

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why is it called Death Valley?**

Death Valley received its morbid name from a group of pioneers lost here in the winter of 1849-1850. Even though only one of the group died here, they all assumed this would be their grave until they were rescued by two young men. As the party was led out of the valley, someone turned back and said “goodbye, Death Valley” and the name stuck. For more information on the Lost Forty-niners go to [http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet\\_culture.htm](http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet_culture.htm)

- **What is borax used for?**

Borax’s most well known use is for laundry detergent, but the main use today is in the production of fiberglass. It is also used as a flux for welding, a preservative, pottery glaze, in heat-resistant glass, and even as an insecticide.

- **Where is the lowest place in the park?**

Badwater Basin is not only the lowest place in the park, it’s the lowest in the Western Hemisphere. It is located 18 miles south of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center on the Badwater Road (CA 178).

- **I only have two hours to visit death Valley, what should I see?**

The most popular drive in Death Valley is the Badwater Road. If you visit the Devil’s Golf Course, Badwater, and take Artists Drive on the return trip back to Highway 190 it should take about 1½ hours round-trip. Add a stop at Zabriskie Point if you are continuing east, or stop at the sand dunes if you are heading west to round out your 2 hour visit.

- **Can I bring my dog to the park?**

Yes, but we don’t recommend it. It may sound like a good idea to take your pet to a national park but there is little you can do with them while you are here. Pets must always be on a leash or confined. They may not be left unattended in the campgrounds. They must remain on roads or in developed areas, so no hiking with them on trails or cross country. The good news is you can walk them (on leash, of course) on backcountry roads. Interesting ones to try are Twenty Mule Team Canyon Road and Titus Canyon Road into the narrows.

- **When/where can I see wildflowers?**

If conditions are just right, Death Valley can have spectacular spring wildflowers. If rain falls in several storms throughout the winter and spring the flowers may bloom in late march and early April in the park’s low elevations, April and May at mid elevations, and into June in the mountains. For lists of wildflowers, current sightings and locations go to <http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet-Wildflower.htm>

- **Where is the best place to see sunrise or sunset?**

The most popular places to see sunrise are: Dante's View, Zabriskie Point, and the sand dunes. Sunset locations also include Zabriskie Point and the sand dunes, but Artists Palette and Aguerberry Point are also very good.

- **What is the fastest way to Death Valley from Las Vegas?**  
The fastest route from Las Vegas is through Pahrump, Nevada. From Interstate 15 take NV 160 to Pahrump. Just north of town, turn left on Bell Vista Road. Take Bell Vista (becomes Stateline Road in California) to Death Valley Junction and turn right on CA 127, then a quick left on CA 190 to Death Valley. The whole trip is about 120 miles and take 2 hours.
- **What is the hottest temperature ever recorded here?**  
In July 1913 it hit 134°F (57°C) at what is now Furnace Creek Ranch. Although this was the world record at the time, it has since been exceeded by two degrees Fahrenheit at a weather station in Lybia. For more information on average and record temperatures go to <http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet-weather.htm> (click "Death Valley Weather and Climate")
- **How long is Death Valley?**  
Death Valley is about 140 miles long, from the head of Last Chance Canyon in the north to where the Amargosa River makes its big bend near Saratoga Springs in the south.
- **If Death Valley is below sea level, was it ever under the sea?**  
The short answer is no, Death Valley as we know it today has always been separated from the sea by mountains.  
On the other hand, long before Death Valley formed, the region was seabed for hundreds of millions of years as the abundant layers of limestone, dolomite and marble prove.
- **What kind of wildlife can we see here?**  
The most commonly seen wildlife include coyotes, ravens, roadrunners, ground squirrels, and lizards. If you are lucky, you may see bighorn sheep in the mountains. If you visit Salt Creek in the springtime you can see pupfish. For a full list of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish go to [http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet\\_natural.htm](http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet_natural.htm)
- **Are there dangerous animals here?**  
Yes, but if you are reasonably careful they should not be a problem. Potentially dangerous animals include rattlesnakes, scorpions, black widow spiders, bees, wasps, coyotes, and mountain lions. To avoid getting hurt, avoid all contact with wild animals. Do not feed coyotes. Always look first before placing your hands or feet anywhere.
- **Is it safe to visit Death Valley in the summer?**

Yes, but you must be prepared and use common sense. With an air conditioned vehicle you can safely tour many of the main sites in Death Valley. Stay on paved roads in summer, and if your car brakes down, stay with it until help arrives. Always bring plenty of water in your car in case of emergency and drink at least 2 to 4 liters per day, more if you are active in the heat. Summer hiking is not recommended except in the early morning hours and in the mountains.

- **Where can I visit a ghost town?**

The best ghost town in the Death Valley area is Rhyolite, located just outside the park near Beatty, Nevada.

- **What did they mine here?**

Gold, silver, lead, tungsten, copper, borax, talc

- **Where can I camp?**

There are nine developed campgrounds in Death Valley NP. All are first come-first served except Furnace Creek Campground which can take reservations from mid-October through mid-April. For more information see

<http://www.nps.gov/deva/pphtml/camping.html>

It is also possible to backpack and backcountry car camp. To get a free backcountry camping permit go to The Furnace Creek Visitor Center or any ranger station. For information on where you can camp and regulations go to

[http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet\\_backcamp.htm](http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet_backcamp.htm)

- **What are the condition of roads?**

There are more than 300 miles of paved roads, 300 miles of improved dirt roads and hundreds of miles of unmaintained 4x4 roads in Death Valley National Park. Conditions can change quickly with inclement weather, always check for current conditions before taking backcountry roads. For standard road conditions go to

[http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet\\_roads.htm](http://www.nps.gov/deva/FrameSet_roads.htm)

For up-to-date road conditions and the weather forecast go to

<http://www.nps.gov/deva/Morning.pdf>