry roadside camping is only advisable to visitors with four-wheel-drive vehicles or vehicles that have a high clearance.

BACKCOUNTRY TIPS & REGULATIONS

- Backcountry campsites must be more than 100 yards from any water source to protect these fragile areas for wildlife.
- Campfires are prohibited, except in designated fire pits in developed campgrounds. Gathering wood is unlawful. The use of a low-impact backpacking stove is encouraged.
- Many springs may be dry or contaminated. Don't count on collecting water. Plan to carry or stash water ahead of time. Those who visit during the hot spring, summer, and fall months should carry at least one gallon of water per person per day. Low humidity creates extreme dehydration potential during the summer. Do not hike in the park's low elevations between May and October.
- Camping is not allowed on the following "day use only" dirt roads: West Side, Wildrose, Skidoo, Aguereberry Point, Cottonwood Canyon (first eight miles only; *note that the last 2.8 miles are currently closed due to flooding*), Racetrack (from Teakettle Junction to Homestake Dry Camp), Titus Canyon, Mosaic Canyon, Grotto Canyon, Natural Bridge Canyon, Desolation Canyon, Pinion Mesa, and Big Pine.
- Camping is not allowed at the historic mining areas of: Keane Wonder Mine, Ubehebe Lead Mine, Skidoo Mill, or within one mile of any mining structure.
- Overnight group size is limited to 12 people and no more than four vehicles. Groups should plan to split into smaller units and camp at least 1/2 mile apart. For commercial groups larger than 12 people, call the commercial and special use permit office at **(760) 786-3241**.

CAMPGROUNDS

Campground	Months of Operation	Elevation (ft)	# of Sites	Water	Tables	Fireplaces	Flush Toilets	Pit Toilets	Dump Station	Fee Per Night*
Emigrant	All Year	2,100	10	•	•		•			None
Furnace Creek*	All Year	-196	136	•	•	•	•		•	$30
Mahogany Flat	All Year. but often closed in the winter due to conditions	8,200	9							None
Mesquite Spring	All Year	1,800	40	•	•	•	•		•	$20
Stovepipe Wells	Oct. 31-April 15	Sea Level	190	•	•	•	•		•	$18
Sunset	Oct. 31-April 15	-196	270	•			•		•	$18
Texas Spring	Oct. 31-April 15	Sea Level	106	•	•	•	•		•	$20
Thorndike	mid-April-December. pending snowfall	7,400	6							None
Wildrose	All Year	4,100	23		•	•		•		None

*To make reservations for Furnace Creek during the winter months, call **(877) 444-6777**. RV hook-up sites are $44 per night.
For all other campgrounds, space is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Manzanar NHS

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, led the United States into World War II and radically changed the lives of more than 110,000 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry who were living in the United States. The attack intensified public and official racial prejudices and rhetoric and led to fear of potential sabotage and espionage by Japanese Americans.

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the secretary of war to establish military areas and to remove Japanese American citizens from their local communities due to perceptions that they might threaten the war effort. Without due process, the government gave peoples of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast one week's notice to decide what to do with their homes, farms, businesses, and other possessions. They did not know where they were going or for how long. Each family was assigned an identification number and loaded onto cars, buses, trucks, and trains, taking only what they could carry with them. Located at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in eastern California's Owens Valley, Manzanar War Relocation Center was one of 10 camps that forcibly detained Japanese Americans from 1942 to 1945.

Congress established Manzanar National Historic Site in 1992 to preserve the site and its stories. Archeological surveys and oral history interviews are ongoing.

THINGS TO DO

The Manzanar Visitor Center offers 8,000 square feet of exhibits with stories, photographs, artifacts, audiovisual presentations, and opportunities for reflection.

Visit the reconstructed barracks, with newly installed exhibits that feature personal voices, diaries, photos, and video clips from former inmates. Take the 3.2-mile self-guided auto tour around the site to see rock gardens, foundations, historic orchards, and the camp cemetery. Although cars and bicycles are restricted to the tour road, you are free to explore the entire site on foot. Walking is one of the best ways to see everything. Remember, be careful while walking and do not disturb or collect anything.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Manzanar National Historic Site is open every day from dawn to dusk. The Visitor Center is open Sunday-Friday and Monday from 9 am to 4:30 pm (closed December 25). Entry is free. For more information, call **(760) 878-2194** ext. 3310, or visit **nps.gov/manz**.

Joshua Tree National Park

The twisted trees and intriguing rocky landscape give the impression that Joshua Tree National Park was ripped from the pages of a Dr. Seuss book. Though secluded, the park sits within a three-hour drive of more than 18 million people, including Southern Californians.

HISTORY

Minerva Hamilton Hoyt, a Pasadena socialite who was extremely fond of cacti and desert plants, became concerned about the wanton removal and destruction of desert flora. Her tireless efforts to protect this area culminated in the preservation of 825,000 acres, known as Joshua Tree National Monument, in 1936. The monument protected the unique natural resources formed by the junction of two of California's ecosystems: the Colorado Desert, a western extension of the vast **Sonoran Desert**, and the southern boundary of the **Mojave Desert**, which features critical habitat for the park's namesake, the **Joshua tree,** as well as the Little San Bernardino Mountains, which reach above 4,000 feet and provide habitat for California juniper and pinyon pine. The most extensive stands of Joshua trees–which may have been dubbed by pioneers who thought the tree's outstretched limbs resembled Joshua, the biblical figure, in supplication–are primarily found in the western half of the park.

The park's diverse flora is matched by its fauna, including herds of **desert bighorn** and seven species of **rattlesnakes**. Migratory birds fly along the Pacific flyway, which also transects the park. It was in part for this unusual diversity of plants and animals that Joshua Tree National Monument was created.

In 1976, Congress designated 420,000 acres within the monument as wilderness. Today, of the park's current 794,000 acres, 595,000 hold this designation, allowing visitors to explore areas in relative solitude. Joshua Tree received national park status as part of the **Desert Protection Bill** on October 31, 1994. The park encompasses some of the most interesting geologic features found in California's desert areas. Exposed granite monoliths attract rock climbers of all skill levels. **Monzogranite**, a molten liquid that was heated by the continuous movement of the Earth's crust, oozed upward and cooled while still below the surface.

These plutonic intrusions then developed rectangular joints that went through a series of erosion forces that created the impressive rock formations present today.

The presence of water, that rarest of desert commodities, allows life to flourish. Five of North America's 158 desert fan palm oases are located in Joshua Tree National Park. The **Oasis of Mara**, a good example of the human history of the park, is a cornerstone of the Joshua Tree National Park story. The oasis was first settled by the **Serrano Indians** who called it Mara, "the place of little springs and much grass." Legend says they planted the palms to provide food, clothing, cooking implements, and housing for themselves, and as habitat for a variety of desert creatures. In 1850 the

Chemehuevi tribe settled peacefully at the oasis with the Serrano. In the mid-1800s, prospectors brought by the gold rush started to siphon water and cut down trees. In 1880, cattleman moved into the area to take advantage of the high desert grasslands of the **Pinto and Little San Bernadino Mountains**. By 1913, the Serrano and Chemehuevi were gone. Their spirits are still with us in the archaeological sites they left behind. The new Joshua Tree Cultural Center and nature trail at the Oasis of Mara give visitors a peek of history.

THINGS TO DO

Joshua Tree offers endless hours of exploration for all skill and interest levels. Activities include rock climbing, biking, self-guided nature trails, birding, horseback riding, and wildflower viewing. (If you are interested in hiring a professional guide, contact Mojave Guides at **mojaveguides.com**). Visitors can camp at one of eight developed campgrounds or in the backcountry. Most campsites require a reservation, which can be made at **recreation.gov**. If planning to camp at a first-come, first-served campsite (especially during the busy season from September to May), keep in mind that these usually fill up by Friday. Backcountry camping requires registering with a backcountry board. The park's 10 mountains greater than 5,000 feet (1,524 meters) in elevation will challenge **"peak baggers"** of all skill levels. Or make it your goal to hike to all five of the park's fan palm oases. Other trails lead you to remnants of the gold mining era, a part of the park's history. For more park information, call **(760) 367-5500,** or stop by one of the visitor centers. For information online, visit **nps.gov/jotr.**

The Joshua Tree National Park Visitor Center is located on Freedom Way in Twentynine Palms in the Village of Joshua Tree; Cottonwood Visitor Center is located eight miles north of Interstate 10 at Cottonwood Spring. Both are open year-round. The Black Rock Nature Center, in Black Rock Campground, is open year-round, except some national holidays, and with limited summer hours.

Mojave National Preserve

At 1.6 million acres, Mojave National Preserve is not only the third-largest National Park Service area outside of Alaska, but it also holds portions of three of the four major North American deserts: the Mojave and transitional elements of the Great Basin and Sonoran.

Established in 1994 by the **California Desert Protection Act**, the preserve is located between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, providing serenity and solitude from the crowds of these major metropolitan areas. Though many areas of Mojave appear barren, signs of life abound. There are hundreds of seeps and springs, cactus gardens, isolated communities of white fir and chaparral, and the densest, largest Joshua tree forest in the world. Sand dunes, canyons, mountains, volcanic cinder cones, great mesas, domes, and lava flows define the preserve. Rocks 2.5 billion years old have been discovered in the Clark Mountains, which rise to 7,929 feet, reinforcing Mojave's reputation as a land of extremes.

HISTORY

The Mojave American Indian tribe, namesake of the preserve, called this desert home. By the time Spanish colonists arrived in the territory in the 16th century, the Mojaves were the largest concentration of people per square mile in the Southwest. Additionally, the Chemehuevi lived on the land that is now the preserve. Before contact with these colonists, the Chemehuevi lived on prickly pear, mesquite, and roasted agave blooms and hunted deer and bighorn sheep. Living near the Colorado River, they thrived in the Mojave Desert.

The Mojave were a fierce people willing to protect their land, and willing to venture far from it. They traveled to the Pacific Coast, becoming proficient traders, and exchanged crops with coastal tribes for goods such as shells, pots, bowls, ladles, and dishes decorated with geometric designs made from sedimentary clay and crushed sandstone. The material was coiled, dried, painted, and fired in either open pits or rudimentary kilns. The women took the crafts further by making unique pottery dolls for the children, dressing and decorating them complete with human hair.

The search for fortune brought the first white man, Fray Francisco Garces, to the land of the Mojave in 1775. His writings portrayed the Mojave as friendly and industrious. Trappers soon followed, but their interactions with the Mojaves were less peaceful and resulted in years of violence, distrust, and death. In 1865, almost a hundred years, a docket full of Indian wars, and federal seizure of native land, the federal government created the Colorado Indian Reservation near Parker, the southern range of the Mojave.

Ranching has played a vital role in the region over the past 150 years. A hearty group raised cattle and lived throughout the land that is the current preserve. Today, few ranchers remain. The area and the places in the preserve are only meant to serve as a vivid reminder of the activities that used to take place.

Mojave National Preserve is in the process of creating the largest historical ranching district recorded in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1872, the General Mining Act permitted individuals to stake a claim on a plot of land where a mineral deposit was discovered. This resulted in a gold rush in the area, while in later years others tried to profit from silver (1883) and iron ore (1940s). As western expansion marched forward, so did the railroads. In 1902, the Union Pacific made its presence known on the West Coast with the construction of the Salt Lake Route between Salt Lake and Los Angeles. Construction began at the two endpoints and met in the Mojave Desert. The preserve's visitor center, **Kelso Depot** remains closed to visitors for repairs until further notice (expected to reopen in 2026). It was once an essential stop on the line and received its name when three warehousemen put their names into a hat, and the winner was John Kelso.

ACTIVITIES AT MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE

Up to 650 feet in height, Kelso Dunes in Mojave National Preserve are the third tallest in North America. When conditions are right, as sand grains move over one another, they sometimes create a booming sound. Try running down the slopes to make the dunes boom. The preserve is great for backpacking, horseback riding, hiking, wildflower viewing, and four-wheeling (on designated roads; all vehicles must be street-legal).

- Backpacking is allowed. Since there is no registration system and few established trails, make sure you have a map, and **let someone know your itinerary**. Remember to camp at least a quarter mile from any paved road and half a mile from developed areas. Your campsite must also be 200 yards from any water source.
- Three national park campgrounds are available inside the preserve: Hole-in-the-Wall, Mid Hills Campgrounds, and Black Canyon Equestrian & Group Campground. All sites are reservation only, available on a 6-month rolling basis. Black Canyon can accomodate up to 50 people at group sites and up to 30 at the equestrian site. Call **(760) 252-6100**.
- Four-wheel drive routes are popular in the preserve. One of the most recommended is the Mojave Road, which runs across the entire park from east to west. Driving off established roads is prohibited.
- Horseback riding is welcome, but there are no horses for rent.
- Although there are few established hiking trails, abandoned dirt roads, washes, and ridgelines offer an abundance of cross-country hiking opportunities. A map can be found at **nps.gov/moja/planyourvisit/hiking.htm**.

For more information, contact the Hole-In-The-Wall Information Center at **(760) 252-6100** or visit **nps.gov/moja**.

Just For Kids

Death Valley National Park has a host of activities to entice visitors of all ages–including programs just for kids. Visiting the park presents a great opportunity to have fun and learn something about the biology, geology, and history that's all around you. If you want to learn about Death Valley National Park, you can…

BE A JUNIOR RANGER

Young people are eligible to become junior rangers. You can pick up the junior ranger packet at the front desk of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or download it online. Complete the fun activities inside, and receive a free Death Valley junior ranger badge. The badge is a replica of the National Park Service badge with features specific to Death Valley. Junior ranger patches are also available upon completion of the junior ranger activities at park bookstores for a small fee.

EXPLORE DEATH VALLEY

Death Valley National Park is full of vast and incredible geology. Ask your parents to take you on an extraordinary tour that the entire family will never forget. You'll find colorful cliffs, sliding stones, and eerie salt flats. See the "Sights to See" chapter for ideas and directions. Remember to take only pictures and leave only footprints.

SURF A SAND DUNE

Although sand dunes make up only a small percentage of this desert, the ones you find at Death Valley will put any sandbox you've played in to shame! Don't leave the park until you have tromped and tumbled down the 100-foot dunes at Mesquite Flat. Tell your parents the sand dunes are about two miles east of Stovepipe Wells Village–23 miles northwest of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center–on Highway 190.

PEER INTO OUTER SPACE

Explore the desert at night when the moon is full and all the nocturnal creatures venture out to hunt! Look for kangaroo rats and kit foxes with your family, or go on a guided hike with a ranger to stargaze. Look at the night sky through a telescope, and see the heavens like you never have before!

Photography

Exploring our national and state parks is one of the best ways to reconnect with nature–and bringing along a camera or binoculars can elevate your experience. Whether you're a seasoned photographer, a casual wildlife or bird watcher, or a first-time visitor hoping to spot something special, a few tips can help you get the most out of your time on the trail.

Photography isn't just snapping images–it's a way to tell a story, capture fleeting moments, and preserve the atmosphere of a place. In our parks, images can reflect the splendor of a landscape, the subtle beauty of wildlife, or the unbridled energy of a waterfall. Whether you're aiming to document your journey, make art, or simply share your experience with others, thoughtful technique makes a big difference. To get the most out of your park visit:

- **Time it right**: Shoot during golden hours (early morning or late afternoon) when the light is soft and warm. Avoid harsh midday sun when shadows are strongest.
- **Pack light but smart**: A mirrorless or DSLR camera with a wide-angle lens for landscapes and a zoom for wildlife covers most situations. Bring extra batteries!
- **Use a tripod**: For steady sunrise or night shots, use a lightweight tripod for better stability .
- **Compose carefully**: Follow the "rule of thirds" to add depth to your images.

A good pair of **binoculars** is the perfect companion for your trip–they don't just bring distant wildlife into view–it enhances your awareness of your surroundings, helps you spot elusive creatures, and allows you to witness natural behaviors without threatening them. Whether you're birding, watching predators from afar, or scanning the treetops for movement, using binoculars skillfully can turn a simple hike into a rich, immersive experience. Here's how to get the most from them:

- **Choose the right specs**: An 8x42 pair offers a great balance of magnification, brightness, and stability for most users.
- **Adjust for your eyes**: Use the center focus wheel and diopter ring to fine-tune clarity.
- **Stabilize your view**: Rest your elbows on a surface or use a trekking pole for added support.
- **Scan with purpose**: Look for movement or color changes in the landscape. Animals are often camouflaged and reveal themselves through motion.

To protect both the environment and wildlife, always stay on marked trails to avoid damaging fragile ecosystems. Give animals plenty of space by using zoom lenses or binoculars, and follow all park regulations regarding restricted areas and seasonal closures. Moving quietly and minimizing noise not only reduces stress on wildlife but also increases your chances of witnessing natural behaviors without human interference.

ENHANCE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Using cameras and binoculars encourages observation and you'll begin noticing subtle things–a fox's behavior at dusk, the changing texture of bark in different light, or a flash of color in the canopy. These tools sharpen your senses and help you build a stronger connection with the outdoors.

From photographing fog rolling through a valley to spotting a hawk soaring overhead, the combination of thoughtful observation and the right gear brings national and state park adventures to life.

If You Only Have A Day

Since Death Valley is so large, packing all your sightseeing into a single day can be a challenge. Plan carefully and **start early** to get a true flavor of what the park has to offer during a short visit.

Ultimately, what you see depends on where you enter the park. If you begin the day in Furnace Creek, many of the most impressive sights are nearby. Get up early and drive 17 miles south to **Badwater**, the lowest point in North America, as well as a great place to watch the sunrise over the mountains.

Returning north, stop at **Natural Bridge**, a medium-sized conglomerate rock formation that has been hollowed at its base to form a span across the canyon walls. Then proceed to **Devil's Golf Course**. From there, take a short detour to the right onto **Artist's Drive**, a nine-mile route that passes **Artist's Palette**. The striking array of colors here are brilliant reminders of the minerals in the rocks and the earth. Four miles north, you'll come to the Golden Canyon Trail, a two-mile trip that winds through a canyon of colorful rock walls.

Just before **Furnace Creek**, take a short side-trip on Highway 190 east three miles to **Zabriskie Point,** and see the 20-Mule Team Canyon. Return to Furnace Creek for lunch, and visit the Furnace Creek Visitor Center. Heading north from Furnace Creek, stop off and see the **Harmony Borax Works**.

Twenty miles up the road is **Stovepipe Wells** where **Mosaic Canyon** and the sand dunes are located, a great place to watch the sunset.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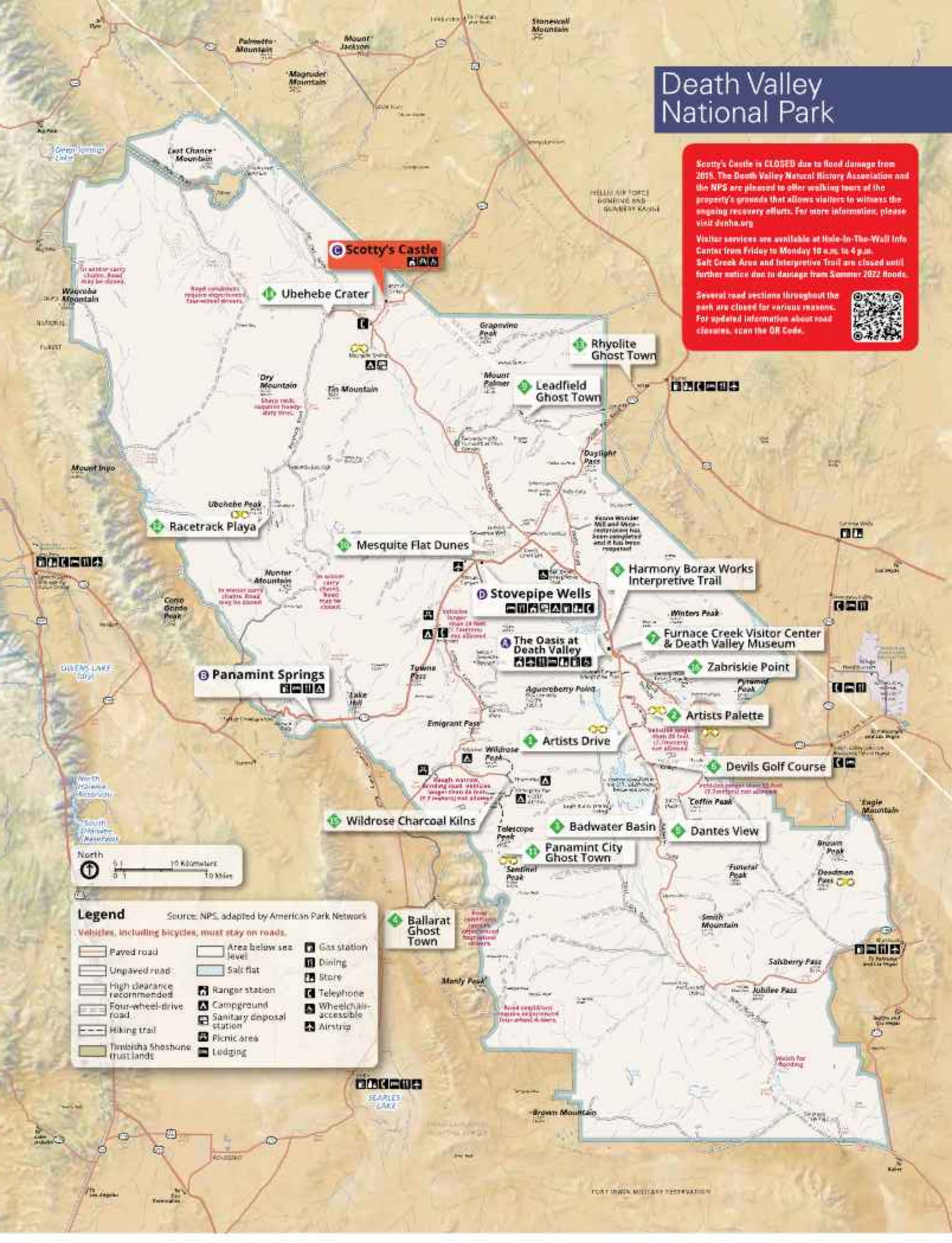

KEY

A The Oasis at Death Valley
- Airstrip (Private Planes)
- Borax Museum
- Banking Services
- Campground
- Inn at Death Valley
- Furnace Creek Visitor Center & Death Valley Museum
- Ranch at Death Valley
- The Inn Dining Room
- The Last Kind Words Saloon
- General Store
- Gift Shop
- Harmony Borax Works
- Laundromat
- Post Office
- Restrooms
- Service Station
- Showers
- Swimming Pools & Sports Courts
- Furnace Creek Golf Course
- The 19th Hole Bar & Grill
- The 1849 Buffet

B Panamint Springs
- Campground
- Gasoline
- Panamint Springs Resort
- Restrooms

C Scotty's Castle
- Gift Shop
- Museum
- Restrooms
- Ranger Station
- Visitor Center

D Stovepipe Wells
- Banking Services
- Badwater Saloon
- Campground & RV Park
- Gasoline Station & General Store
- Gift Shop
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Stovepipe Wells Village Hotel
- Telephone & Internet Services
- Toll Road Restaurant
- Visitor Center

Points of Interest
1. Artists Drive
2. Artists Palette
3. Badwater Basin
4. Ballarat Ghost Town
5. Dantes View
6. Devils Golf Course
7. Furnace Creek Visitor Center & Death Valley Museum
8. Harmony Borax Works Interpretive Trail
9. Leadfield Ghost Town
10. Mesquite Flat Dunes
11. Panamint City Ghost Town
12. Racetrack Playa
13. Rhyolite Ghost Town
14. Ubehebe Crater
15. Wildrose Charcoal Kilns
16. Zabriskie Point

Nikon ®

Locations with this logo have the most impressive views of the park's landscape or are pristine wildlife habitat. You'll appreciate them even more with binoculars or a spotting scope.