

DEATH VALLEY 5-Day Itinerary:-

Following is a tentative schedule for your hiking tour in Death Valley. It may change depending on trail conditions, time of year, weather, snow levels, group needs or other unforeseen circumstances.

Terrain notes: Death Valley offers glimpses of over 1.5 billion years of geologic history – you would have to visit 6 other states to see samples of all the geology you can see within the Park boundaries. Although it is the largest park in the lower 48 states, Death Valley is probably one of the least developed. There are only two trails that are actually maintained by the Park Service. The rest of the hikes follow canyon bottoms or are cross-country routes. In addition to a primitive trail system, the road system in the Park is also quite primitive. This means we will be driving on some dirt roads during the week. Your guides will do their best to ensure your comfort but please be prepared for moderate cross-country travel to reach the starting points for a few of our hikes.

Day 1:- Arrival Day

Complimentary airport pick-up (Las Vegas, NV) scheduled for 1:00 PM.
Orientation at 5:30 PM at the Ranch.

HIKING DAYS

Day 2:- Golden Canyon/Gower Gulch and Desolation Canyon

Today we will see the first two of the several spectacular and very different canyons we will visit this week. In the morning we will head to nearby Golden Canyon. This canyon is one of the most popular canyon hikes due to accessibility and scenery and is a great place to introduce the group to the topography of the area. Our hike will offer fabulous views of the badlands of the Black Mountains, Manly Beacon and Red Cathedral. Along the way we will also see our first evidence of the mining history in Death Valley – in this case old borax mines. The short hike will be a 4-mile loop up Golden Canyon, and back down Gower Gulch, gaining approximately 800 feet over a divide to get from Canyon to Gulch. The long hike will be a longer loop (5.5-miles) through Golden Canyon and Gower Gulch, and will involve over 1,000 feet of climbing.

After lunch at Artist's Palette, we will head up Desolation Canyon and view the dynamics of badlands erosion as we hike amidst the palette of colors: pinks, greens and golds created by the minerals in the rocks. At times this canyon is so narrow that you can touch both sides with outstretched arms! The long hike will be up to 3 miles round trip with 700 feet of elevation gain. Because this is an out-and-back hike, the short hikers will decide how far in they want to go before turning around.

Day 3:- Mesquite Dunes & Mosaic Canyon

This morning we will travel north to the Stovepipe Wells area where we will set out across the sand in search of the sandy summit of the star dune. The

Mesquite Sand Dunes offer a unique and stunning hiking experience due to the simplicity of landscape and the surrounding vistas. The abundance of animal prints captured in the sand reminds us that we are by no means the only ones enjoying a walk in the dunes. This is an out-and-back hike so the long and short hiking groups can decide how far they want to go. It is 1.1 miles from our starting point to the highest dune which is approximately 100 feet high. It may not sound like much, but hiking 100 feet uphill in the sand is a fun challenge!

In the afternoon we will head into Mosaic Canyon, a favorite of Death Valley visitors. Mosaic Canyon was formed by a fault in the Tucki Mountains that revealed an ancient seabed of brecciated rock which is up to 900 million years old and offers fascinating contrasts in texture and color. Juxtaposed to the rough conglomerate rocks, in the narrow sections of the canyon we will see evidence of the power of water as we scramble up polished marble smoothed by centuries of winter floodwaters. We will travel up to 4 miles out-and-back gaining up to 850 feet.

Day 4:- Fall Canyon & Ubehebe Crater

Today we will once again embark on a two different hikes in order to sample the variation of landscape in Death Valley. In the morning we will all set out across the alluvial fan at the base of Titus Canyon on the east side of the Valley in the Grapevine Mountains. The long hikers will head 3 miles up the canyon, passing through deep, narrow stretches of canyon and gaining 1,200 feet before reaching a 35-foot dryfall – the natural turnaround point. The short hikers will go as far as time allows before turning around and heading back down canyon. You will be amazed that the hike looks like a totally new place when you simply turn around and head in the opposite direction.

This afternoon we will head north to the Cottonwood Mountains and a totally different experience. The landscape of the Ubehebe Crater and Little Hebe Crater is volcanic and reflects recent (geologically speaking!) events. Ubehebe Craters was formed approximately 3,000 years ago when magma heated the groundwater below and the resulting steam blew off the overlying rocks and covered the six square miles surrounding the crater with 150 feet of volcanic debris. At 300-500 years old, Little Hebe is one of the youngest geologic formations in the Park. We will do a 1.5-mile loop around the crater rims. Those feeling adventurous will want to continue 500 feet down the cinder trail to the floor of the crater. Save a little energy for the challenging climb back to the rim through the skidding volcanic cinders!

Day 5:- Wildrose Peak

Our hike today will be completely different from anything we have experienced all week. Wildrose Peak (9,064 feet) on the western side of Death Valley in the Panamint Range boasts one of the two maintained trails in the Park. We will drive from our inn below sea level to the trailhead at the Charcoal Kilns at 6,900 feet. From the Charcoal Kilns (dating back to the 1870's when they were used to

create charcoal for nearby silver smelters), the trail wraps gently uphill through a pinyon pine – juniper forest where we see signs of Juniper Mistletoe – a parasitic plant that may help its host by attracting birds to the trees. After gaining 800 feet and traveling 1.8 miles we reach the first saddle where we are gifted our first views of Death Valley and the surrounding mountain ranges. That is just a teaser, as the views get even better as we continue another 1.4 miles and 500 feet up the trail to the second saddle. This will be the turnaround point for the short hikers who, when finished, will have climbed a total of 1,300 feet over 6.2 miles. The long hikers will continue to the summit 1 mile away and 850 feet higher. The switchbacks on this final stretch climb up the ridge before gaining the meadow-like, windswept mountaintop. The longer hike totals 8.4 miles and 2,164 feet of elevation gain.

Day 6:- Natural Bridge and Badwater Basin

On our final morning, we will once again take two short hikes. First we will hike out-and back on the Natural Bridge trail which offers great examples of geological phenomena such as slip faults, chutes and natural arch formation. We are still seeing new things even on our last morning!

On our way out of the Park we will stop and take a walk at the lowest elevation in the western hemisphere. As we look behind us to the canyon wall at our starting point, we will be able to see a sign marking “Sea Level” over 250 feet above us. The salt flat is 5 miles wide and 22 miles long and offers fantastic views up and down the length of the valley. Both sides the valley are surrounded by alluvial fans rising to tall peaks and disappearing into narrow canyons. Although some are at great distances, we will be able to see several of the areas we have hiked during the week – a fitting farewell to the area.

Departure for airport at approximately 11:00 AM so we have time to stop for lunch at a hidden oasis outside the Park. Complimentary drop-off at Las Vegas, NV McCarran Airport at 3:00 PM.

Death Valley Hiking Logistics & Packing:-

Arrivals:

- Tahoe Trips & Trails’ complimentary airport shuttle will pick you up at the Las Vegas, Nevada McCarran Airport at 1:00 PM. Your guides will be waiting for you at the Zero Level pickup area. From Baggage Claim take the escalator that is located near baggage carousel #7 and directly across from Starbucks down to Zero Level. From Zero Level walk outside the only door and meet the guides outside on the curb.

- If the scheduled pick-up time does not work for your flight, you will need to rent a car and drive yourself to the Furnace Creek Ranch. There are no commercial shuttles running to Death Valley National Park. You are responsible for the cost of transportation to the inn if your travel plans do not allow you to meet our

complimentary airport shuttle.

- If you are planning to meet the Tahoe Trips & Trails airport shuttle and are going to be delayed, please call our office (800-581-4453 or 530-583-4506) and leave a message. Guides will check messages if they do not find you at the airport at the scheduled time.

- Luggage: We assume each person will be traveling with one medium-sized suitcase and one small carry-on. Vehicle space is limited. Please let us know in advance if you are traveling with more bags so we can do our best to accommodate your extra luggage.

- If arriving by private car, the check-in time is 4:00 PM at the Furnace Creek Ranch. Please call the inn for directions (see lodging information below).

- If arriving separately, please check yourself in and then meet us at 5:30 PM in front of the registration building at Furnace Creek Ranch for orientation.

Departures:

- Departure by car: 11:00 AM from Death Valley. Those guests with private cars will need to follow the group to the final day's hike.

- Departure by air: Our complimentary drop-off at Las Vegas, Nevada McCarran Airport is at 3:00 PM.

Private Shuttles:

- None available. You will need to rent a car if your schedule does not allow you to take advantage of our complimentary shuttle.

Lodging:-

Furnace Creek Ranch will be our home for all 5 nights. (Note: We are at the RANCH, not the INN) (760) 786-2345. Check-in time is 4:00 PM. Amenities include swimming pool, tennis courts, golf course, stables, museum, and restaurants. Further information is available at <http://www.furnacecreekresort.com/>.

Please note: Lodging in Death Valley National Park is limited to three options. The Furnace Creek Ranch is the moderate option. Although very nice and clean, the Ranch is not a fancy hotel and not quite as charming and unique as the inns are on many of our other tours. Its proximity to our activities and its price point make the Ranch the obvious lodging of choice for this tour.

If you would like to book extra nights, we recommend:

- In Vegas by airport: Best Western McCarran Inn: 1.3 miles from airport, shuttle provided (702) 798-5530, La Quinta: 2 miles from the airport, shuttle provided (702) 796-9000 or (800) 531-5900

· In Death Valley: Furnace Creek Ranch (see contact info above), Furnace Creek Inn (expensive) (760) 786-2345, or Stovepipe Wells (least expensive) (760) 786-2387.

Packing Information:-

For Weather. We have chosen to run the Death Valley trip during the months with the best hiking weather. The weather in both March/April and October is delightful with typical daytime temperatures in the 80s in the Valley. Keep in mind that it can be 25-30 degrees colder up at elevation (above 9,000 feet) where we will hike one day. Evening temperatures in the Valley are in the 50s and 60s. Rain is a possibility, but is not likely. Total rainfall in Death Valley is less than 2 inches per year. Most of that falls in the winter but bring your raingear just in case.

For dinners. The restaurants we dine at are quite casual. Nice pants and shirts are great for men and women alike, although jeans are also fine on all nights. Hiking attire. People tend to prefer shorts, but be aware that the sun can be very intense. We often hike in light-colored cotton T-shirts or shirts made of fabrics that wick away moisture. You also may wish to bring comfortable long pants to hike in for early mornings or to protect your skin from the sun.

Luggage: We assume each person will be traveling with a maximum of one medium-sized suitcase and one small carry-on. If you will have more bags please let us know in advance as vehicle space is limited. With advance notice, we will do our best to accommodate extra luggage.

Suggested Equipment & Clothing List

Water bottle or hydration system – Minimum 2-quart capacity!!! – VERY IMPORTANT

Day pack – Large enough to carry extra clothes, water, & snacks.

Footwear – Either hiking boots or low hiking shoes are fine. Please do not plan to hike in tennis shoes. Breaking in newer footwear prior to your trip will make your trip more enjoyable.

Rain gear – Lightweight and waterproof jacket for carrying on the trail. Pants are optional, but are often nice to have to put over your shorts if it is chilly.

Jacket – Heavy fleece or other warm parka for colder days, summits, and nights.

Evening wear – Casual (see dining attire above).

Hiking attire – T-shirts and shorts or pants

Socks – Enough pairs to keep your feet dry. Ones that wick away moisture (those made with a good percentage of nylon, wool, or polypropylene) are best.

Sun hat or visor – VERY IMPORTANT!!

Bathing suit

Warm hat and gloves – for hiking Wildrose Peak where it can be 25-30 colder than the valley.

Sunglasses –Should have UV protective lenses VERY IMPORTANT!

Miscellaneous Personal Items

Toiletries – Include plenty of high-SPF sunscreen and lip balm

Medications

Insect Repellent – Occasionally needed at night

Optional

Camera, film

Hiking poles

Binoculars

Texas or other sandals

If you should need any help with your travel plans, please call our travel service
Better Travel at 1-800-869-0949.