



Death Valley Delights

TRIP AT-A-GLANCE

Dates: February 19-23, 2011
 Location: Death Valley National Park, CA
 Cost: \$ 1380
 Rating: 2
 Activities: Hiking, cultural exploration
 Meeting Place: at our hotel in Las Vegas Feb. 19th
 Arrive: Las Vegas (LAS) anytime before 5 pm
 Depart: anytime after 4:45 pm on February 23rd

Deduct 5% for being one of the first 5 to register (by 11/19/10) and 3% of the entire trip fee when the balance is paid by check.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- experienced guides, including a professional geologist
- four nights of double occupancy accommodation
- all meals from dinner on Sunday to lunch on Wednesday, except for one dinner
- round-trip transportation from Las Vegas and during the trip
- National Park and Scotty's Castle entry fees

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Alcoholic beverages
- Guide gratuities
- Airfare to LAS

Trip Highlights

- visiting the hottest, driest, and lowest National Park- and finding it way more than we imagined
- hiking across badlands, through canyons, and around an old volcano with a professional geologist
- visiting Scotty's Castle, the Borax Museum, and Zabriskie Point
- stargazing in one of the darkest skies you'll ever see
- relaxing by the pool and being glad it isn't July

Trip Overview

Death Valley is the perfect antidote to the winter blahs! In February the skies are clear and sunny (but not too hot!) and the hiking is excellent. In addition to unique ecology and engaging human history, there is fascinating geology that our professional geologist will help us understand. We'll visit Scotty's Castle, a complete anomaly in this landscape; the lowest point in the whole US; and an old volcanic crater. If you long to put away your down jacket and put on your shorts, feel warm sun on your deprived skin, and be totally immersed in a place that has a mythic status for many of us, join us for five days as we explore one of our newest National Parks. By the end of the trip you'll have higher Vitamin D levels and a whole new appreciation of this unique landscape.

Our Itinerary

Saturday: Out trip starts today in Las Vegas. Arrive anytime before 5pm. Catch the convenient shuttle to our hotel, where we will meet at 5:30 pm. We'll start getting to know each other and review our plans for the trip, before sharing our first dinner. The evening is free for you to get to bed early or wander the strip. (D)

Sunday: Today we will make our way to Death Valley National Park, a drive that takes about 2.5 hours. After an orientation to the geology of the Park and a picnic lunch, we'll start our exploration with the Mosaic Canyon Hike, a delightful hike and a perfect introduction to the geology of the area. We'll hike 1 to 2 miles into Mosaic Canyon, so named because of the small rocks cemented

CANCELLATION POLICY

In the unfortunate event that you must cancel your trip, your refund will be determined by the following formula:

Days Prior to Trip	Refund
90 + days	All but \$50
90 – 61 days	50% of deposit
60 – 30 days	50% of trip fee
29 days or less	No refund

Adventures in Good Company reserves the right to cancel or alter a trip due to unforeseen weather, unsafe conditions, low registrations or other circumstances.

On the rare occasion when Adventures in Good Company must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, including the non-refundable portion of your deposit.

Adventures in Good Company is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any canceled trips, including airplane tickets.

TIPPING GUIDELINES

Tipping at the end of the trip is optional. If you feel your guide(s) did an outstanding job and would like to reward them for their efforts, a suggested rule of thumb is US \$7 to \$12 per person, per day. Oftentimes, trip members organize a group envelope (this makes it anonymous) and present it at the last shared meal.

Our Itinerary Continued

into rock beds. We'll then go to our lodging, Furnace Creek Ranch, where we'll spend the next three nights. Overnight Furnace Creek Ranch. (B, L, D).

Monday: This morning we hike the Golden Canyon-Gower Gulch Loop. This 4.5 mile loop trail first takes us through colorful Golden Canyon with its interpretative trail. Leaving the canyon we hike up and over a ridge, passing beneath Manley Beacon and stopping to gaze at the valley floor spreading out in the distance. The trail then drops into Gower Gulch, another canyon but with a completely different feel and footing than Golden Canyon. The loop ends with a traverse along the base of the cliffs that rise from the flat plain below.

If you want some time on your own during this trip, the rest of the afternoon is free for you to do as you choose. For example you might want to fit in lounging by the outdoor swimming pool that is naturally heated by warm springs that keep the pools' temperature at a comfortable 82 degrees. You might also choose to visit the Borax Museum, which is focused on the history of Death Valley. The guides will also have other suggestions, so the choice is yours whether to pack in as much as possible or take some down time. Dinner is on your own tonight. Overnight Furnace Creek Ranch (B, L).

Tuesday: Death Valley is a huge park, a fact we appreciate more fully with today's visit to the northern part of the Park. We'll start with a tour of Scotty's Castle, a Spanish-style mansion that was built in the 1920s and is completely out of place in this environment. From there we drive to the 600-foot deep Ubehebe Crater, the remnants of a massive hydrovolcanic explosion 300 years ago. We'll hike along the west rim of the Crater to Little Hebe and several other craters, before continuing around the rim for a total of 1.5 miles. If we have time on the way back, we'll also stop at the Salt Creek Interpretative Trail. An easy boardwalk takes us to the Creek, a stream of salty water that is the only habitat of the endangered pupfish. We finish the day with a drive to Zabriskie Point to watch the sunset before returning to the ranch. Overnight Furnace Creek Ranch (B, L, D)

Wednesday: Want to pack in as much as possible? Then join your guides for a drive to Zabriskie Point to watch sunrise. Need more rest? Then sleep in and join us for breakfast. Whichever you choose, we'll pack up after breakfast and then visit Badwater Salt Flat. We'll walk at least a half mile to the edge, and perhaps further if we're so inclined. We'll also walk on the Natural Bridge Canyon Trail, an easy walk through a narrow canyon to a natural bridge. After a final picnic lunch we'll return to Las Vegas. We'll have you back by 3:00 and you can either plan to fly out after 5:00 or stick around and try your luck. (B, L)

Packing List

FOOTWEAR

- 1 pair of lightweight hiking boots: boots need to be well broken in and comfortable
- 1 pair of comfortable shoes: athletic shoes, Teva sandals, crocs for wearing around our accommodations
- 2-3 pairs of hiking socks (some people also like to wear liner socks)

CLOTHING

- 1 pair of comfortable long pants for hiking. Zip-offs work well
- 1 pair of shorts
- 1-2 lightweight, light-colored, long-sleeved shirt to protect you from the sun
- 2-3 synthetic or cotton T-shirts or short-sleeved shirts
- 1 medium weight fleece jacket or sweatshirt
- 1 rain jacket or poncho: coated nylon or a **waterproof**/breathable fabric like Gore-tex
- Underwear/nightwear
- swimsuit
- 1 wide-brimmed hat for protection from the sun
- whatever clothes you like to wear when not hiking

TOILETRIES (small everything)

- Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, shampoo, contact lens paraphernalia, and sanitary supplies
- Sunscreen and lip protection with sunblock of at least SPF 15
- personal "patch kit": Band-Aids, Compeed or Second Skin, moleskin, cloth athletic tape, ibuprofen, personal medications, if any. **Individuals allergic to insect bites must bring an anaphylactic kit.**

ESSENTIALS

- Sunglasses (100% UV protection)
- Plastic sandwich box (i.e. a reusable square plastic container)
- Croakies or other sunglasses retainer
- 1 daypack large enough to hold your supplies for the day (water, snacks, sunscreen, raingear, personal patch kit, etc.)
- capacity to carry 2 quarts of water: 2 one-quart water bottles, water in plastic bottles that you buy in a grocery store, or a hydration system that fits in your pack
- hiking poles (recommended, especially if you want to learn to use them)

OPTIONAL

- bandanna (very multi-useful)
- Camera (extra battery) and film/memory card
- Your favorite snack
- Book, notebook, journal, pencil/pen
- Binoculars
- Ear plugs (for a good night's sleep!)
- wrist watch/travel alarm clock

Notes on the Packing List

Daypacks: We recommend a daypack with space for all of your items. Before you leave home check to be sure that your daypack is comfortable to wear all day. Having a daypack with a hip belt and padded shoulder straps will provide for much more comfortable hiking.

Footwear: Well-fitting, sturdy boots are very important to your safety and enjoyment. If you plan to buy new boots, break them in by wearing them around town and taking some short hikes *before* your trip. For general trekking, lightweight cordura or leather boots work well. Leather boots may be waterproofed in various simple ways, and cordura boots will be waterproof if they are lined with Gore-Tex. If you have weak ankles or are recovering from an ankle injury, get leather boots or good quality cordura ones that come above the ankle– you'll find that this will give you more support in uneven or slippery terrain.

Personal First Aid Kit: Small first aid kit with familiar medicine you might need for personal use, ESPECIALLY blister or foot remedies like moleskin, gelskin, blister bandages or similar. The amount and kind you bring will depend on your tendency to blister but many people get blisters on hiking tours. Other suggestions: remedies for respiratory ailments? Stomach ailments? Sore muscles or joints? We will have a first aid kit too, but if you already know what works for you it's better to have it with you than experiment on a trip.

Clothing: Layering is the most practical and efficient method of insulating the body. Several layers of varied weight materials provide better insulation than one thick layer of clothing. Also, adding or subtracting layers allows you to adjust to the temperature at your particular level of activity. For this trip you can use long underwear as your base layer, your sun shirt as a second layer, and your fleece as a third layer. If it gets cold you can use your rain gear, warm hat and/or gloves as needed.

Rain Gear: You will need a parka or jacket made of a coated nylon or a waterproof/breathable fabric like Gore-tex, HellyTech, Membrane, H2No, or Ultrex. **Be sure it keeps water out.** Before making this important purchase, be sure that it fits you properly. It should be large enough to fit over all your layers. In particular, the hood needs to be effective. It should shield your face from the rain and turn with your head. Movement of your arms must not interfere with the hood. Put on your daypack; can you still raise your arms? Lastly, the wind/rain pants. They should be comfortable, allow enough room for your layers, and permit free movement of your legs (for example, can you crouch comfortably?). Partial or full-length leg zippers are useful for easily putting your pants on over your boots.

Hydration: It is very important to your safety and enjoyment to have an *independent* ability for accessing your water. As you are hiking you will need water to be accessible in order to drink frequently. One method is to have a water bottle attached to your waist strap. Another option is to use a **HYDRATION SYSTEM** such as CamelBak, Platypus, and Gregory bladder bags which are simply a collapsible water bag with a hose attachment that you drink from. These fit inside your pack with the hose positioned over your shoulder where you can access your water without the use of your hands. Some models are designed to attach to the outside of your pack. Bladder bags can hold 40-100oz. of water.

Items on your packing list can be purchased through a number of outdoor outfitters including:

Recreational Equip. Inc (REI)
800-426-4840
www.rei.com

Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS)
603-924-7231
www.ems.com

Sierra Trading Post
800-713-4534

www.SierraTradingPost.com

Also check out the websites on the Affiliate page of our website (under Resources)

Additional Trip Preparations

HELPFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.nps.gov>

This web site will give you access to the National Park Service web site. Just click on the National Park you want to view. Has a lot of interesting and useful information about each place.

<http://www.death.valley.national-park.com/>

Everything you want to learn about Death Valley National park. Includes history, wildlife and more.

WEATHER

February is a great time to visit Death Valley - Highs are typically in the 70s during the day and the lows are in the 40s at night. Sunny skies are the norm in Death Valley, but in winter storms can bring cloud cover and occasional rain. Wind is common in the desert, and dust storms can suddenly blow up with approaching cold fronts. The higher elevations in the Park also have cooler temperatures.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

We will be staying at Furnace Creek Ranch (760/786-2345). You can also leave the Adventures in Good Company office number (877/439-4042) in case of emergency and we will know how to get in touch with you. **There is no cell phone reception in the National Park.**

CONDITIONING

Additional aerobic conditioning is unnecessary for anyone who already exercises regularly. If you don't, you will find that you have more energy during the trip if you start a moderate exercise program a couple of months before your trip. For example, you might start walking 3 or 4 times a week for half an hour, at a pace that is brisk enough to make you breathe deeply. Hills are good for this. Other options are working out at a health club on a stairmaster or treadmill, aerobics classes, cross country skiing or any activity that makes you breathe deeply. In addition, if you live in the flatlands, make sure that either some of your walking includes hills, or find a stadium or tall office building and do some stairs a couple of times a week the month before your trip.

What if you don't have time to start an exercising program? Don't worry, you'll be fine – just more tired than usual at the end of the day!

RECOMMENDED PRE-TRIP READING

Lost in Death Valley: The True Story of Four Families in California's Gold Rush, by Connie Goldsmith. Culled from original sources, this competent account chronicles the bad decisions, internal politics, frightful experiences, and intense memories of the survivors and describes their lives after the harrowing journey.

Geology Underfoot in Death valley and Owens Valley by Robert Sharp. Provides an on-the-ground look at the processes sculpting the terrain in this land of extremes.

Hiking Death Valley: A Guide to Its natural Wonders & Mining Past, by Michael Dignonnet

This book is a great resource tool. A fairly inclusive area guide with historical, geological and physical details.

Death Valley and the Amargosa: A Land of Illusion by Richard Lingenfelter. Traces the history of Death Valley, tells the stories of its explorers, prospectors, and con men, and discusses the geography and development of the valley.

Getting There Continued

OUR TRAVEL AGENT

If you need assistance with making your travel plans, call Sara Schuitemaker at Scan East West Travel. Her toll-free number is 800-727-2157 and her email is sara@scaneastwest.com.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend travel insurance. We know that women never want to cancel their trips, and the reasons for doing so are always excellent. Occasionally it's a sudden illness; even more frequently it's the illness of someone they care about. Trip insurance at least minimizes the disappointment and expense during what is often a difficult time. In addition insurance covers the cost of lost baggage; medical expenses during your trip, including emergencies, repatriation, and evacuation; and trip delay. If you decide to purchase insurance, you can secure a policy through your own insurance company or enroll with the company we use, Travelex Insurance. Call 1-800-228-9792 or visit www.travelexinsurance.com. The location code is 20-0016.

TRAVEL

All the major airlines fly into Las Vegas (LAS), as well as many of the low cost competitors. Check for fares and availability. We will meet at 5:30 pm at our hotel near the airport. Death Valley is 120 miles from Las Vegas. You can plan to fly out after 4:45pm on February 23rd.

LODGING

You should be able to fly in the day of the trip, but Las Vegas is a fascinating town to visit and you may want to stay an extra night or two.

If you have a gambling spirit, the cheapest way to find a hotel room is to go through Priceline (www.priceline.com). When you have a choice of area, choose the Las Vegas Strip area. Most hotels do not offer an airport shuttle but transportation is easily available for \$6.50-\$8.00 from BellTran shuttles. Our guides have stayed at very nice places for \$25 to \$40 a night, a bit more with service fees and taxes but still a bargain.

If you prefer to know what you're getting into, the following are a sample of the possibilities: **** indicates where we are staying the first night of the trip**

****Tuscany Inn and Suites** (702-893-8933 or 877/887-2261)

Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV

Avg price: \$110 - \$130

Large rooms with refrigerator, stove and coffee maker about 3 blocks off the Strip. Several restaurants and swimming pool.

The Stratosphere Tower – Resort and Casino (866-538-0187)

2000 South Las Vegas Blvd

Avg price: \$105 - \$180

Located on the northern end of the strip. Amenities include: Top of the World restaurant, 8th floor pool w/rock waterfall, fitness center, business center.

The Renaissance Las Vegas Hotel (800/750-0980 or 702/784-5751)

3400 Paradise Rd, Las Vegas NV

Avg price: \$130-\$150

This boutique, non-smoking, non-casino hotel is a welcome departure from typical Vegas hotels. It is located off the Strip, but along a mono-rail stop so getting to the Strip is convenient.

Amenities include: Pool, fitness center, award winning steakhouse – The ENVY, 24-hour business center.