

PETROGLYPHS

Ancient rock art speaks through the ages!

MAKING THE BEST BETTER

Eastern Sierra festivals and celebrations ramp up the fun.

DESERT DRIVING

What to expect and how to prepare for the adventure.

RIDGECREST AND DEATH VALLEY

TRAVEL / PHOTOGRAPHY / 10 TERRIFIC SPOTS / NATURE / DINING SPRING 2017

DEATH VALLEY

OUR HOT, DRY, UNIQUE, AMAZING NATIONAL PARK

NOT QUITE ALONE

IN FACT, COULD IT BE HAUNTED?

VEGAS, BABY!

VEGAS-BOUND SIDE TRIPS

WHEN WILDFLOWERS BLOOM

IT CAN BE SPECTACULAR!





Jeep.

THERE'S ONLY ONE

16



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Living in the days of "selfies," it's worth it to experience the beauty and uniqueness of the unique topography, but here's how to take great pictures to keep those memories alive!

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In a good year, nothing beats the spectacle and the splendor of wildflowers.

RIDGECREST AND DEATH VALLEY

VISITOR'S MAGAZINE

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48 Pancakes As Big As Your Head

Wonderful flavors run the gamut from lobster taquitos to mega-pancakes.

49 Collectibles, Antiques and Souvenirs

Leave room in that suitcase for the treasures you collect en route.

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From hotels to roadside services, we've got everything you'll need for the best adventure road trip ever!

About the Cover:

Unshapely and even grotesque at times, Joshua trees grow primarily in the Mojave Desert. **Cheryl McDonald**, our photography editor, took this photo at sunrise in the Joshua Tree Forest off Hwy 178 near Walker Pass in the East Sierra foothills.



www.samsonite.com

THE DESERT IS MY SYMPHONY

NORTHWARD ON 395

The desert begins long before you reach Death Valley, and the ride up Hwy 395 skirts through a cluster of once-booming mining towns just south of Ridgecrest. Renowned Hollywood sound engineer Cabot Lodge Cunningham enjoyed that stretch so much while working on films that he moved there. This year, the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert will publish *Tales from the Owl Saloon: Hollywood to Red Mountain and Beyond*, Cunningham's boisterous memoir of colorful characters like Death Valley's Scotty of Scotty's Castle fame, and of this grand expanse of sand and sky:

This be my desert when on an inky black night I gaze into heaven's canopy of stars and behold a great stage that has been prepared ... just for me. The whole world becomes a chair on which to recline ... the entire universe awaits my pleasure.

A meteor streaks across the inky sky ... The overture is about to commence ... the stars seem to twinkle with delight. Another meteor is seen. The stage is hiding just below the horizon ... another ... then still another meteor darts by ... from the vast stillness.

The wails of a lonely coyote are heard ... and an answering response reverberates from the bottomless pits of time.

I relax as I bask in nature's grandeur. This is my symphony of life.

Art: Richard Nuckles, from the book, *Tales from the Owl Saloon: Hollywood to Red Mountain and Beyond*



Tales from the Owl Saloon: Hollywood, Red Mountain and Beyond will be on sale for \$27.95 at the Historic USO Gift Shop in Ridgecrest, CA 760-375-8456 or visit hsumd.org.

Headquartered in the Historic USO Building, 230 W. Ridgecrest Boulevard in Ridgecrest, the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert preserves and displays artifacts and memorabilia from dairies, mining, homesteading, railroading, aqueduct building, developing the China Lake naval weapons station, and other aspects of cultural heritage, and activities include open mic and movie nights, concerts, field trips, and speaker programs.



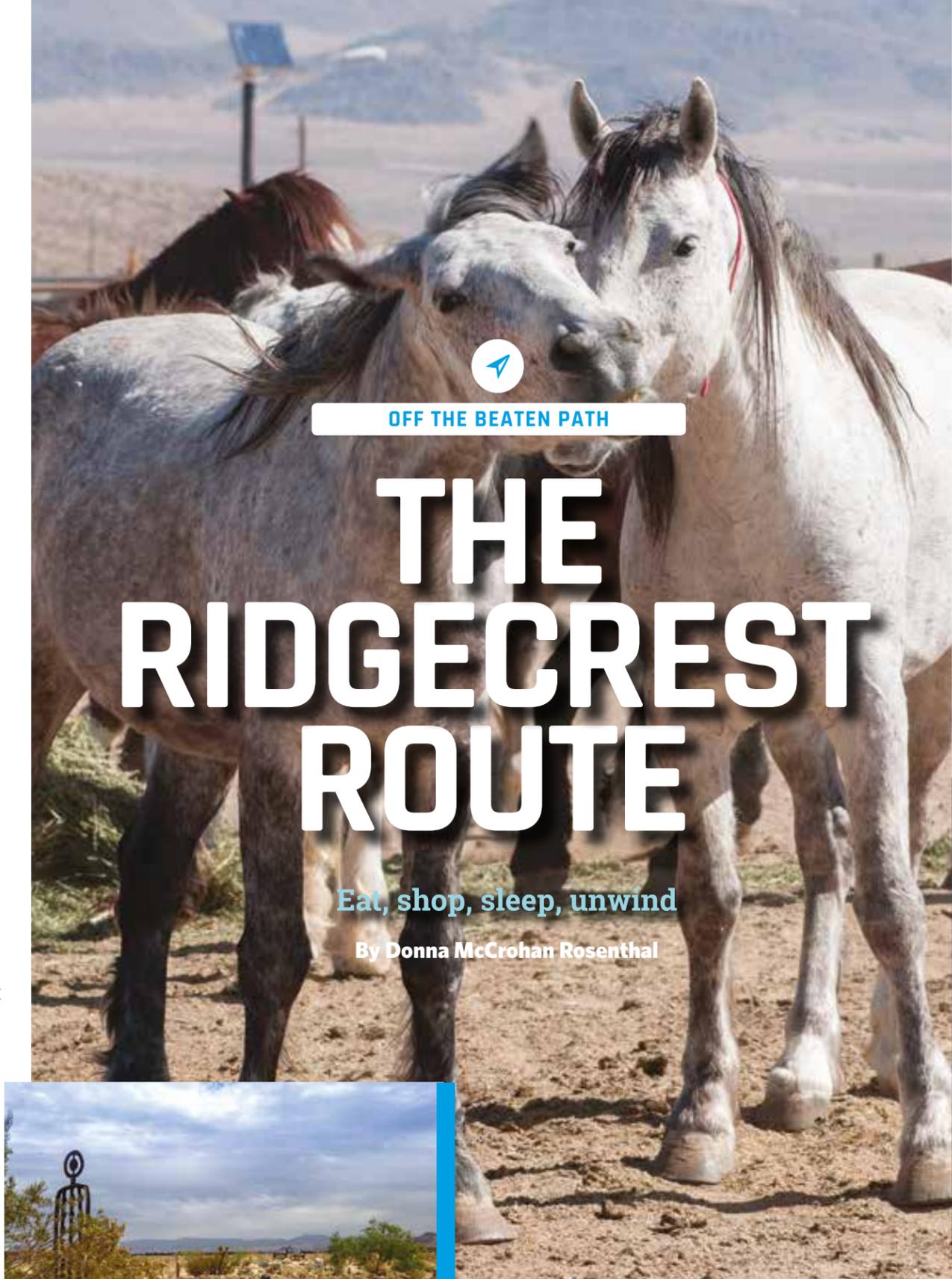
BEWARE THE HEAT

LITTLE BOTTLE . BIG FLAVOR



BLM ADOPTION PROGRAM

Once roaming free on public lands in the West, burros and mustangs from the range are now periodically removed by the BLM and made available for adoption to maintain healthy herds in the wild.



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

THE RIDGECREST ROUTE

Eat, shop, sleep, unwind

By Donna McCrohan Rosenthal



MATURANGO MUSEUM

Also serves as Death Valley Visitor's Center

Whether heading to Death Valley from north or south on Hwy 395, stopping in Ridgecrest makes sense.

Buy the essentials you forgot to pack and satisfy your creature comforts and cultural curiosity, in a full-service city with easy driving and parking, and a rush hour that lasts little more than a rush minute.

Petroglyph designs adorning dozens of buildings, echoed by median art on China Lake Boulevard and the sculptural pieces in Petroglyph Park, honor the Native American heritage that the remarkably undisturbed Big and Little Petroglyph Canyons of the nearby Coso Range famously preserve.

Ridgecrest restaurants range in cuisine from '50s style diner, American, barbecue/seafood/steakhouse, Chinese, French,

Hawaiian, Japanese, Mediterranean, Mexican, Thai, and Vietnamese, to favorite fast food chains.

Shopping runs the gamut from the "big box" Big Five Sporting Goods, Big Lots, Home Depot, Kmart, and Walmart, to mom-and-pops and museum stores. Lodging comes in different shapes and sizes, and from upscale to economy-priced – Hampton Inn & Suites, Spring Hill Suites by Marriott, Heritage Inn, Best Western, Quality Inn, Clarion Inn Hotel, EconoLodge Inn & Suites, Super 8, and Motel 6 to name a few – plus the Desert Empire Fairgrounds RV Park adjacent to the Desert Empire Fairgrounds. For those times when the unexpected threatens to wreck a vacation, Ridgecrest has auto repair and tire shops, car rental agencies, pharmacies, and Ridgecrest Regional Hospital.



HISTORIC USO BUILDING

One of Ridgecrest's most historically valuable buildings.

Driving Distances:

Ridgecrest to Death Valley
113 miles 182 km

Ridgecrest to Las Vegas
237 miles 382 km

Los Angeles to Ridgecrest
153 miles 247 km

Mammoth Lakes to Ridgecrest
178 miles 287 km

Yosemite to Ridgecrest
239 miles 384 km



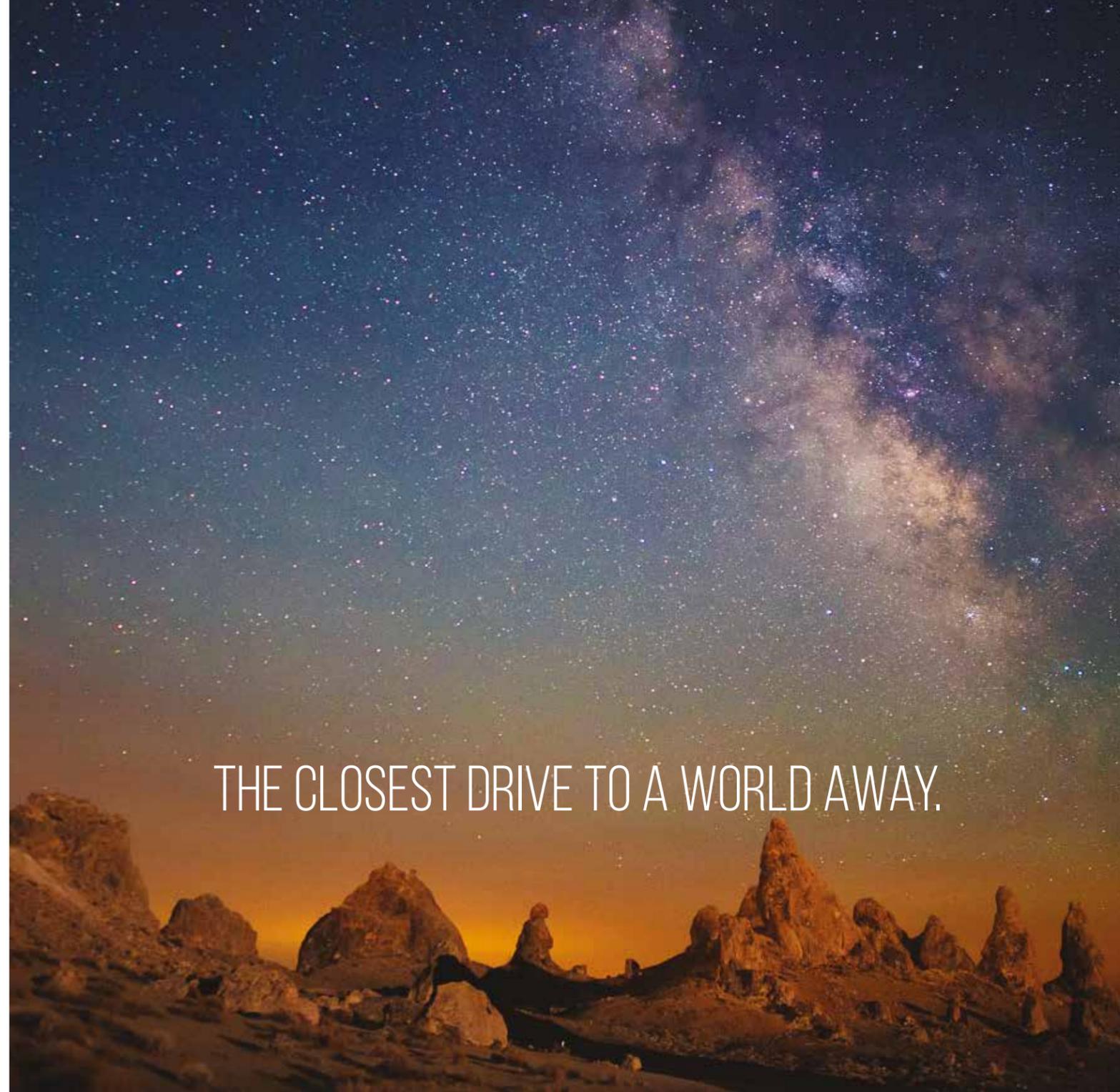
ARTISTRY IN MOTION

Local Ridgecrest artist, Nick Null, has painted over twenty petroglyph designs on businesses in the Ridgecrest area.

Annual fairs, festivals, and special events such as October's Desert Empire Fair punctuate year-round music, movies, displays and archives in the Historic USO Building, headquarters of the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert; art and natural history exhibits at Maturango Museum and its artists' Open Studios Tour in October; the US Naval Museum of Armament and Technology on the Naval Air Weapons Station (China Lake) base; the high teas, witch's teas, weekly Wine & Paint Nights at My Enchanted Cottage and Tea Room; arts, crafts, and artisan shows around town; concert series by the Indian Wells Valley Concert Association and RMES (Ridgecrest

Musical Enrichment Society); theatrical performances by CLOTA (Community Light Opera and Theatre Association); literary programs by Ridge Writers, the East Sierra Branch of the California Writers Club; and interactive murder mysteries by Master Mystery Productions. □

Donna McCrohan Rosenthal writes columns and travel articles for several California and Southwest magazines and newspapers and has lectured widely, including at the Smithsonian Institution.



THE CLOSEST DRIVE TO A WORLD AWAY.

For less than a tank of gas, Ridgecrest is THAT close to most of California.

Online Permitting • Location Library • 24/7 Response
Production and Scouting Assistance • Pre-Approved BLM Land
5% Uplift from California Film and Television Tax Credit Program

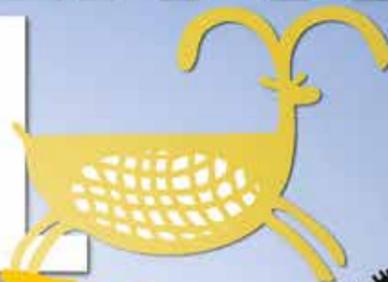
Ridgecrest Regional Film Commission

www.filmdeserts.com

760-375-8202



5TH ANNUAL NOVEMBER 3-4, 2018 RIDGECREST PETROGLYPH FESTIVAL



EVENT INCLUDES

**HONOR A VETERAN CAR & BIKE SHOW
NATIVE & TRADITIONAL VENDORS • SPEAKERS
TOURS • FAMILY FUN ZONE • BLM BURROS**

MORE INFO RPFESTIVAL.COM OR CALL 760-375-8202

Ridgecrest Resources

HOTELS

HOTEL GUIDE KEY

B-Breakfast, D-Dining, P-Pool, W-WiFi, G-Gym, M-Meeting Rooms ★ BEST OF RIDGECREST PICK

A NIGHT'S INN
706 N Balsam St.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-677-2508**
booking.com

AMERICAN INN & SUITES
553 S. China Lake Blvd.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-375-3020**
americainnridgecrest.com

AMERICAS BEST VALUE INN
131 South China Lake Blvd
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-371-7454**
abvridgecrest.com
Welcome to the new boutique hotel Americas Best Value Inn and Suites North Ridgecrest - conveniently located off of CA-178 in Ridgecrest - California.

BEST WESTERN CHINA LAKE INN
400 S China Lake Boulevard
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-371-2300**
bestwestern.com
Stay at this clean, friendly hotel in Ridgecrest, California offering free full breakfast, luxurious rooms, a fitness center; a Jacuzzi and a non-heated swimming pool.

BUDGET INN
831 N. China Lake Blvd.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-375-1351**
hotels.com

CLARION INN RIDGECREST
901 N China Lake Blvd
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-446-7910**
clarionridgecrest.com
The Clarion Hotel in Ridgecrest is the perfect oasis for your next vacation or business trip. With two full service restaurants, banquet halls and 24 hour front desk access, Clarion is your best choice of hotels in Ridgecrest.

DESERT MOTEL
339 W. Church St.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-375-1371**
desertmotelsuites.com

ECONO LODGE INN & SUITES
201 W. Inyokern Rd.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-446-2551**
econolodge.com/hotel/ca294
The Econo Lodge Inn and Suites near China Lake Naval Station in Ridgecrest, CA is an easy stop on the road. This pet-friendly hotel is near destinations like Lake Isabella and Red Rock Canyon State Park.

ECONOMY INN & SUITES
416 S. China Lake Blvd.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-375-1591**
economyinnridgecrest.com

HAMPTON AND SUITES RIDGECREST CA
104 East Sydnor Avenue
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-446-1968**
hilton.com
Whether for business or pleasure, our top-notch hotel accommodations and friendly team are ready and waiting to help you enjoy all the stunning natural beauty, fascinating museums and eclectic boutiques that await just outside our hotel.

MOTEL 6
535 S. China Lake Blvd.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-904-6979**
motel6.com

QUALITY INN
507 S. China Lake Blvd.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-375-9731**
choicehotels.com
Quality Inn is located less than two miles from China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station. Death Valley National Park is 80 miles away and offers vibrant colors of spring wildflowers.

RODEWAY HERITAGE INN AND SUITES
1050 North Norma St
Ridgecrest 93555 **855-446-5400**
choicehotels.com
Rodeway Heritage Inn and Suites offer true comfort. The Inn is a 2 story interior hotel with oversized rooms that include refrigerator, microwave, iron and board in room. Coffee. On premise hot breakfast and restaurant. Beer and Wine bar.

SPRINGHILL SUITES RIDGECREST
113 E. Sydnor Avenue
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-446-1630**
marriott.com
The SpringHill Suites by Marriott seamlessly blends design, functionality, modern amenities to refresh - all at an affordable price. Spacious suites and vibrant lobby offers a beautiful experience to relax and unwind.

SUPER 8 RIDGECREST
426 South China Lake Boulevard
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-375-2220**
super8.com

TRAVEL INN
131 W. Upjohn Ave.
Ridgecrest 93555 **760-384-3575**
travelinnridgecrest.com



Ridgecrest Resources

RESTAURANTS

RESTAURANT GUIDE KEY

B-Breakfast, BR-Brunch, L-Lunch, D-Dinner **N** DENOTES NEW LISTING ★ BEST OF RIDGECREST PICK

Restaurants in the list is compiled by the magazine's staff and freelance writers as a service to our readers. We accept no advertising or other consideration in exchange for a listing.

CONTACT THE EDITOR We would like to hear from you. Please send us your restaurant suggestions by e-mail to media@racvb.com. We cannot guarantee any listings and are at the discretion of the editors.

Ridgecrest/Inyokern

ALE'S STEAKHOUSE 1030 N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-8644	L/D	CHINA EXPRESS 723 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-371-9868	L/D
ARBY'S 830 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-7572	B/L/D	CHINA LAKE BUFFET & ALOHA HAWAIIAN GRILL 138 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-9983	L/D
BANGKOK HOUSE RESTAURANT 303 W. Inyokern Rd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-6971	L/D	CLASSIC BURGERS 6525 Inyokern Road Inyokern 93527 760-375-9983	B/L/D
BASKIN ROBBINS 501 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-3131	Ice Cream	COCINA CALIENTE 901 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-3999	L/D
BEANSTERS ESPRESSO 1601 Triangle Dr. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-2320	B/L	CREST DONUTS 960 N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-4128	B/L/Donuts
BEAR HUGS FROZEN YOGURT SHOP 904 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-1939	FroYo	DEL TACO 1020 N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-6198	B/L/D
BERNARDINO'S 6601 Inyokern Rd. Inyokern 93527 760-377-4012	B/L/D	DENNY'S 104 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-5572	B/L/D
BEVRIDGE DRIVE THRU 201 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-1238	BEV/SNACKS	DJ'S PUB 135 Garnet St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-3321	
BURGER KING 139 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-1299	B/L/D	DOMINO'S PIZZA 856 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-2800	L/D
CARL'S JR. 230 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-8280	B/L/D	EPHEN TACOS SMOKEHOUSE JUNCTION 634 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-793-2101	L/D
CASA CORONA 1429 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-5055	L/D	THE GRAPE LEAF 901 N. Heritage Dr. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-3930	B/L/D
CASEY'S STEAKS & BARBEQUE 1337 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-8000	L/D	GOLDEN DRAGON 945-D N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-3949	L/D
CHARLEY'S GRILLED SUBS 501 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-4541	B/L/D	GOLDEN OX 440 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-3702	B/L/D
CHARLIE'S PUB & GRILL 901 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-7910	D	INDIAN WELLS DRIVE THRU DAIRY 441 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-2711	

Ridgecrest Resources

INDIAN WELLS BREWING COMPANY 2565 N. Highway 14 Inyokern 93527 760-377-5989	Beer	PONY ESPRESSO COFFEE SHOP & CAFÉ 1355 N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-7669	B/L/D
JOHN'S PIZZA 348 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-4407	L/D	PURE HEALING FOODS 972 N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-301-0940	B/L/D
JACK IN THE BOX 919 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-1953	B/L/D	ROXANNE'S CAFÉ 901 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-7910	B/L
KOREAN MARKET & BBQ 305 W. Inyokern Rd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-499-6005	L/D	SAIGON FLAVOR VIETNAMESE BISTRO 819 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-371-7500	L/D
KRISTY'S FAMILY RESTAURANT* 430 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-9132	B/L/D	STARBUCKS 750-A N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-9202	B/L/D
KRISPY DONUTS 860 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-2000	Donuts	SCHOONER'S PATIO GRILL 1400 N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-2700	B/L/D
LA FIESTA 119 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-5901	B/L/D	SUBWAY 815 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-4784	B/L/D
LITTLE CAESARS PIZZA 906 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-1051	L/D	SUBWAY 901 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-5000	B/L/D
LUGO'S GRILL 908 N. Norma St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-6960	B/L/D	TACO BELL 1240 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-4513	B/L/D
MCDONALDS 150 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-7181	B/L/D	TAQUERIA BERNARDINO'S 841 N. Downs St, Ste. B Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-3202	B/L/D
MIDWAY CAFÉ 831 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-5961	B/L/D	TOKYO HOUSE 890 N. China Lake Blvd. #A Ridgecrest 93555 760-384-1948	L/D
MON REVE 126 N. Balsam St. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-3212	L/D	TOMMY T'S SPORTS BAR 117 E. Ridgecrest Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-371-4112	Bar
OASIS MEXICAN RESTAURANT* 321 W. Inyokern Rd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-382-1840	B/L/D	WIENERSCHNITZEL/TASTEE FREEZ 220 S. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-3689	L/D
OLVERA'S RESTAURANT 120 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-7200	L/D	XIN BOWL ASIAN BISTRO 1110 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-3888	L/D
PAPA JOHN'S 820 N. China Lake Blvd. Ste. A Ridgecrest 93555 760-375-7272	L/D	Trona	
THE PARTNER'S BAR 1033 Inyokern Rd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-4400	Bar	ESPARZA RESTAURANT 13223 Main St. Trona 93562 760-372-5314	B/L/D
PIZZA FACTORY 1601 N. Triangle Dr. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-7492	L/D	TRAILS DRIVE IN 84520 Trona Rd. Trona 93562 760-372-5803	L/D
PIZZA HUT 1245 N. China Lake Blvd. Ridgecrest 93555 760-446-3200	L/D		



FREE WI-FI

McDonalds
150 N. China Lake Blvd.
Ridgecrest, CA

ADVENTURE

WELCOME TO DEATH VALLEY

To some, the name is a little too “deathy,” but this is a gem of a hotspot that deserves your attention and respect.

Few names sound more threatening than “Death Valley.” With temperatures that have topped 130° F, and wagon trains that failed to cross it a century and a half ago, this particular stretch of desert lived up to the ominous label.

But that was then. This is now. The austere terrain abides and Death Valley National Park today is the hottest, driest, and lowest of the national parks. But, thanks to air-conditioned automobiles, paved roads, and a range of facilities, journeying through it

becomes a magic carpet into another world. Beautiful vistas, stunning geological formations, remnants of mining boom towns, and natural wonders await.

In winter, peaks wear glistening snow. In spring, following favorable rain, wildflowers bloom abundantly. Serenity, poetry, and spectacle cast a spell. Subtle grandeur of this order doesn’t happen too often. You can see it once or a hundred times and still marvel at art drawn by Nature’s own hand – for miles and miles of nothing but glorious miles.

ENTRANCE FEES

Fees apply for anyone who stays in the park.

- \$25 for seven days vehicle entrance fee
- \$20 for seven days motorcycle entrance fee
- \$12 for seven days for an individual on foot or bicycle
- \$50 annual pass for one year
- \$80 America the Beautiful annual pass for national parks and other federal fee areas
- Free annual pass for all US active duty personnel and their dependents
- \$10 senior pass \$10 for lifetime admission for US citizens or permanent residents age 62 or older.
- Free lifetime admission and discount pass for US citizens or permanent residents with permanent disabilities.

4TH GRADE PASS - EVERY KID IN A PARK

Fourth graders (or home-school equivalent) can earn a free pass to all federal areas by visiting everykidinapark.gov/get-your-pass/fourth-grader, printing the voucher, and redeeming it when they visit the park.

FAHRENHEIT TO CELSIUS CONVERSION

- 32°F = 0°C
- 50°F = 10°C
- 60°F = 15.56°C
- 70°F = 21.11°C
- 80°F = 26.67°C
- 90°F = 32.22°C
- 100°F = 37.78°C
- 110°F = 43.33°C
- 120°F = 48.89°C
- 130°F = 54.44°C

Obey the Rules That Protect Death Valley

Disturbing or collecting any animal, plant, rock, or natural, historical, or archaeological feature is strictly forbidden.

On the Web: www.nps.gov/deva/
By phone: (760) 786-3200

DEATH VALLEY FACTS

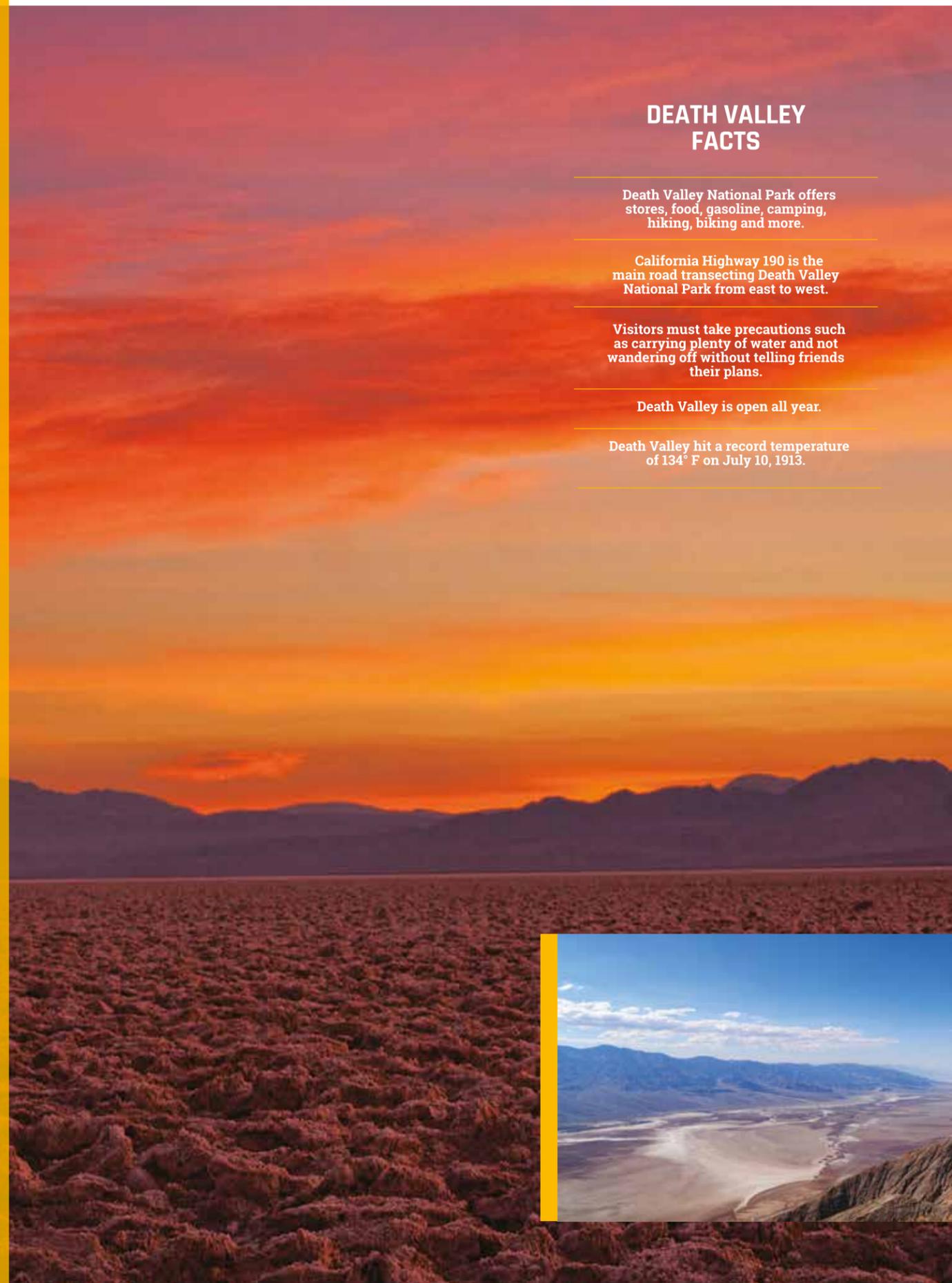
Death Valley National Park offers stores, food, gasoline, camping, hiking, biking and more.

California Highway 190 is the main road transecting Death Valley National Park from east to west.

Visitors must take precautions such as carrying plenty of water and not wandering off without telling friends their plans.

Death Valley is open all year.

Death Valley hit a record temperature of 134° F on July 10, 1913.



DEATH VALLEY

FURNACE CREEK



By Andrew Sound

Refreshed exhibits make an excellent start to a visit to the Valley, and new energy- and water-saving features make it a sustainable venue in a harsh environment.

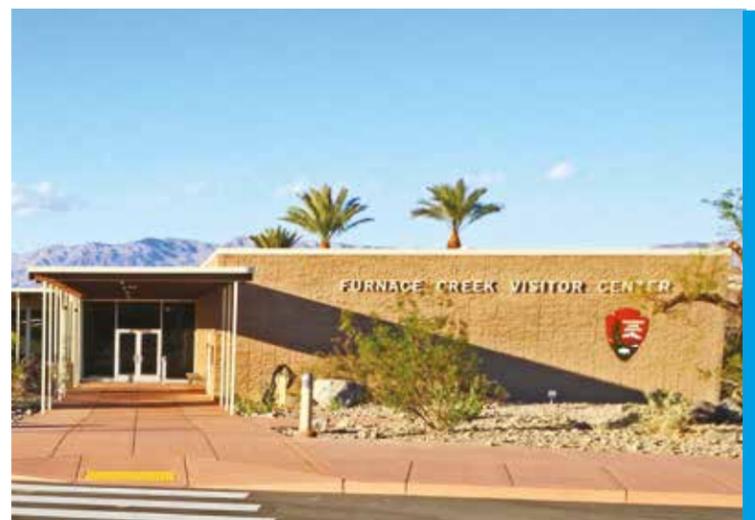
The original Visitors Center opened in 1960, with that era's lack of attention to energy usage. The building was demolished beginning in 2009 and the new debuted in November 2012, preserving the look and footprint of its predecessor, but adding solar panels, double-paned windows, and more efficient cooling and heating systems.

The displays now put more emphasis on tactile, 3D qualities, and tell new stories, and old stories in new ways. Plaster models of Valley wildlife are touchable, unlike the old, stuffed animals behind

glass. One new exhibit immerses the visitor in a Death Valley night sky, with the quiet broken only by the sounds of nocturnal creatures.

Beyond the exhibits, the center offers a gift shop featuring cool souvenirs (toy pupfish!) and a great variety of books for all ages. Friendly, informative rangers stand ready to answer questions, and a 20-minute orientation film runs in the auditorium throughout the day.

Andrew Sound specializes in regional and historical writing and serves as program chair for the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert.



Furnace Creek Visitor Center & Museum

Hours: **Open daily, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Phone: (760) 786-3200

TERRIFIC TEN



Death Valley has some amazing places to see, but don't forget about some of the other sights in the surrounding region that add a special something to your trip to the Eastern Sierra.

A WORD TO THE WISE

- Don't rely on GPS. Take a map.
- Don't expect to have wi-fi and cell service in Death Valley.
- Vehicles must remain on established roads.
- Check in advance for road conditions at nps.gov.

1

AGUEREBERRY POINT

Named after Pete Aguerberry who discovered gold here in 1905 along with Shorty Harris, Aguerberry Point in the Panamint Range commands a spectacular view over the central part of the valley.

2

BADWATER

Badwater is the lowest point in North America. Walk out onto the salt-encrusted lakebed, and look back up to the sign on the hill marking sea level, 282 feet above your head.

3

FURNACE CREEK

Along California 190, the main road through Death Valley, Furnace Creek is where to find gas, lodging, restaurants, camping, golf and horseback riding along with a souvenir/convenience store and the Borax Museum.

4

HARMONY BORAX WORKS

Operated from 1883 to 1888, Harmony Borax Works and the famous twenty mule teams started from here. Some buildings remain, along with an actual 20-mule team wagon train!

5

UBEHEBE CRATER

This natural crater was created when hot magma met groundwater, creating a spectacular steam explosion. Hiking down into the crater is easier than hiking back up due to the volcanic cinders underfoot.

6

SCOTTY'S CASTLE (CLOSED)

You may have heard of the ornate Roaring Twenties and Depressions era Scotty's Castle and grounds, **but this Death Valley treasure remains closed due to extreme flood damage**, and is not likely to re-open to the public until 2018. Entry to Grapevine Canyon and the castle district is prohibited.



7
CHINA RANCH

A working date farm, China Ranch offers a gift shop featuring dates and date-filled baked goods, as well as nature walks through the date palms. Southeast of Death Valley, follow the signs from the town of Tecopa through a spectacular canyon.

8

THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

Poised in Lone Pine in the Eastern Sierra, the museum features exhibits and artifacts related to film-making, especially those movies shot in and around Lone Pine and the nearby Alabama Hills, location for classics from *Gunga Din* to *Iron Man*.

9

MATURANGO MUSEUM

This Ridgecrest museum offers Death Valley visitors information and exhibits on local desert natural history. Check out the mural depicting the chain of ice age lakes including Lake Manly, now known as Death Valley.

10

AMARGOSA HOTEL & OPERA HOUSE

Rising up out of barren surroundings at Death Valley Junction just east of Death Valley, this famed hotel serves as the venue for musicals and pantomimes, during November through April, in the spirit of the recently deceased Marta Becket who performed here from 1968 through 2012, and painted herself an audience on the wall when no real one appeared.



AMARGOSA HOTEL & OPERA HOUSE



SUPERSTITION

NOT QUITE ALONE

By Daniel Stallings

With the bare bones of gold, silver, and borax mining camps scattered about the valley, you can feel this sense that you aren't quite alone out here. Death Valley is filled with stories of restless spirits, lost souls, and bumps in the night. Some of these places still stand, and you can explore and discover their spooky secrets.

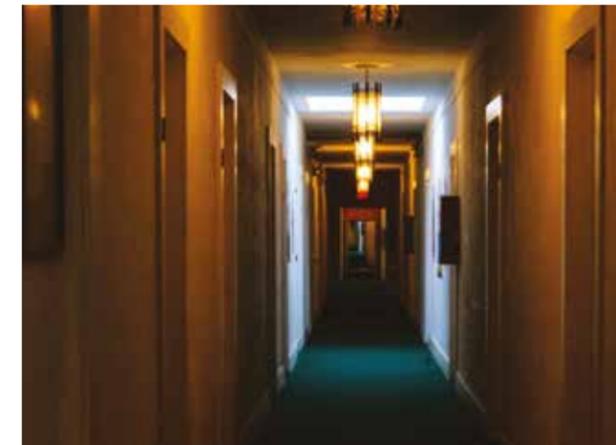
The **Amargosa Opera House and Hotel**, located in Death Valley Junction just east of Death Valley National Park, was once a theater built to entertain those who worked in the nearby borax mines. Though the mines are now silent, the opera house and hotel still run, thanks to the passion and hard work of dancer, artist, mime, and actress, Marta Becket. Her performances were legendary, but the performances of a more departed variety have also gained

notoriety. Some claim a spectral cat had been known to interrupt the shows. Other tales center on mysterious sounds, scents, and shadows in several hotel rooms, the dining room, and an un-renovated portion of the hotel known as "Spooky Hollow." The hotel is still open for guests to brave a night in its haunted hallways, and paranormal investigators flock to it.

If wilder terrain and wilder ghost stories are more in your wheelhouse, the ghost town of Skidoo lays claim to the spirit of accused murderer, Joe Simpson, who was famously lynched by the town and then re-lynched for late-arriving reporters in 1908. Or there's the town of Rhyolite in Nevada, where, in 1907, a prospector claimed his camp had been dragged five hundred feet in the middle of the night away from a haunted desert oasis called "Tule Holes," which for

over three hundred years was the site of many unexplained and unusual events. □

Though he writes in all genres from poetry to essays to fiction and nonfiction, Stallings specializes in writing and producing interactive murder mysteries. mastermysteryproductions.wordpress.com



STEP INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION

Ridge Writers' annual Weird Weekend each September celebrates "the stranger side of the desert" with a meet-the-author, Weird Weekend Storytelling Competition, and an interactive murder mystery.

A world of aliens, lost gold mines, apparitions, Bigfoot sightings, and objects moving when they shouldn't, extends its eerie invitation for Friday-Saturday, September 22-23, 2017.



NATURE

WHEN WILDFLOWERS BLOOM

By Donna McCrohan Rosenthal



of course cactus. Remember while in Death Valley National Park to obey the rules that strictly forbid picking flowers.

When Death Valley fails to go floral, outlying areas generally still have nice bunches scattered in closely watched nooks and crannies. The canyons north of Inyokern on Hwy 395 can harbor spectacular groupings, as can the **Rademacher Hills**, approached from the road behind Cerro Coso Community College in Ridgecrest.

Even in the very worst of years, **Maturango Museum** hosts its annual **Wildflower Exhibition** (March

31-April 2 in 2017) with an impressive collection of just-gathered specimens of the region's finery. On the same weekend, the **Ridgecrest Desert Wildflower Celebration** adds to the festive spirit with lectures, programs, and contests.

Conditions change day to day, week to week, throughout the season. For updates on where the wildflowers are and how long they might last, contact Death Valley National Park (www.nps.gov/deva/; 760-786-3200) and the **Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitors Bureau** (visitdeserts.com; 800-847-4830 or 760-375-8202).

> In a good year, the desert won't stop blooming for months. Color spills down from the Sierra Nevada into the canyons, into the foothills, into the towns, and on into Death Valley. This doesn't mean a continuous blanket

of blooms. Some years yield brilliant patches and swaths. Others can't manage more than glorious smaller bouquets. It depends on the right weather factors such as adequate rain in late autumn and winter, and not too much wind when the buds pop up. Too many gusts can blow fragile blossoms away.

Death Valley puts on its best show mid-February to mid-April at lower elevations, and farther up, early April to early May. Above 4000 feet, the display runs late April to early June. Among the most prevalent beauties: blazing star, desert gold, evening primrose, lupine, mariposa lilies, Mojave wildrose, phacelia, poppies, and



The Desert Five Spot



RADEMACHER HILLS

These hills provide a desert panorama that takes in the Indian Wells Valley as well as the Panamint Mountains and Telescope Peak in Death Valley National Park.

THE BEST OF THE DESERT

With seasonal rains at their mercy, the blooms of wild flowers are always a wondrous display.





POWER UP

Make sure you have extra batteries and extra memory, especially if you plan to shoot in RAW format. Wifi is rare inside the park.



YOUR BRIGHT FUTURE

Bright sun and light colored landscapes often require a polarized filter. A circular polarized lens filter works well.



PREPARE

Don't forget your paper map; not all GPS systems work here. And stay on designated roads. Hiking trails are available. Be sure to pack water and snacks.



GET SIDeways

If you're using a smartphone for taking pictures, remember to turn the camera sideways so that your images will be in landscape for better viewing on larger screens.

PHOTOGRAPHY

WORTH THE SHOT



In a world of selfies and social media postings, make sure to get those memories captured in the best way possible.

By Cheryl McDonald

The heat is not the only thing Death Valley is known for. Unique geology and picturesque landscapes make Death Valley one of the most photographed locations in the United States.

You will find photo opportunities from sunrise to well beyond sunset throughout the park.

Sand dunes, salt and mineral sculpted dry lake beds, dramatic mountain ranges carved by lava, earthquake, and erosion, old railway and mining remnants including **Twenty Mule Team Borax** historical sites can be found here.

Are you a nature photographer? Death Valley is the home of many unique species of plants and animals. There are also several locations to shoot bird migration photos in both the spring and fall. Spring is a great

time for flower photography. Wildflower blooming starts as early as February and is usually finished by late April. Every year is a surprise as different plants bloom each year.

Astrophotographers will find the Milky Way right over head once the sun goes down. Death Valley is a designated "International Dark Sky" location. So be sure to bring your tripod, remote shutter release, and flashlights if you are into light painting.

However you like to take pictures, from cell phones to old style film cameras, you will find interesting and rewarding locations to shoot in this incredibly photogenic national park. For more information: www.nps.gov/deva.

Cheryl McDonald is a landscape photographer and watercolor artist primarily focused on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.

THE BEST OF THE DESERT

Keep in mind the cavernous perspective when taking photos with people.



THE BEST OF THE DESERT

Mesquite Sand Dunes have played a big part in movies, including the *Star Wars* franchise.





ANCIENT

DESERT VARNISH

By Julie Bradford

Carving images into rock is a rigorous task, meant to last. It is art without an eraser – confident, conscientious, and above all else, permanent.

Wielding crude hammers fashioned from stone, the indigenous people of the Mojave Desert left behind an impressive body of work, carving lasting images into rock, known as petroglyphs. They created over 100,000 of them, lining the canyons of Coso Range, covering 400 square miles east of the Sierra Nevada in California. No other location on the continent contains rock art this abundant.

The Coso Rock Art District includes petroglyphs up to 12,000 years old, and is filled with the best canvas nature offers: desert varnish. Composed of clay, iron, and manganese, it covers the surface

of basalt rocks. When scratched, it reveals lighter rock beneath, producing a perfect backdrop for etching designs that last millennia.

Mystery surrounds the reasons why early Coso inhabitants committed design to stone, leaving only guesses from the imagination. A diary? A cautionary tale?

Carvings of spirals and grids, dots and lines, depict an abstract art difficult to interpret. Spectacular displays of human-like figures dressed in unique patterns and fancy headdresses, no two alike. Everyday items like tools and weapons, and everyday creatures like lizards and snakes. Bighorn sheep are depicted the most – tens of thousands of them – adorning the rocks like they once adorned the canyons, till relentless arid weather depleted larger game animals along with plant life.

The same arid weather preserves the petroglyphs today, a lasting reminder of people long ago, finding meaning in design. It is art that cannot be placed in a gallery for casual viewing. This art requires a rugged desert trek, well worth the journey, to glimpse images so meaningful they were carved into nature.

Award-winning storyteller Julie Bradford resides in the Indian Wells Valley, home of the Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival. She writes from her windblown abode in the desert, with the sound of Navy jets in the sky, and a view of the Sierra Nevada from her kitchen window.

ANCIENT CALIFORNIA



Pecked, engraved, chipped, and abraded into stone, this stunning concentration of rock art located in the Coso Mountains range, near China Lake, was dedicated as the Coso Rock Art National Historic Landmark in 2001. Access is limited to tours with approved guides operated through **Maturango Museum** in Ridgecrest. For security reasons, applications must be received well in advance (maturango.org; **760-375-6900**). For information about the **Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival** in November, visit rpfestival.com or phone **760-375-8202**.





What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but that doesn't mean you have to. Here are stops between Ridgecrest and Las Vegas that are easily worth the travel time.

VEGAS, BABY!

SIDE TRIP TREASURES

By Linda Saholt

Planning a leisurely trip to Las Vegas? Now is a good time to take the longer route and enjoy Death Valley, plus some of those other highlights that you've always had to skip due to time restrictions.

A great place to start your research for this adventure is the **Maturango Museum's Visitor Center** in Ridgecrest. Check out the selection of free brochures and information available, including *Routes to Las Vegas*, *Getting There is Half the Fun*, and *Oh, Ranger! Death Valley National Park*. So many fascinating choices! Look them up on your web browser before you go – hours, directions, whether open seasonally or year-round – to fine-tune your trip agenda.



LEFT BEHIND?

Don't miss out on the Area 51 Alien Center where, you know, stuff happens.





HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE
Shoshone Museum Gift Shop
Visitor Center

HISTORIC VIEWS

Leaving Ridgecrest on Hwy 178, you'll pass the BLM's (Bureau of Land Management) **Wild Horse and Burro Facility**, always a fun place to visit, especially with a bag of fresh carrots.

Once you arrive in Death Valley, there are the naturally color-splashed **Artist's Palette**, and the extraordinary **Dante's View** directly above the Badwater Basin. If you have a high-clearance vehicle suited for rough roads, you might enjoy exploring **Echo Canyon** and **Hole in the Wall**, both in the Funeral Mountains.

Outside Death Valley, stop in Shoshone for a meal and gas. **The Shoshone Museum Gift Shop Visitor Center** displays mammoth bones and fossil camel tracks. There are the **Shoshone and Tecopa Hot Springs**, and views, rock and fossil hunting at the **Yaga Labyrinth** at Tecopa.

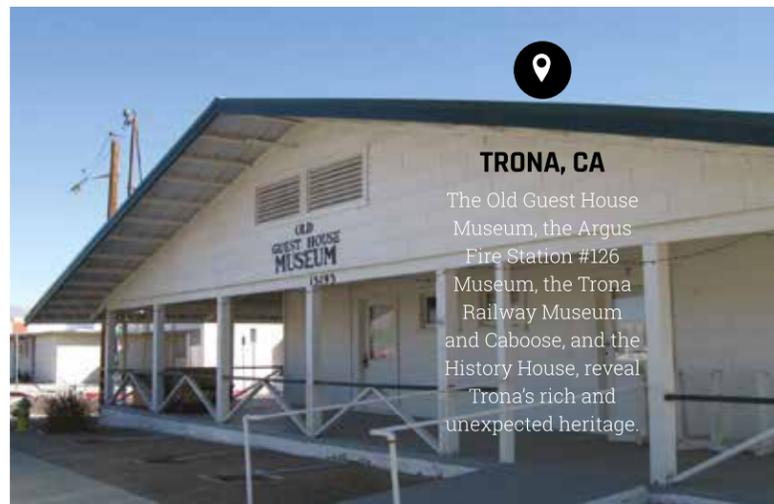
Or perhaps you might loop down on Hwy 127 to Interstate 15 and catch Baker, home of the **World's Tallest Thermometer** (134). Baker is also home to the kitschy **Mad Greek Cafe**, **Alien Fresh Jerky**, and the disc-shaped, space-themed **UFO Hotel**, currently under construction.

For ghost town aficionados, visit historic Rhyolite, Nevada, four miles west of Beatty on Hwy 374. In its heyday it had a population of close to 10,000,

complete with churches, stores, doctors, dentists, undertakers, an opera house, a stock exchange, telephone service, electricity, and 50 saloons; or Amargosa Valley, Nevada, which features the **Area 51 Travel Center**.

The desert is full of dreams—some worked, some flopped, and all are interesting!

Linda Saholt has been a desert dweller for three decades, one of which was spent as a newspaper reporter specializing in off-beat human interest stories.



TRONA, CA

The Old Guest House Museum, the Argus Fire Station #126 Museum, the Trona Railway Museum and Caboose, and the History House, reveal Trona's rich and unexpected heritage.



MOVIES COME TO THE DESERT

Seventeen miles from Maturango Museum, look for the otherworldly spires of Trona Pinnacles Natural Formation, where *Planet of the Apes* and *Star Trek* scenes have been shot.



YOSEMITE

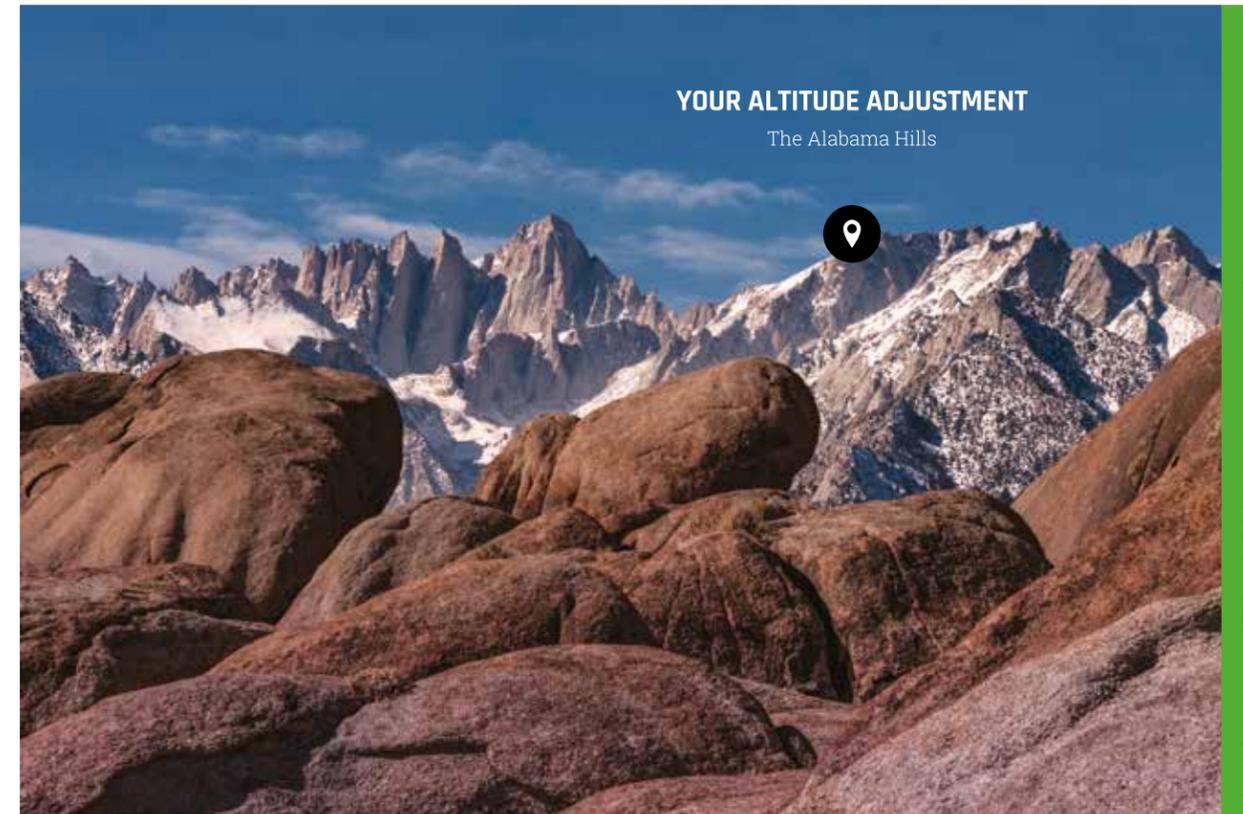
With its towering walls and grand waterfalls, there is no doubt that Yosemite National Park is a place of wonder.

ROAD TRIP INSPIRATIONS

YOSEMITE TO DEATH VALLEY



Yosemite National Park has a majesty forged in granite, massive, and alive with abundant wildlife, glistening waterfalls, sweeping meadows, and ancient sequoias. Death Valley, 270 driving miles to the south, has a totally different power, a spellbinding vast serenity. Both inspire awe.



YOUR ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

The Alabama Hills



In its own quiet way, so does the Eastern Sierra Nevada route that connects the two. From approximately late May through October, the snow has melted and the Tioga Road – Hwy 120 from Crane Flat to Tioga Pass – delivers visitors from Yosemite to Scenic Hwy 395, dotted with its own set of adventures for outdoor enthusiasts, official wilderness areas, and the unmistakable stamp of the Old West.

In Lee Vining off the intersection, spectacular tufa towers rise up out of

Mono Lake, one of the oldest lakes in North America. The surreal calcium carbonate spires formed when freshwater springs reacted with alkaline lake water. As many as two million birds flock there each year.

In Bishop, Laws Railroad Museum preserves the heritage of a time when towns centered on their train depots. Farther south come Independence and the acclaimed Eastern California Museum, then Manzanar with displays and self-guided tours that chronicle its role as



Death Valley

National Park
California/Nevada



an internment camp during World War II.

In Lone Pine, the Alabama Hills may look familiar. Hollywood shot on-location there for decades. Stop by the Museum of Western Film History for a map of "Movie Road" to retrace the path of Western serials, classic Western movies, and more recent blockbusters. Nearby, Mt. Whitney reaches 14,505 feet, making it the highest peak in the contiguous United States.

In Olancho, the Ranch House Café offers a homey ambiance and friendly service, plus a special enticement when octogenarian Ida Reese (nom de plume "Magnolia Sage") gives readings from her candid musings and colorful life.

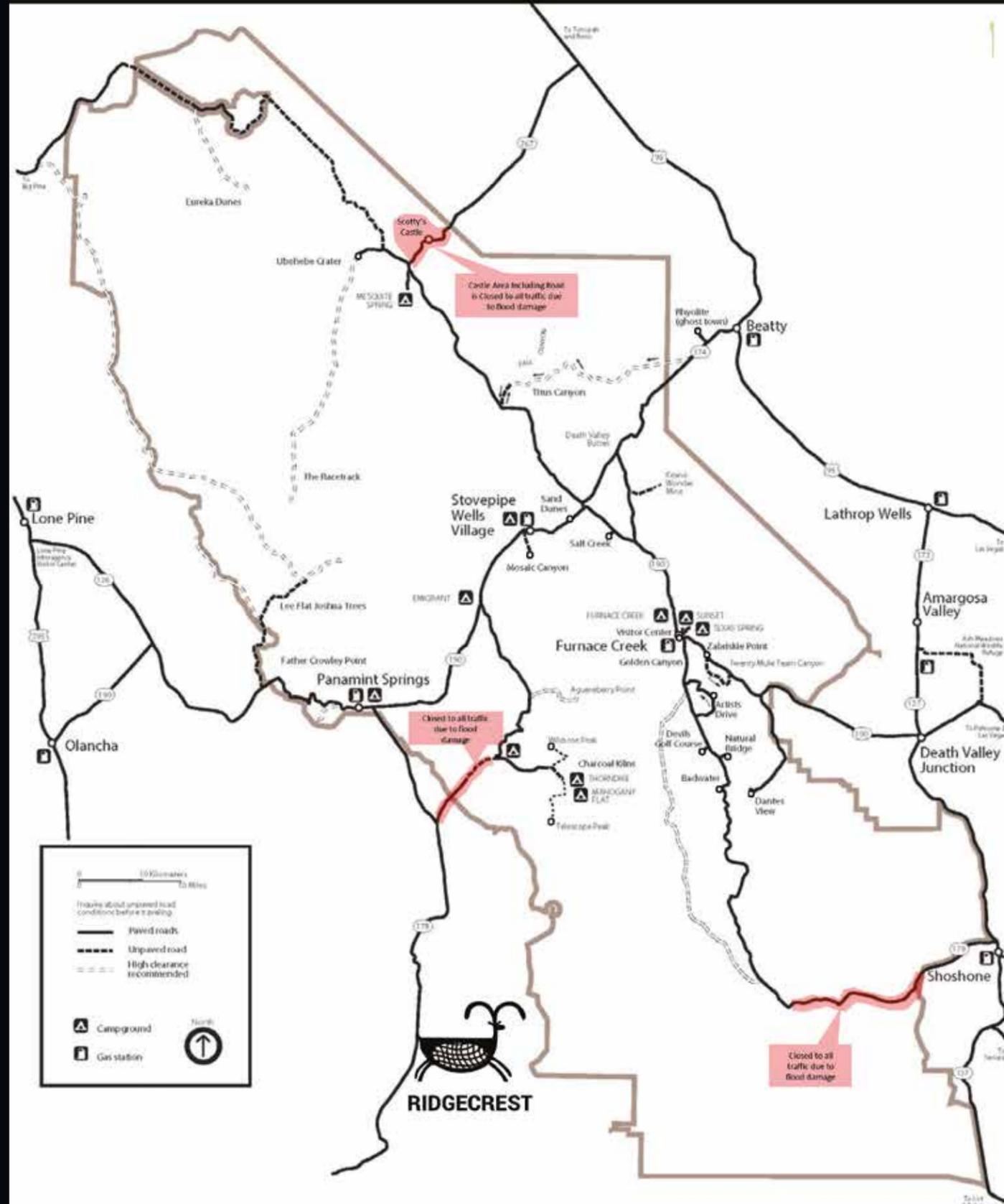
Just north of the Kern County line, Fossil Falls reveals the effect of volcanic activity from lava that flowed as recently as 20,000 years ago.

The Inyokern exit at Hwy 178 leads to Ridgecrest, the tufa formations of Trona Pinnacles, and the wonders of Death Valley National Park.

FOR MORE ABOUT YOSEMITE

On the web: www.nps.gov/yose/
By phone: (209) 372-0200

Note that in fall, winter, and spring, tire chains may be required due to snowy or icy conditions, and passes through the Sierra Nevada may be closed. Check in advance and plan accordingly.





FIVE TIPS FOR SAFE DESERT DRIVING

Desert driving has risks — even in the winter. Here are five tips for safely navigating the roads of Death Valley National Park.

By Teresa Bitler

GET A TUNE UP

Your vehicle should be in good condition before taking any road trip. Schedule a tune-up to check all major systems, including the air-conditioning system, and top off fluids. You'll also want to make sure the tires are properly inflated since underinflated tires generate more heat. The additional heat, especially during the summer, can weaken an underinflated tire to the point of blowout.

Before you go, inspect your spare and make sure you have everything you need to change

a flat tire. You may also want to consider packing a roadside tool kit and your vehicle owner's manual (if it isn't already in your glove box).

BRING THE ESSENTIALS

Always take plenty of water. During summer months, plan on at least one gallon of water per person per day, plus extra water for the radiator. If you will be driving in remote areas of the park, bring enough water for three days.

Since temperatures can dip dramatically in the desert after dark, be sure to pack warm clothing and blankets in case



SAFETY FIRST

Tools and equipment are your first defense in an emergency. Keep a first aid kit and flares when possible.

you're stranded overnight. To minimize the risk of running out of gas, top off your tank whenever you have the chance at Furnace Creek Ranch, Stovepipe Wells Village, and Panamint Springs Road.

MAP YOUR ROUTE

Know where you'll be in the park, and share your route with someone in case of an emergency. In the summer, stick to paved roads, and avoid deep canyons and dry washes during stormy or threatening weather since thunderstorms in the desert can produce deadly flash floods. Check current road and weather conditions before heading out.

For the most part, cell phones do not work in Death Valley, so do not rely on them for directions or in emergency situations. Instead, bring a reliable GPS and topographical maps if you're heading off road.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT GEARS

Climbing the park's steep mountain roads can overheat your engine. If your vehicle is struggling, shift into a lower gear (D2 and then D1) so that you can maintain a consistent speed. On particularly steep grades, turn off your vehicle's AC since it can put additional strain on the engine and cause it to overheat.

Going downhill, shift into lower gears to use your transmission to slow your vehicle; relying on your brakes can cause them to overheat and fail. When you do need to use your brakes, apply them firmly.

KNOW WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

If your vehicle breaks down, stay with it until help arrives unless there is a clearly visible call box nearby. Do not go looking for help, and do not waste energy with unnecessary exertion. Keep in the shade as much as possible.

Anytime you leave your vehicle, whether to get a ride to the nearest gas station or to stop for a hike on a marked trail, always leave a clearly visible note under the windshield detailing who you are, where you're headed, and when you left.

Teresa Bitler writes about Southwest travel, road trips, and national park adventures. She is the author of Backroads & Byways of Indian Country.



ALONG THE WAY

ROAD TRIP BASICS: WHO TO TAKE?



The road trip is the quintessential adventure, but an ill-fitted collection of characters can make a trip go south real fast.

However you arrived at the decision to take the road trip of a lifetime is not really important. Whether inspired by a wild night of cocktails or a recently completed bucket list, this is the first question you've got to ask: Who's going?

COMPATABILITY IS KEY

Look around you. You know who's the life of the party and who's the party pooper. Your choice of cabin mates can make the difference between a memorable trip or the longest combination of silence and pouting you'll ever experience.

Compatibility doesn't end with personality. Severe dietary restrictions, real or imagined, can make a trip difficult. Ditch the diet if you can, and get ready for a wide variety of culinary delights, some of which might be enjoyed at a roadside mini-mart or calorie-laden diner.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND AND AN OPEN WINDOW

The sights and smells of your new adventure may not be what you're expecting. Agree on frequent stops and try to go whenever you stop. This will keep the trip moving along and keep the group on a reasonable schedule. And buy a small can of air freshener for those unexpected events. You know what I mean.

HAVE JOB SECURITY

Everyone in the car should have a duty, whether it's the road DJ or the scout for the next stop. Knowing that everyone has something to do and think about will not only help you survive the trip, but maybe your friendships will last even longer. □

— Ray James



KNOW YOUR ROLES

Navigator? DJ? Food scout? Make sure your travel companions have specific jobs.



The Driver:
Eyes on the road.

The DJ:
Keep us entertained

The Foodie:
Keep the snacks coming

The Navigator:
Find the fun



HEY, NAVIGATOR - BUY A MAP. THE OLD SCHOOL KIND.

Yeah, we know, "There's an app for that."

But when batteries are low, no signal on your smartphone, or the GPS on the fritz, a printed map will keep you out of trouble and get you on your way. Just like in the olden times.

FESTIVALS

MAKING THE BEST BETTER

Festivals and celebrations have a way of bringing out the best of a place and enhancing it with extras ranging from movies to mules to mud. Here's a sampling, listed from north to south along Hwy 395 then on into Death Valley.

Bishop Mule Days (every Memorial Day weekend)

Six days of rip-roaring mule shows, packer's scramble, musical tires, chariot racing, youth events, Western entertainment, arts, crafts & tack prove that "anything a horse can do, a mule can do better" (muledays.org; 760-872-4263).

Lone Pine Film Festival (every Columbus Day weekend)

Presentations by and about Western movie legends, a rodeo, cowboy church on Sunday, famous Main Street Parade, and site tours take place near the great Alabama Hills where so many classic and B-Western movies were made (www.lonepinefilmfestival.org; 760-876-9909).

Randsburg Old West Days (every third Saturday in September)

Old West shootouts, line dancing, vendors, music, food, car show, and geocaching kick off with an all-you-can eat pancake breakfast (randdesertmuseum.com; 760-371-0965).

Trona Gem-O-Rama (every second Saturday in October)

Drive your own car to pluck crystals out of the blow holes and mud, then enjoy the gem and mineral show, good food, and museums (www.l.iwvisp.com/tronagemclub/).

Ridgecrest Desert Wildflower Celebration (Mar. 31-Apr. 1, 2017)

Maturango Museum's annual wildflower exhibition heads the lineup of flora-inspired activities blooming around town (maturango.org; 760-375-6900).



ANCIENT MUSIC

Carlos Espino plays Native-inspired music at the Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival in November.

Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival (November 4-5, 2017)

The wonder of Native American rock art resonates throughout two days of music and dance, an educational lecture series, and the Petroglyph Park Street Fair with vendors from all over southern and central California (rpfestival.com; 760-375-8202).

Death Valley '49ers Encampment and Music Festival (Nov. 8-12, 2017)

Highlights include old-time and Western music, art and craft shows, wheelbarrow race, pioneer costume contest, wagon train and horse parades, poker, horseshoe, and golf tournaments (www.deathvalley49ers.org; 760-786-2345).

FOOD

PANCAKES AS BIG AS YOUR HEAD



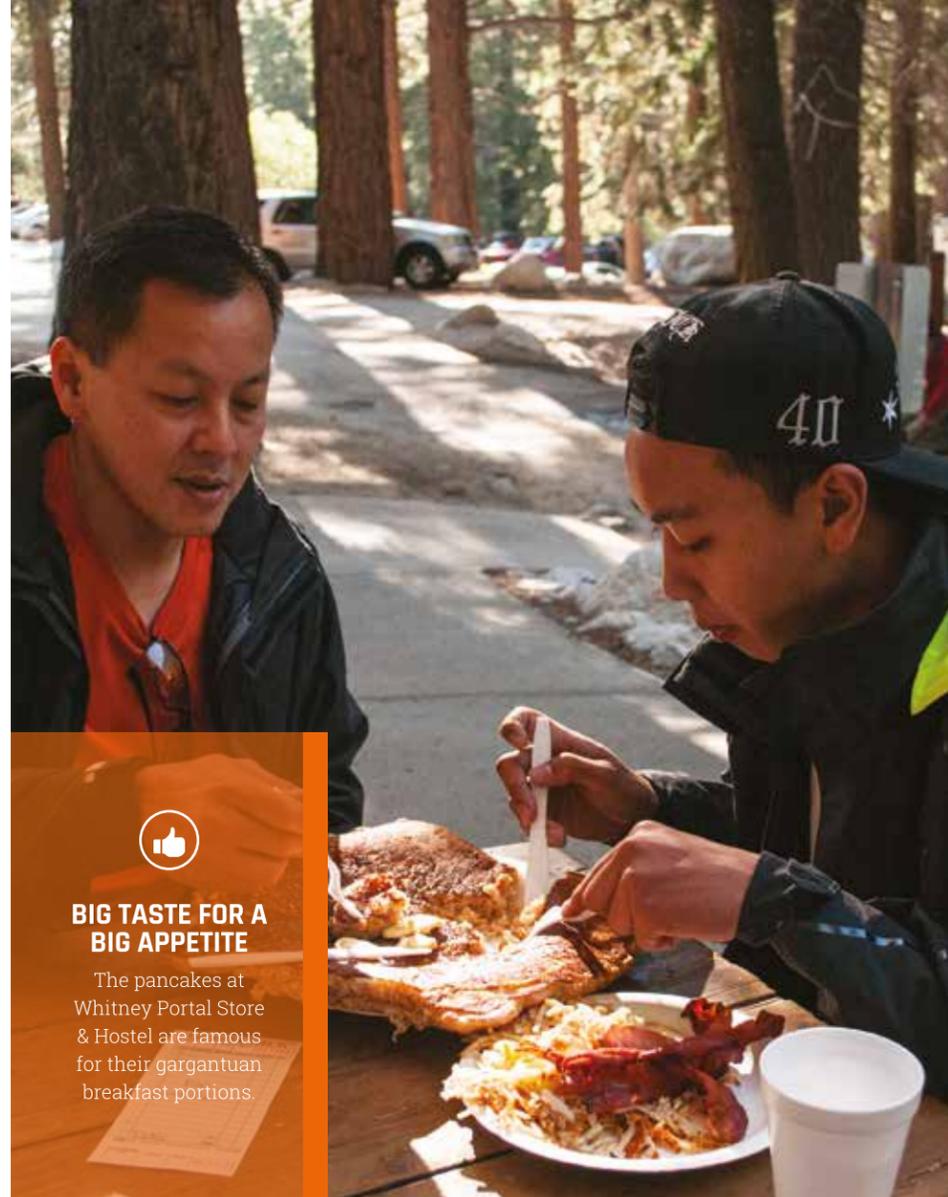
Fine food and fun food make any outing better. On a drive to Death Valley, wonderful flavors abound, while others walk you back into history.

In the Eastern Sierra Nevada at the eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park, **Whoa Nellie Deli** distinguishes itself with lobster taquitos and wild buffalo meatloaf – gourmet food in a Mobil gas station at the intersection of Hwys 120 and 395.

Mammoth Brewing Company's brewery, tasting room, and beer garden in Mammoth Lakes on Hwy 395 greet motorists about 30 miles south of the 120 turnoff to Yosemite. In August, look for the Mammoth Festival of Beers and Bluesapalooza, two days of top craft breweries from all over the country.

South on Hwy 395 into Bishop, **Erick Schat's Bakkerly** fills two large rooms with breads, cakes, desserts, and deli. Farther south in Lone Pine, the **Whitney Portal Store & Hostel** serves burgers, and pancakes so big that they overlap the plate.

Ridgecrest offers ribs, steaks, seafood, and a variety of international cuisines including **Mon Reve's** fine French fare. **My Enchanted Cottage**



BIG TASTE FOR A BIG APPETITE

The pancakes at Whitney Portal Store & Hostel are famous for their gargantuan breakfast portions.

and Tea Room has perfected its Victorian ambiance that starts in the gift shop and continues into the “secret garden” and restaurant with a prodigious tea list, scones, and elegant sandwiches and confections.

Randsburg's **General Store**, tucked behind rises off Hwy 395 south of Ridgecrest, deals in hamburgers, sandwiches, and sarsaparilla soda that evokes a bygone era in a nostalgic soda fountain setting.

Once you pass through Death Valley National Park, **China Ranch Date Farm** near Tecopa specializes in date nut bread, muffins, cookies, and luscious date shakes.

As you reach Baker on Interstate 15, watch for “fresh alien jerky” signs. Fine food. Fun food. Food that's out of this world. Where else can you dine on lobster taquitos, sarsaparilla, date shakes, and intergalactic chow all in the same trip!



MON REVE DELIGHTS

With a traditional menu of French favorites, this Ridgecrest restaurant provides a cozy environment and spectacular fare.



ALONG THE WAY

COLLECTIBLES, ANTIQUES AND SOUVENIRS

Ridgecrest's Old Town on Balsam Street off West Ridgecrest Boulevard provides the area's best assortment of antiques/collectibles shops, among them **Baxendale's** (760-375-9633) and the newly expanded **S&M Coins and Collectibles** (for “Steve and Marnie”) (760-384-1709) with vintage toys, jewelry, furniture, coins and more. For arts & crafts and artisan wares, the **Sierra Art Guild** and other groups regularly hold shows around town.

For books and souvenirs related to regional history and nature including Death Valley, Ridgecrest's **Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert** (HSUMD) and the **Maturango Museum** have varied and appealing selections. As an added attraction, the HSUMD stocks See's candy year-round.

In Lone Pine, visit the **Museum of Western Film History** for the Western memorabilia exhibits and a movie about nearly 100 years of cinema in the Alabama Hills; leave with books, mugs, games and all things Western from the gift shop in the lobby.



Bibliophiles can happily head to Ridgecrest's new/used **Red Rock Books** on West Ridgecrest Boulevard (760-375-3454) and **Spellbinder and Range & River Books** in Bishop to the north on Hwy 395.

Bargain-hunters will enjoy Ridgecrest's many thrift shops, as well as the senior center's thrift shop in Trona that sometimes markets books for a dime, a nickel, and even a penny.

Northbound on Hwy 395 – north of Inyokern and south of Pearsonville, “hubcap capital of the world” – the **Indian Wells Brewery and Rocket Fizz Bottling Plant** sells Mojave Red, Lobotomy Bock, and other beers and ales, and bacon soda, buffalo wing soda, and sodas named Root Beer Float and Gross Gus's Dragon Drool Black Licorice Soda. An open window onto the conveyor belt allows the public to watch the production process. □

PACK LIKE A PRO

Whether you're planning an overnight getaway or a weeklong escape, you'll need to pack a suitcase. These tips can help you pack like a pro.

By Teresa Bitler



START WITH A PLAN

Before you pack, check the weather and plan your outfits accordingly. Choose pieces you can easily mix and match. Avoid the temptation to over-pack, but add an extra pair of underwear and socks just in case.

Once you've figured out what you'll need, make a list and cross off each item as you pack it. Bring a second copy to use when packing for your return.



DON'T FORGET

In addition to clothes and toiletries, include extra camera cards, as well as chargers and adapters for laptops, tablets, MP3 players, cameras, and other electronic devices. Keep these in your carry-on with your prescriptions if you are flying.

To your checked luggage, consider adding a small first aid kit containing at the very least adhesive bandages, antiseptic, and aspirin. If you will be outdoors, always pack sunglasses and sunscreen.



HEAVY ITEMS FIRST

Place shoes, hair dryers, and other heavy items on the bottom of your suitcase, filling the gaps with underwear, socks, and belts. Next, pack heavier rolled items such as jeans and sweaters. Leave a space for your toiletry bag in this layer.

Finish with a layer of lighter rolled items, such as t-shirts, topped with folded pieces that are prone to wrinkling.

FIRST PERSON

IMPRESSIONS

By Romanie Sánchez Smele

Silence. Space.
Silence with an echo.
Silence in the vast space
of a landscape made of
warm rich colors...

These words might be the best description of what I felt in Death Valley.

I was visiting some friends in San Francisco when I decided to take a week off, rent a car and go into the desert. It was more of an impulse than a meditated decision. I wanted to paint, write and think in a surrounding I imagined would give me space. It did, and much more.

I got a sense of being insignificantly small in the dimension of this strong stubborn nature. As I was quietly feeling this, I would look to my feet and witness the life of miniature plants proudly taking part in the creation of this environment, overseen at first, but so relevant.

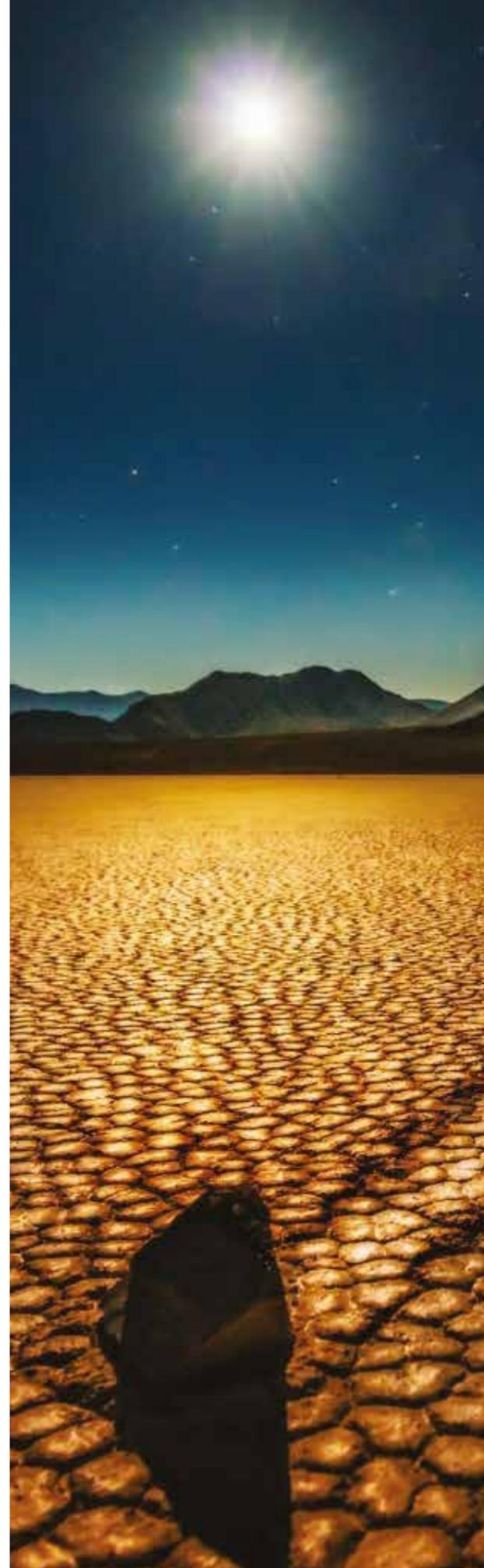
I experienced the importance that however small we are in the large scale of nature and life, we all play a valuable part in the clockwork of it.

Rocks and minerals always fascinated me. As I went in and through the many ways of this mineral desert, the palette of colours changed and shapes shifted reminding me of the playful random figures paint creates on my canvas. I was in my paintings.

The great central salt lake felt mysterious. Sliding rocks making paths on flat rugged salty ground made me puzzled. I looked around me and felt I was definitely in another planet.

On my long drive back to the city I realized how deeply affected I was by this very special place on earth. Its visage is engraved in my retina forever.

Romanie Sánchez Smele is an artist in acrylics and oils, born in UK and raised in Spain on the island of Ibiza where she is currently based. Her art - surreal and based on inner dialogue - has exhibited in Spain, Portugal, Austria, and the United States.





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