

BIG LOVE IN DEATH VALLEY

DESERT
TRIPPING

There will come a moment on your getaway in Death Valley National Park—while hiking between walls of polished marble or standing on a blinding-white salt flat or floating in a spring-fed pool under ink-black skies awash with stars—when you'll realize you're falling in love.

Because despite its morbid name, arid landscapes, and well-deserved rep for extreme heat, as park ranger Jess Kavanagh points out, "Death Valley slowly creeps into everyone's heart."

To kindle that romance, pay attention to three things: the best time to visit (November through April, when temperatures are more moderate), how long to visit (at least one night but, really, make it two or three), and where to stay. >>



deeply into desert

White salt flats at Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America at 85.5 metres below sea level

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Falling hard is easy in Death Valley, which woos with some grand gestures

>> That last decision is easy now that the luxurious Inn at Death Valley has completed its multi-million dollar renovation. Opened in 1927, this California Mission-styled retreat offers elegant rooms and brand-new casitas, broad terraces shaded by date palm trees, a fancy restaurant and bar, and a to-die-for swimming pool complete with deck-side stone fireplaces, cabanas, and a spa.

The Inn is part of the Oasis at Death Valley, the park's main tourist complex located near the must-see sights and beside the excellent Furnace Creek Visitor Center. Offerings at the Oasis include the family- and budget-friendly Ranch at Death Valley hotel, restaurants, horse stables and the world's lowest-elevation golf course (which means, dear golfer, you're guaranteed the lowest round of your life).

A classic Death Valley day begins with a drive south along Badwater Road toward the lowest point in North America—85.5 metres below sea level—at Badwater Basin. Once there, walk out on the shimmering salt flats, then turn and search high on the cliffs for a white sign indicating sea level. Returning north, detour along the dipping, curving and colourful 14.5-km Artist's Drive. Stop at popular Golden Canyon and take a hike through its otherworldly landscapes. Finish your day at Zabriskie Point where the late-day sun super-soaks the surrounding golden badlands.

Other tempting sights—Mesquite Flats sand dunes, Father Crowley Vista Point where fighter jets sometimes streak through the canyon below, the 183-metre-deep Ubehebe crater, and Mosaic Canyon with its polished marble walls—are widely spread out over this 1.3-million-hectare park so plan accordingly.

Be sure to include Dante's View in that plan. As you stand at its extraordinary vantage point—over 1500 metres above the valley, with views that encompass the entirety of this strange and wonderful park—you might find your heart racing. It may be due to the high elevation. Or it might be love.

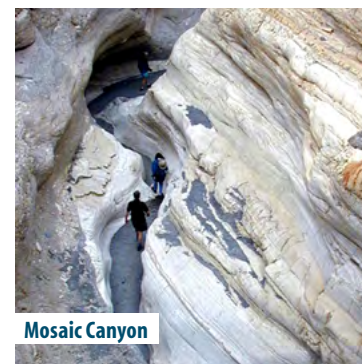
— Ann Britton Campbell



Zabriskie Point, with Panamint Range in distance



The Oasis at Death Valley at sunset



Mosaic Canyon



Overlooking cloud-dappled Badwater Basin



Mesquite Flats sand dunes

IF YOU GO For more on Death Valley National Park: [nps.com/deva](https://www.nps.com/deva). Stay at the Inn at Death Valley: [oasisatdeathvalley.com](https://www.oasisatdeathvalley.com). And start in Sin City before cleansing in the desert...the closest airport is Las Vegas McCarran International, 195 km away.



otherworldly

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ANN BRITTON CAMPBELL; NATIONAL PARK SERVICE; COURTESY OF XANTERRA TRAVEL COLLECTION