

Exploring the Beauty and Extremes of Death Valley & Beyond

March 3 – March 12, 2023
Trip #2316



Sunset at Zabriskie Point

Trip Overview

Death Valley is the largest National Park in the Lower 48 states. It is one of the few places in the U.S. where one can explore a desert floor and a few hours later summit a mountain peak covered in snow. Death Valley offers some of the best stargazing in America. The International Dark-Sky Association has designated Death Valley National Park as a Gold Tier Dark Sky Park, the highest rating of darkness. On this 10-day adventure we will explore the canyons and peaks of Death Valley, as well as the beautiful Red Rocks areas near Las Vegas.

After arriving in Las Vegas, we'll spend a day getting used to the heat by visiting the incredibly scenic Valley of Fire State Park, Nevada's oldest, and another day hiking in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. We then leave the neon lights and drive to the scenic and historic desert town of

Stovepipe Wells in Death Valley. There will be wildlife, historic abandoned ghost towns and mines, rocky peaks, sheer cliffs, and canyons to explore. While in the national park we'll have the opportunity to join ranger talks on the local geography/geology and learn more about Death Valley's incredible night sky.

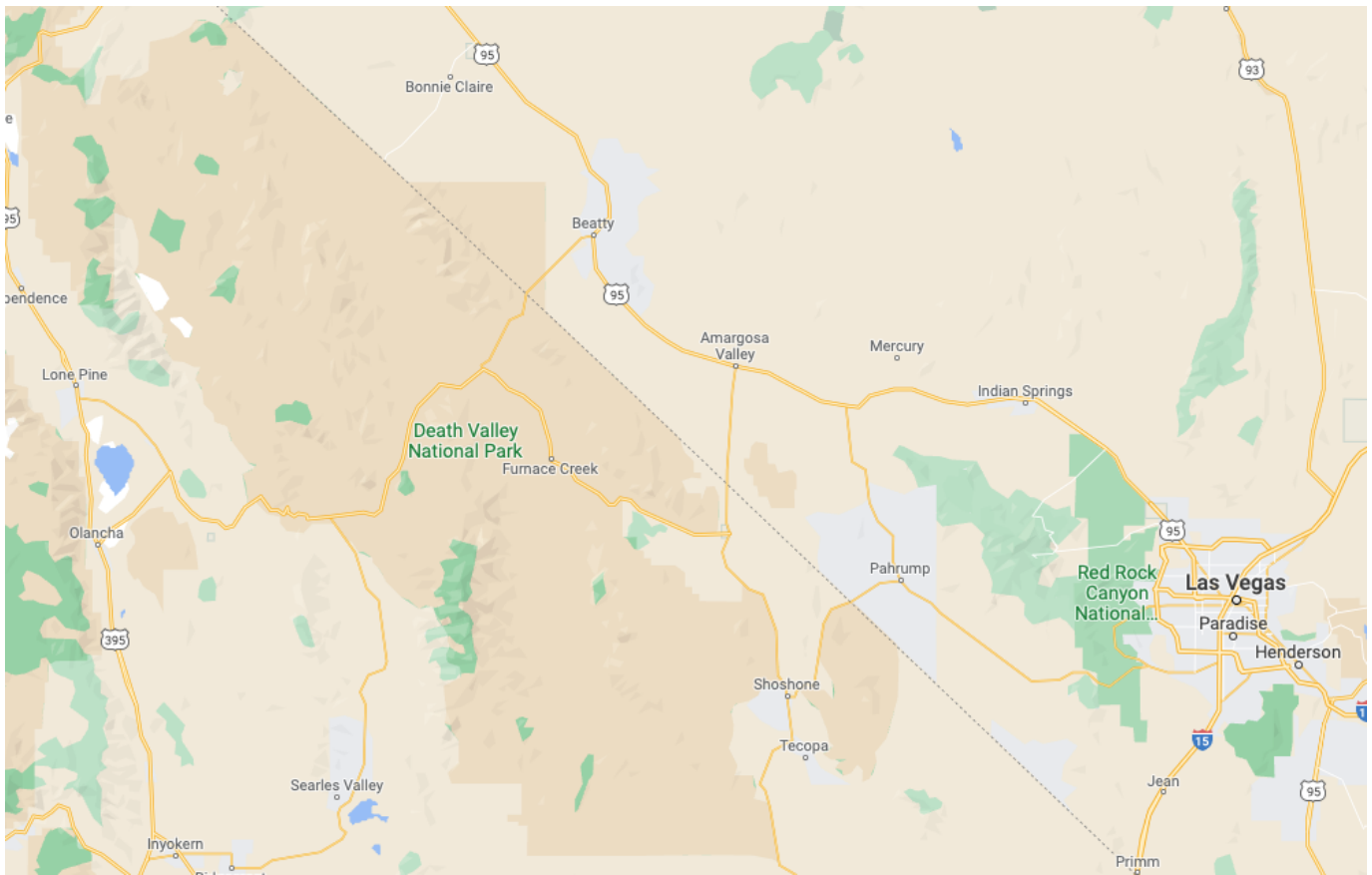
We'll enjoy moderate to challenging hikes ranging from 5 to 10 miles per day. In March, there will be eight or more varieties of wildflowers to see and if the weather before our arrival has been good there may even be a **super bloom** this is a rare desert botanical phenomenon in which an unusually high proportion of wildflowers whose seeds have lain dormant in desert soil germinate and blossom at roughly the same time.



Death Valley super bloom

We will experience the striking contrasts of “sand dunes and snowfields” while visiting desert terrain below sea level one day and on another the late season snows high above the desert floor. Climbs of particular note are the scenic summits of Corkscrew Peak (5,804'), Mosaic Canyon, and the maze of canyons to Zabriskie Point. Late afternoons can be spent relaxing at our motel pool, or visiting nearby historic mining, town sites and other attractions in the park.

We will spend our last night back in Las Vegas and enjoy a farewell dinner before departing for home.



Trip Difficulty

This trip is rated Moderate / Vigorous (#4-5).

This is a [moderate/vigorous](#) hike geared towards the outdoors adventurer and experienced hiker. You must be able to hike 5 to 10 miles per day at a moderate pace with elevation gains between 500 feet and 3200 feet over the course of 4 to 6 hours, while carrying enough equipment to keep you safe in the event of bad weather or injury. Hikes are at altitudes between -282 and 5,800 feet. You must be comfortable hiking in the heat and perhaps snow.

Death Valley National Park is a land of harsh environments. There will be a great deal of sun exposure with average low temperatures between 46 and 55 with average highs between 73 and 82 degrees in the valleys while it might be only 30 to 50 degrees on the high peaks. We'll stay hydrated with 3+ liters of water per day and focus on pacing when climbing the peaks to avoid altitude sickness. They may be covered in snow requiring the use of microspikes to achieve the highest summit. The terrain will at times require the use of hands to scramble over scree, slick rock, and dry falls within narrow canyons. Despite these challenges, with careful planning, preparation, and teamwork, we'll endure the conditions and have fun exploring the vast beauty the region has to offer.

Daily Itinerary

Following is the daily itinerary which we plan to follow. Note that the hikes may be changed, or days swapped (particularly in Death Valley National Park) to take advantage of the best weather.

Day 1 - Friday March 3

Fly to Las Vegas, Nevada (2,000') where we will rent cars, gather supplies, have dinner and spend the next three nights.

Day 2 - Saturday March 4

We begin our adventure with a one-hour drive northeast to Valley of Fire State Park. The landscape features bright red Aztec sandstone outcrops nestled in gray and tan limestone. After stopping at the visitor's center, we will do as many of the short hikes and photo stops as we have time for, e.g. Balancing Rock, White Domes, Fire Wave, Rainbow Vista, Elephant Rock, the Beehives, and the Seven Sisters. Today will total 5 to 6 miles and 600 feet elevation gain.



Valley of Fire State Park

Day 3 - Sunday March 5

We will visit Red Rocks National Conservation Area which will include a stop at the visitor's center to learn about the area. We will then begin our scenic Rim Drive with several stops including hikes to Calico Tanks and Petroglyph Walls. If time permits, we may also visit Ice Box Canyon. Today will total 5 to 6 miles with 1200 feet of elevation gain.



Red Rocks National Conservation Area

Day 4 - Monday March 6

Today we drive to Death Valley National Park with a stop at the grocery store along the way to pick up supplies for our lunches and some of our breakfasts while in DVNP. Once in the Park, we will stop at the visitor center and then explore the Furnace Creek area which may include scenic drives/stops at Dante's Point, Twenty Mile Mule Team Canyon, Harmony Borax Works, and Artist's Drive. We will round out our day with a visit to Badwater Basin (lowest elevation in the US), before checking into our hotel for the next five nights. The Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes are close by and will be a welcome after dinner walk one evening. These will all be shorter hikes with total distance for the day of about 3 miles.

Day 5 - Tuesday March 7

We will climb to Corkscrew Peak which is a 7.4-mile hike with 3,200 feet of elevation gain. The hike features grand views overlooking Mesquite Flat, Grapevine Mountains, Funeral Range, and central Death Valley. The last portion of the hike is steep, but we soon will reach the summit ridge, pass the “hole-in-the-rock”, and be on the summit with magnificent views.



View from Corkscrew Peak

Day 6 - Wednesday March 8

A wonderful canyon hike is planned today with a trip to Fall Canyon. Fall Canyon has been described as one of the most spectacular canyons. The first three miles of the canyon is a deep gorge getting deeper as we move further into the mountain. We will encounter narrows and falls along the way, but they are all passable with a bit of effort. We will explore a few side canyons and return to our vehicles. The total hike for this day may be up to 12 miles depending upon when we turn around in the canyon.

Day 7 - Thursday March 9

This morning, we will explore Mosaic Canyon, known for its smooth, wavy white marbled walls and “mosaic breccia” conglomerate rock. This 4-mile hike gains 750’ elevation and requires some scrambling around boulders and over dry falls. The afternoon will feature a drive and visits to the mill at Keane

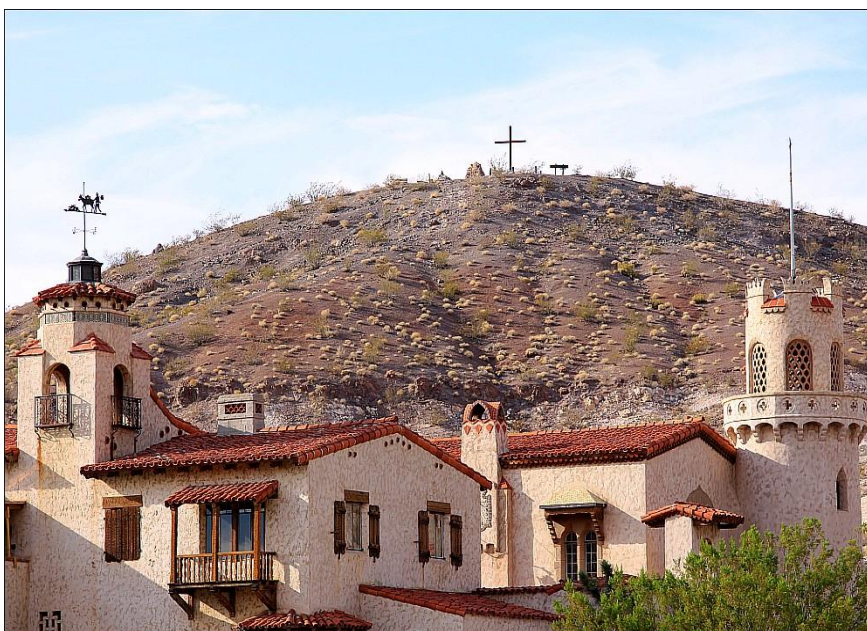
Wonder Mine and the ghost town of Rhyolite where we can see examples of mining in the park dating to the early 1900's.

Day 8 - Friday March 10

Today will take us to the Ubehebe Crater, a large Maar volcanic crater 600 feet deep and a half a mile across created by steam and gas explosions from hot magma reaching groundwater. The intense heat flashed the water into steam which expanded until the pressure was released as a tremendous explosion.



Ubehebe Crater



A highpoint of today's adventure will be a trip to Scotty's Castle, also known as Death Valley Ranch. It is a magnificent mansion built in a remote location in the Grapevine Mountains. Scotty's Castle is named for gold prospector Walter E. Scott, although Scott never owned it, nor is it an actual castle. It was built by Chicago millionaire Albert Johnson between 1922 and 1933. At the time most people believed it belonged to Walter Scott who claimed to have a secret gold mine

in the tunnels beneath it. 99% of the contents are original from when the Johnsons vacationed there in the 1920s and 1930s.

Day 9 - Saturday March 11

On our last day in DVNP, we will finish exploring the Furnace Creek area by completing a 7.8 mile loop hike with an 834 feet elevation gain, through Golden Canyon, Gower Gulch and the Badlands to Zabriskie Point. This may be the most popular hike in the park. We'll weave our way through a maze of towering golden walls, colorful badlands and canyon narrows. The route involves minor rock scrambling, climbing over ledges and ducking under overhangs. We'll then drive back to Las Vegas for our final night. We will celebrate with a farewell dinner and reflect upon the trip's activities.

Day 10 - Sunday March 12

Fly home after breakfast

While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or governmental or ranger recommendations). The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

Accommodations, Meals and Transportation

We will spend the first three nights in Las Vegas at a hotel near the strip. We will then drive to Death Valley National Park where we will spend five nights in a hotel in Stovepipe Wells, CA. After exploring Death Valley, we will return for our final night in the Las Vegas, NV area.

Dinners will be at local restaurants or at the hotels. Lunches will be "trail lunches" and are the participant's responsibility. Breakfasts will either be at hotels with continental breakfasts, or simple and quick meals (bagels, yogurt, etc.) eaten in your room with supplies we pick up enroute to Death Valley. We will eat in our rooms on mornings where we want to get out early to beat the heat which means that everyone will be expected to be ready to go on time.

Some participants will be asked to share in the driving, which requires a check of your driving record. Please inform the leaders if you are willing to do this.

Weather

Temperature

[March](#), the first month of the spring, in [Death Valley National Park](#), is a moderately hot month, with temperature in the range of an average low of 54.9°F (12.7°C) and an average high of 82°F (27.8°C).

Sunshine/Rainfall

In Death Valley National Park, in March, during 3 rainfall days, 0.3" (7.6mm) of precipitation is typically accumulated. In Death Valley National Park, during the entire year, the rain falls for 20 days and collects up to 2.36" (60mm) of precipitation. In March, the average sunshine is 9h.

UV index

The average daily maximum UV index in Death Valley National Park, [California](#), is 6. A UV Index value of 6 to 7 symbolizes a high health hazard from the exposure to the Sun's UV rays for average individuals. Hats, sun screen, and sunglasses are highly recommended.

Trip Price

The trip cost is \$2450 per person for shared occupancy for AMC members, and \$2550 for non-members. To join AMC (2020 pricing \$50 individual, \$75 family) click [here](#). A check for \$1,000 payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club should be mailed to Stephen Cohen 2802 Arbor Drive #2 Madison, WI 53711. The balance of \$1,450 is due October 1, 2022.

The price for this excursion is based on quotes or estimates obtained at the time the trip was planned. The final price of the trip will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, we incur will be shared by trip participants. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is more likely than a price increase. All Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis and refunds, if any, are issued after the trip's financial accounting is complete.

In accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing the leaders' costs. Beyond this, the leaders are not allowed to realize any profit from this excursion. The trip price includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Adventure Travel excursions. The trip fee also includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If these possibilities concern you, individual travel insurance is recommended. More information about included emergency medical and evacuation insurance, as well as about optional and recommended travel insurance, will be provided to participants in their formal acceptance letters, which will be sent out when the trip has the required number of accepted applicants.

Includes:

- Nine nights of lodging.
- Dinner for the entire trip, starting with dinner on March 3, 2022
- Four hotel breakfasts
- Car rental and gas.
- Park entrance fees
- Emergency medical & evacuation insurance coverage.

Does not include:

- Airfare. The trip leaders will advise you and will facilitate group travel, but the purchase of tickets is the responsibility of the participant. At this time, we estimate that the cost for a round trip ticket between the US East Coast and Las Vegas will be in the range of \$550 to \$650.
- Lunches, breakfasts while in Death Valley, beverages, trail snacks, personal items, optional activities, & incidental expenses.

Participant Expectations

You should enjoy traveling and be comfortable traveling in areas which are unfamiliar to you. You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, we guarantee that you will have a great time.



Hiking in Mosaic Canyon

Application Process

We expect a group size of 16 people, including the 2 leaders. This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip. A waiting list will be established when the trip is full.

To apply, you must download, complete, and submit the [online](#) application.

Terms, Conditions and General Information

Please carefully read the [Adventure Travel Standard Terms and Conditions](#). They are an integral part of this prospectus. Cancellations made after the trip has been confirmed to run will incur a minimum \$200 fee.

Trip Leadership

Steve Cohen has been an active AMC adventure travel leader since 2012. He has led 27 hiking/trekking-oriented Adventure Travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountains huts of Austria, etc. He lived in Europe for four years and is fluent in both French and German. Steve is chair of Adventure Travel. He can be reached at scohen1234@gmail.com or 617-997-6861. To learn more about Steve's past and upcoming trips visit: www.adventuretravelwithsteve.com



Jay Sitkin from Philadelphia is a Delaware Valley hiking, biking, and backpacking leader, and AMC Adventure Travel Leader. He has traveled throughout North & South America, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Western & Eastern Europe. Jay has lived in Israel and has had an extended stay in New Zealand. He has hiked, cycled, or backpacked in Patagonia, Croatia, in the alps. Jay owned an outdoors shop in Blue Bell, PA selling outdoor clothing and gear, climbing equipment, canoes, kayaks, xc skiing equipment and offered a wide variety of lessons in these activities. Over the years he has organized trips as varied as hiking

the Tour Du Mont Blanc, touring Alaska, and to Machu Picchu. He has participated in long distance cycling activities such as the Tour of Colorado, MOOSA, and has backpacked and hiked Yellowstone and the Tetons, and the "W" in Patagonia. He can be reached at +1 267-664-0939 or sitkinj@gmail.com

What to Bring

Photography

For those interested, this excursion can involve more than a splendid hiking trip. While there is absolutely no requirement that you be interested in photography, or even bring a camera, Death Valley National Park is beautiful all year, but for most photographers, the months of November through March offer the most opportunities. This trip is not a class or workshop, it is first, and foremost, a hiking trip in a beautiful region. However, if you are a seasoned photographer or a budding novice, or just curious, the popular photography locations around Furnace Creek and Stovepipe Wells offer many excellent opportunities but comprise only a small sliver of Death Valley National Park. There are dune fields, expansive views, mud playas, Joshua Trees, canyons and more. When convenient we will try to be out in the early morning and early evening light to take advantage of the best times for photography (as well as coolest times of the day). Our hikes will also be paced to allow for photo stops.

Photo credits:

1. Sunset at Zabriskie Point by Anish Patel Photo
2. Death Valley Superbloom by MarcCooper_1950
3. Valley of Fire State Park by Foy Scalf
4. Red Rock National Conservation Area by BLM Nevada
5. Ubehebe Crater - National Park Service
6. Scotty's Castle by loop-oh
7. Other photos by Bill Wheeler