

# TRAVELS NOW AND THEN

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## DEATH VALLEY 1970

**1970**

Camping trip to Death Valley, Easter 1970

1970

DEATH VALLEY MARCH 21, 22 1970

MARCH 21.

Early start - drove straight up Golden State freeway - up Antelope Valley → Palmdale → Mojave. D. drove (over some bad back roads) to Trona (beside large salt lake where salt is mined). Had lunch in restaurant in Trona then on into Death Valley through Wildrose Station. Intended to visit Skidoo (Ghost Town) but massive gully cut the track just past sign post. Went straight on to Furnace Creek campground - unfortunately very dusty and all regular places taken as well as most of the best shade. However found a tree with some space under it and camped. Furnace Creek an oasis in the desert - big resort - camp too far on outskirts. Went to visitor center and then on short trip - Devil's Golf Course, fantastic mud + salt formations of height about 2 ft, miles of it. — Salt Pools, full layer of salt on mud, cracked — then on Artists drive in foothills of Funeral Mountains - saw Artists Palette. Then into narrow Golden Canyon (dirt track). Finally up to Tebiriskie Point in what was originally an ocean bed. Back to camp.

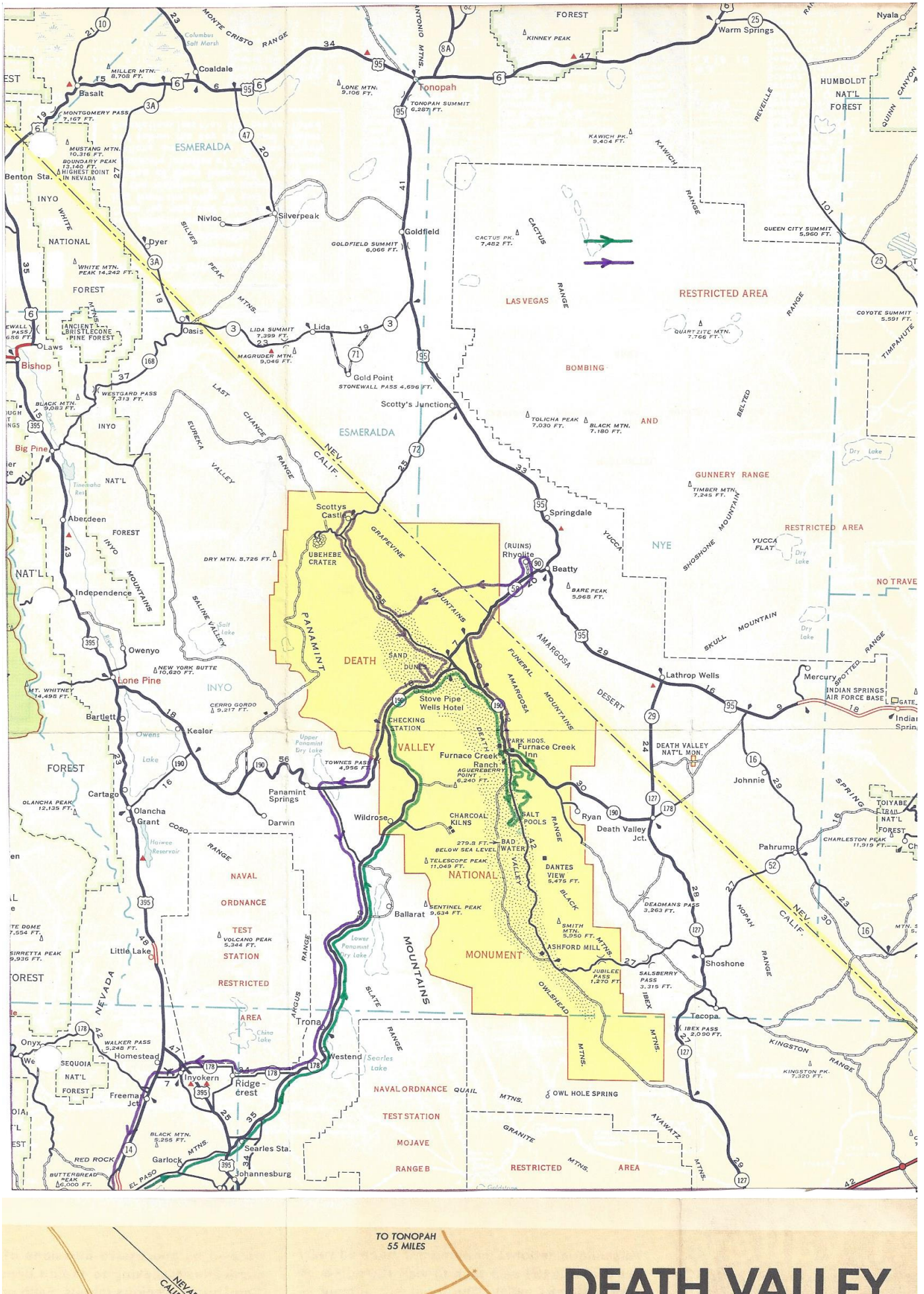
MARCH 22.

Up early, packed up and off. Visited the Harmony Borax works near Furnace Creek from where the 20-mule teams hauled the wagons of Borax out of the South end of the valley. Then drove out of E. side of Monument to Pinyonite - a ghost town - group of 6 or 7 mined buildings. Population in 1907 was 12,000 - mining town. There Dana + Kathy wanted to climb through every building. Then embarked down Titus Canyon Road back into Monument. 26 miles of terrible dirt road. Not too bad to begin with but once we got into the Caperine Mountains we thought we'd never get out - one way road - wild stone road (didn't even see any bighorn sheep - of which there are quite a few around there). Eventually got down into the lower altitudes to Leadfield - A mining ghost town founded on wild + misleading advertising. 300 people flocked there - in















point of interest and most convenient start for trips to the southern half, and the Stove Pipe Wells area, which is the most convenient start for trips to the northern half, including the valley, and the mountains on both east and west.

## NORTH

Average driving time, plus visiting time, and round trip mileages are given from Stovepipe Wells Village. Miles for individual places of interest are also given on the map. Follow road signs and drive carefully.

**Salt Creek.** (22.4 miles round trip; 2 hours). A free-flowing stream having inch-long pupfish, descendents of a species that lived in the last great lake that filled the valley. Along the way you can see the *Devils Cornfield* (arrowweeds that look like cornstalks in a saltflat), and can take the turnoff to the *Sand Dunes* on the north side of the road.

**Mosaic Canyon** (5 miles round trip; 1/2 hour). Drive to the end of the road and take a walk to get an intimate experience of a small canyon with interesting rock patterns.

**Wildrose Station.** (58.8 miles round trip; 2 hours). Drive down Emigrant Valley with a choice of three side trips into the mountains. *Skidoo* (13.8 miles round trip; 2 hours from paved road) is the ruins of an old mining town. *Aguereberry Point* (13.8 miles round trip; 2 hours from paved road) affords a magnificent view of the valley and the east mountains. *Mahogany Flat* (15.6 miles round trip; 2 hours from paved road) takes you past the *Charcoal Kilns* up to Mahogany Flat Campground and the 7.6-mile trail to Telescope Peak, highest point in the national monument.

**Titus Canyon** (one way westward; 26 miles; 5 hours). You may want to take the short loop to the ruins of the old mining town of *Rhyolite*. Titus Canyon is an uphill drive through pale-colored hills to Red Pass, then down to Leadville ruins into and along the bottom of Titus Canyon, a spectacular example of erosion. This is a narrow, winding, steep, dirt road frequently closed by storms. Check with a park ranger before starting this trip.

**Scottys Castle** (90.8 miles round trip; 5 hours). This is the desert mansion of a millionaire and his friend, Death Valley Scotty. A 45-minute trip through the castle leaves at frequent intervals throughout the day. A trip to *Ubehebe Crater* (17.4 miles round trip and 1 hour from the castle) will let you see a volcanic crater one-half mile across and 800 feet deep. Near the cra-

Average driving time, plus visiting time, and round trip mileages are given from Furnace Creek. Miles for individual places of interest are also given on the map. Follow road signs

**Dantes View.** (52.4 miles round trip; 5 hours). A magnificent panorama of the valley a mile below and the Panamint mountains a mile above you, across the valley. Side trips to: *Zabriskie Point* (0.4 mile round trip; 1/4 hour) for colorful and dramatically eroded hills; *20-Mule Team Canyon* (one-way road; 2.7 miles; 1/4 hour) to travel one of the old freight routes into the valley; and *Ryan* (3 miles round trip; 1/2 hour) to see an old mining town.

**Badwater Road to Ashford Junction.** (88 miles round trip; 4 hours). *The Badwater Self-guiding Auto Tour* booklet describes this trip from the visitor center to *Badwater*, including side trips to *Golden Canyon*, *Artists Drive*, *Devils Golf Course*, and *Natural Bridge*. Badwater is the lowest point to which you can drive in the Western Hemisphere. Beyond it, the road rises gently to *Ashford Mill*, the ruins of an old gold mill, near the junction to Westside Valley Road.

**Westside Valley Road.** (88 miles round trip; 3 hours). A beautiful scenic trip along the valley floor—the historic route of the 20-mule team borax wagons. Turnouts to *Bennetts Well*, the ruins of *Eagle Borax Works*, *Shortys Well*, *Bennett-Arcane Long Camp* at Tule Spring, and the *Dayton-Harris* grave.

The Badwater-Westside Valley round trip from the visitor center is about 88 miles, with side trips and turnout stops. You should allow 8 hours for the full trip—and take lunch.

**Harmony Borax Works and Mustard Canyon.** (5 miles round trip; 1/2 hour). Inspect a well-preserved processing plant and drive through a colorful canyon.

## ADMINISTRATION

Death Valley National Monument, established on February 11, 1933, covers almost 3,000 square miles. It is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Death Valley, Calif. 92328, is in immediate charge. He and his staff have offices in the visitor center, which is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our exper-



ter is the road south to the *Race Track* (54 miles round trip; 4 hours). You drive through a back-country mountain valley to the mud-flat bottom of an old lake. Check with a park ranger before starting this trip.

able resources are conserved, that renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.



August 1926 a P.O. was set up. In Jan. 1927 it closed and the town died. Finally from Leadfield we went down about 6 miles of very narrow twisty canyon - Titus Canyon - just wide enough for the car - steep walls rising or towering on each side and driving on what was obviously the storm river bed (saw Petroglyphs on way down). Finally and abruptly we emerged into Death Valley and took road north to Scotty's Castle. Scotty was a character who reputedly or somehow hit it rich - people searched for years for his "golden" canyon around the valley. He satisfied a longtime ambition (born as a muleskinner in the valley) when with Art Johnson and Mrs Johnson (Eastman's who came west on Scotty's recommendation) he built a castle in Caprine Canyon. Filled out with the most expensive and sometimes incredible finishes. Beautiful woodwork - goat skin curtains! A fountain in the living room.

Finally left the castle and on the way out of Death Valley visited the Devil's confield and the Sand Dunes, where the kids played and rolled down the Sandhills for sometime - had great fun - they wanted to camp there but bloody hot - saw some blokes playing hide and seek with walkie-talkies. Then left the valley and drove back thro' Panamint Valley to Tona to China Lake - had a fish and chip dinner there - very good fish + chips - then drove back in dark to home and got there about 11 p.m.





*Furnace Creek, Death Valley*



*Badwater, Death Valley*

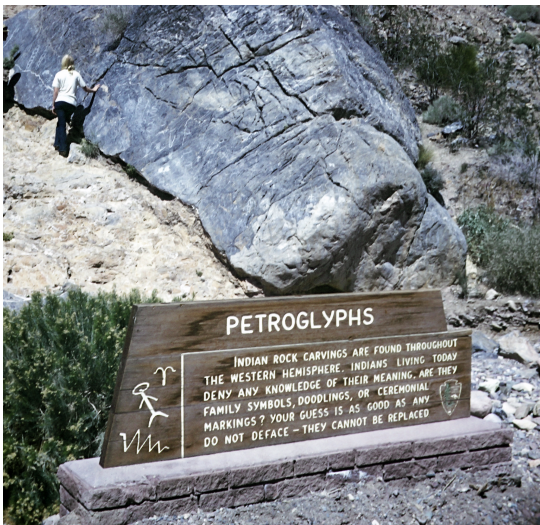


*Badwater and the Dunes, Death Valley*





*Rhyolite Ghost Town, Death Valley*



*Petroglyphs, Titus Canyon, Death Valley*



*Petroglyphs and Titus Canyon, Death Valley*





*Scotty's Castle, Death Valley*

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*Last updated 7/30/99.  
Christopher E. Brennen*