America’s National Parks are receiving a face lift thanks primarily to two funding programs, the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Signed into law by President Obama in February 2009, the “Recovery Act”, provides $750 million to the NPS and will fund 800 projects throughout the system of nearly 400 National Park System sites. The Recreation Enhancement Act is funded by 80% of every dollar collected as entrance and camping fees in federal recreation areas such as national parks.

Death Valley, the largest park in the lower 48 states, will see a variety of projects take shape during the next few years. To stimulate the economy, private contractors have been hired to complete most of these projects. To begin, a new parking area has been constructed accessing the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes near Stovepipe Wells and extensive improvements were made at the Texas Spring Campground.

Here are some of the upcoming projects visitors will see:

- **Roads:** Improvements will be made to almost all roads in the park. This construction will be ongoing and some short delays may be expected along these routes until completion.
- **Solar Energy:** The park will be installing photovoltaic equipment in several areas to make use of the sun’s energy to produce electricity.
- **Facilities:** Rehabilitation projects for park campground facilities include the installation of cleaning stations and replacement roofs on restrooms. Scotty’s Castle will see construction of new restrooms as well as rehabilitation of the historic cookhouse. The orientation kiosk at Ryan’s Junction will be replaced and a new parking lot, orientation kiosk and visitor use area is planned for Father Crowley Point.
- **Wayside Exhibits:** A large number of interpretive signs will be replaced and new ones created to provide visitors with interesting and accurate information at visitor use areas throughout the park.
- **Furnace Creek Visitor Center:** Perhaps the most important change for visitors will be a major rehabilitation of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center and auditorium. Museum exhibits will be upgraded and improvements made to the auditorium where visitors will view a new park film and attend evening ranger programs.

We are asking all visitors to please “excuse the mess” as we work to complete these stimulus projects. It is our hope that the improvements will provide everyone with a safer and more enjoyable visit to Death Valley.


**Park Information**

**Help Protect Your National Park**

Please remember and obey the following regulations during your stay:
- Collecting or disturbing any animal, plant, rock or any other natural, historical or archeological feature is prohibited.
- All vehicles must remain on established roads. This includes motorcycles, bicycles, and four-wheel drive vehicles. All motorized vehicles and their drivers must be properly licensed. Vehicles with off-road registration “green stickers” may not be operated in the park.
- Do not feed or disturb wildlife, including coyotes, roadrunners & ravens. When wild animals are fed by humans they tend to depend upon this unhealthy food source rather than forage for their natural diet.
- Hunting and use of firearms in the park is illegal. Firearms may be transported and carried in accordance to state law.
- Keep pets confined or leashed. Pets are allowed only in developed areas and along paved or dirt roads.
- Camping is limited to developed campgrounds and some backcountry areas. For details on backcountry camping and to obtain a free permit, stop at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or any ranger station.
- Campfires are allowed in fire-pits provided in developed campgrounds. They are prohibited elsewhere in the park. Gathering wood is unlawful.
- Please do not litter.

**Staying Safe & Sound**

**Water:** Drink at least one gallon (4 liters) of water per day to replace loss from perspiration. Carry plenty of extra drinking water in your car.
- **Heat & Dehydration:** If you feel dizzy, nauseous or a headache, get out of the sun immediately and drink plenty of water. Dampen clothing to lower your body temperature. Heat and dehydration can kill.
- **Hiking:** Do not hike in the low elevations when temperatures are hot. The mountains are cooler in summer, but can have snow and ice in winter.
- **Summer Driving:** Stay on paved roads in summer. If your car breaks down, stay with it until help comes. Be prepared; carry plenty of extra water.
- **Flash Floods:** Avoid canyons during rain storms and be prepared to move to higher ground. While driving, be alert for water running in washes and across road dips.
- **Dangerous Animals:** Never place your hands or feet where you cannot see first. Rattlesnakes, scorpions or black widow spiders may be sheltered there.
- **Mine Hazards:** Do not enter mine tunnels or shafts. Mines may be unstable, have hidden shafts, pockets of bad air and poisonous gas.
- **In Case of Emergency:** Dial 911 from any telephone or cell phone. Cell phones may not work in many parts of the park, do not depend on them.

**Survive the Drive**

The main cause of death in Death Valley is single-car accidents.
- **Follow the speed limit to help negotiate the narrow roads,** sharp curves and unexpected dips.
- **Avoid speeding out of control on steep downhill grades by shifting to a lower gear and gently pressing on the brakes.**
- **Don’t block traffic.** Pull off the pavement if you want to stop to enjoy the scenery.
- **Wear a seatbelt and make sure it is adjusted to fit snugly.**
- **Unpaved roads are subject to washouts.** Check for conditions before traveling these routes.

**Useful Books & Maps**

The Death Valley Natural History Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing visitors to Death Valley National Park with a quality educational experience. These suggested offerings from our publications were chosen to help you plan your visit and make the most of the time you spend in Death Valley. Prices may change without notice.

- **Death Valley National Park: An Interpretive History** (Cornett) Filled with historic and professional photos, this guide provides a colorful introduction to this magnificent park and its history. Includes visitor tips, over-view map and park facts. 48 pages. $7.95
- **Best Easy Day Hikes: Death Valley** (Cunningham & Burke) Includes concise descriptions and simple maps of 23 short, easy-to-follow routes within the park. 120 pages. $6.95
- **Hiking Death Valley: A Guide to its Natural Wonders and Mining Past** (Digeronnet) A comprehensive guidebook providing 280 hiking/driving destinations ranging from easy day hikes to multiple-day treks. 542 pages. $19.95
- **Death Valley National Park Guide Map** (Automobile Club of Southern California) A detailed map including points of interest, lodging and restaurants, campgrounds and services with descriptions. $4.95
- **Death Valley National Park Map** (Trails Illustrated-National Geographic Maps) Waterproof, tearproof, 100% plastic topographic map. Included backcountry road descriptions, trails/routes, and safety tips. $9.95

**Temperatures**

Average Max  | Average Min
---|---
January 65°F / 18°C | 39°F / 4°C
February 72°F / 22°C | 46°F / 8°C
March 80°F / 27°C | 53°F / 12°C
April 90°F / 32°C | 62°F / 17°C
May 98°F / 37°C | 71°F / 22°C
June 108°F / 43°C | 80°F / 27°C
July 115°F / 46°C | 88°F / 31°C
August 113°F / 45°C | 85°F / 29°C
September 106°F / 41°C | 75°F / 24°C
October 92°F / 33°C | 62°F / 16°C
November 76°F / 24°C | 48°F / 9°C
December 65°F / 19°C | 39°F / 4°C

- **Record High:** 134°F / 57°C, July 1913
- **Record Low:** 19°F / -7°C, January 1913

The official weather station is at Furnace Creek.
Abandoned Mines

Death Valley Faces Consequences of its Mining History

The accounts of the abundance of gold in (California) are of such extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service who have visited the mineral district.”

President James K. Polk’s address to Congress, December 5, 1848

Stories of gold found in the newly-acquired territory of California had been published in the press during preceding months, but President Polk’s official notice to Congress sparked the California Gold Rush, enticing more than 250,000 people to join the search for riches during the next four years. Among those who caught the “Gold Fever” was a 28 year old New Englander named William Lewis Manly, who joined a pioneer wagon train across the desert to reach the new territory in 1849. When part of the group tried to find a shortcut to the goldfields, Manly joined them and ultimately led some of these “Lost 49’ers” into Death Valley in what became the region’s first recorded visit.

These “Lost 49’ers” survived to tell the tale of their desert journey, and some even took the time to pick up mineral samples along the way. These samples proved to include some high-grade silver ore, showing that riches could be found in this unexplored land. Braving the harsh condition described by Manley and others, prospecting expeditions began making their way to Death Valley in the 1850s. These resulted in the discovery of surface deposits of both silver and gold, as well as other minerals. But pursuing these valuable ore veins to their source meant digging underground. “Hard rock mining” operations followed but demanded more men and greater financial commitment. By selling shares to the public based on the assumed profits from these operations, mining companies began to excavate larger mines, build mills, and develop transportation systems to move the ore to market. By the 1870s there were active mines at Panamint City, Darwin, Cerro Gordo and Chloride Cliff.

All mines in the Death Valley region, and across the nation, operated under statues of the General Mining Act of 1872. This law, with its goal of helping citizens profit while developing the resources of the west, provided rights to those making claims on public land for “valuable mineral deposits” they found. The law held no stipulations for cleaning up abandoned sites and the ecological messes when mining operations ceased. These oversights became more apparent as mining technology went beyond the pick and shovel stage. Although some legislative changes have been made, this 1872 mining law is still the primary legal avenue today for mining in the US.

It wasn’t until the early 20th century that newer technologies began changing the mining industry in Death Valley. The arrival of railroad lines, and later automobiles and roads, decreased the cost of moving ore. Electric and gasoline engines made an impact by making it easier to dig deeper to reach year of its founding in 1905. The mining town of Skidoo also experienced frenzied growth as the Skidoo Mine produced more than $1.5 million in gold between 1906 and 1917.

Other minerals had longer lasting consequences than gold in Death Valley. Borates, first scraped from dried lake bed sediments in the 1880s, were later found in great quantities in the badlands to the east in veins of valuable Colemanite. In addition to silver, gold and borates, ventures for the mining of antimony, copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, salt, nitrate and talc were established during the next several decades. Mineral prospecting had temporarily ceased in Death Valley when President Herbert Hoover made it a National Monument in February 1933. Within four months this cessation had been rescinded by Congress and mining activities continued. New technologies, however, were to alter the face of mining activities there in the coming decades.

Bigger machinery and the prospects of global markets reinvigorated efforts at borax mining near Death Valley in 1971. Open pit and strip mine operations and an increase in mining traffic began to create concerns that the National Monument would be adversely affected. Similar situations at other National Park sites eventually led to the passing of the Mining in Parks Act of 1976. This law gave the Secretary of the Interior authority to determine if mining activities would cause “irreparable loss or destruction” to NPS resources and effectively ended active open pit mining and the filing of new claims in Death Valley.

Death Valley’s last active mine closed in 2005, but unintended consequences of the previous 130 years of mineral extraction are still with us.

Today, a reported 126 National Park Service structures and buildings at mining sites. However, mine sites have visited the mineral district.”

At first glance this may seem an uncomplicated task – cover up the mine openings and tear down the dilapidated structures. However, mine sites are historically important and preservation of these significant remnants of Death Valley’s mining past remains an important mission of the Park. In addition, wildlife such as bats and owls use mine shafts for nesting during the winter. Accordingly, the Park will focus on ways to stabilize decaying structures and providing cable nets for mine shafts that will allow wildlife to make use of the sites while preventing people from entering.

More that 700,000 visitors arrive in Death Valley National Park each year. The use of federal stimulus funds to improve the Park’s mining sites will go a long way towards making these visits safe and enjoyable for everyone.

We encourage visitors to make use of the sites while preventing people from entering.

Warning and closure signs should be heeded at mining sites and all should resist the temptation to enter mine openings or dilapidated buildings at mining sites.

Be aware of potential dangers during their visits here. Mining sites are historically important and preservation of these significant remnants of Death Valley’s mining past remains an important mission of the Park. At first glance this may seem an uncomplicated task – cover up the mine openings and tear down the dilapidated structures. However, mine sites are historically important and preservation of these significant remnants of Death Valley’s mining past remains an important mission of the Park. In addition, wildlife such as bats and owls use mine shafts for nesting during the winter. Accordingly, the Park will focus on ways to stabilize decaying structures and providing cable nets for mine shafts that will allow wildlife to make use of the sites while preventing people from entering.

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What to See

Furnace Creek Area

- **Golden Canyon**: Hikers entering the narrows of this canyon are greeted by golden badlands within. An interpretive pamphlet is available. Two-mile round-trip walk.
- **Artist’s Drive**: Scenic loop drive through multi-hued volcanic and sedimentary hills. Artist’s Palette is especially photogenic in late afternoon light. The 5-mile paved road is one-way and is only drivable with vehicles less than 25 feet in length.
- **Devil’s Golf Course**: Immense area of rock salt eroded by wind and rain into jagged spires. So incredibly serrated that “only the devil could play golf on such rough links.” The unpaved road leading to it is often closed after rain.
- **Natural Bridge**: Massive rock span across interesting desert canyon. The spur road is gravel and often rough. From the trailhead, the natural bridge is a ½ mile walk.
- **Badwater**: Lowest point in North America. Badwater Basin is a surreal landscape of vast salt flats. A temporary lake may form here after heavy rainstorms. Do not walk on the salt flats in hot weather.
- **Zabriskie Point**: Surrounded by a maze of wildly eroded and vibrantly colored badlands, this spectacular view is one of the park’s most famous. Zabriskie Point is a popular sunrise and sunset viewing location. The viewpoint is a short walk uphill from the parking area.
- **Twenty Mule Team Canyon**: Winding through otherworldly badlands, this 2.7 mile, one-way loop drive is unpaved, but accessible to all standard vehicles other than buses, RVs, and trailers.
- **Dante’s View**: The most breathtaking viewpoint in the park, this mountain-top overlook is more than 5000 feet above the inferno of Death Valley. The paved access road is open to all vehicles less than 25 feet in length.

Stovepipe Wells Area

- **Sand Dunes**: Tawny dunes smoothly rising nearly 100 feet from Mesquite Flat. Late afternoon light accentuates the ripples and patterns while morning is a good time to view tracks of nocturnal wildlife. Moonlight on the dunes can be magical, yet night explorers should be alert for sidewinder rattlesnakes during the warm season.
- **Mosaic Canyon**: Polished marble walls and odd mosaic patterns of breccia make this small canyon a favorite. The twisting lower canyon is so narrow hikers must walk through it single-file. Some rock scrambling is required. The canyon opens up after ½ mile to reveal the heights of Tucki Mountain, but hikers can continue another ½ miles.
- **Salt Creek**: This stream of salty water is the only home to a rare pupfish, **Cyprinodon salinus**. Springtime is best for viewing pupfish; in summer the lower stream dries up and in winter the fish are dormant. The wooden boardwalk loops ½ mile through stands of pickleweed and past pools reflecting badland hills. Wheelchair accessible.
- **Titus Canyon**: One of the largest and most scenically diverse canyons in the park. Within its lofty walls visitors can find multi-colored volcanic deposits, a ghost town, Indian petroglyphs, bighorn sheep, and deep, winding narrows. Titus Canyon is accessible to high-clearance vehicles via a 26-mile one-way dirt road beginning outside the park. Standard vehicles may reach the canyon’s mouth from the west via a two-way section of road.

Panamint Springs Area

- **Father Crowley Vista**: A landscape of dark lava flows and volcanic cinders abruptly gives way to the gash of Rainbow Canyon below this viewpoint. Walk the dirt track east of the parking lot for a grand overlook of northern Panamint Valley.
- **Wildrose Charcoal Kilns**: These ten beehive-shaped structures are among the best preserved in the west. Built in 1876 to provide fuel to process silver/lead ore, they still smell of smoke today. The last 2 miles of gravel road to the kilns are passable to most vehicles.
- **Lee Flat Joshua Trees**: The finest stands of tree-sized yuccas in the park grow in this mountain-rimmed valley. Take the paved but rough Saline Valley Road to a junction in Lee Flat. The gravel roads in either direction will provide good views of Joshua trees.
- **Aguereberry Point**: 1000 feet higher than Dante’s View, this viewpoint gives a perspective over Death Valley from the west. Along the gravel road is the remains of Pete Aguereberry’s camp and his Eureka Mine. The last climb to the peak may require a high-clearance vehicle.
Walks and Hikes

Things to Know Before You Go

Before starting a hike, learn the current conditions, water availability, and weather forecasts. Backcountry should obtain a free permit. Always carry water. Two liters for a short winter dayhike; 4 liters or more in the summer or for long hikes.

Trails & Routes

Golden Canyon
Length: 1 mile, one-way.
Difficulty: easy
Start: Golden Canyon parking area, 2 miles south of Hwy 190 on Badwater Road.
Description: Easy trail through colorful canyon. Red Cathedral located ¼ mile up canyon from last numbered marker. Interpretive trail guides are available.

Gower Gulch Loop
Length: 4 miles round-trip.
Difficulty: moderate
Start: Golden Canyon parking area, 2 miles south of Hwy 190 on Badwater Road.
Description: Colorful badlands, canyon narrows, old borax mines. Hike up Golden Canyon to marker #10, then follow trail over badlands and down Gower Gulch to finish loop. Two easy dryfalls must be scrambled down. Ask for Gower Gulch handout at Visitor Center.

Desolation Canyon
Length: 1½ miles, one-way.
Difficulty: moderate
Start: Parking area at end of ½ mile dirt road off Badwater Rd, 3.7 miles south of Hwy 190.
Description: Narrow canyon through colorful badlands. Follow old road and then wash east continuing toward cliffs, then follow wash draining from the south. Hike up canyon, keeping to the right at the forks. No trail in canyon.

Badwater Salt Flats
Length: as long or short as you like (the salt flats are 5 miles across)
Difficulty: easy to moderate; sections may be muddy or rough.
Start: Badwater parking area
Description: Follow the path out from Badwater Pool into the purity of white salt and the nation’s lowest elevation at 282 feet below sea level. Avoid hiking here in the hot months due to the lack of shade and extreme temperatures.

Natural Bridge Canyon
Length: ½ mile to natural bridge, 1 mile to end of canyon.
Difficulty: easy
Start: Natural Bridge parking area, 1.5 miles off Badwater Rd on gravel road, 13 miles south of Hwy 190.
Description: Uphill walk through the narrow canyon. Large natural bridge at ½ mile. Trail ends at dry waterfall.

Constructed trails are rare in this park. Trails are provided in places that are heavily used and sensitive to damage. If a trail is there, please use it. Most hiking routes in the park are cross-country, up canyons, or along ridges. Footing can be rough & rocky.

Hiking in low elevations can be dangerous when it is hot. The high peaks can be covered with snow in winter and spring. The best time to hike in the park is October to April. Dogs and bicycles are not allowed on trails or in the wilderness.

Salt Creek
Length: ½ mile round-trip.
Difficulty: easy
Start: Salt Creek parking area, 1 mile off Hwy 190 on graded gravel road, 13.5 miles north of Furnace Creek.
Description: Boardwalk along small stream. Good for viewing rare pupfish and other wildlife. Best in late winter/early spring.

Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes
Length: 2 miles to highest dune.
Difficulty: easy to moderate
Start: 2.2 miles east of Stovepipe Wells on Hwy 190.
Description: Graceful desert dunes, numerous animal tracks. Walk cross-country to 100 ft. high dunes. Best in morning or afternoon for dramatic light. Also good for moon-lit hikes. No trail.

Mosaic Canyon
Length: ½ to 2 miles, one-way.
Difficulty: moderate
Start: Mosaic Canyon parking area, 2 miles from Stovepipe Wells Village on graded gravel road.
Description: Popular walk up a narrow, polished marble-walled canyon. First ½ mile is narrowest section. Some slickrock scrambling necessary. “Mosaics” of fragments of rocks cemented together can be seen in canyon walls. Bighorn sheep sighted occasionally.

Darwin Falls
Length: 1 mile, one-way.
Difficulty: moderate
Start: Darwin Falls parking area, 2.4 miles up gravel road toward Darwin Springs, turn one mile west of Panamint Springs Resort on Hwy 190.
Description: Year-round waterfalls and lush vegetation tucked into a rugged canyon. Can be overgrown and has some rough spots. There is a trail to first waterfall but dangerous cliffs beyond.

Titus Canyon Narrows
Length: 1.5 miles, one-way.
Difficulty: easy
Start: Titus Canyon Mouth parking area, 3 miles off Scotty’s Castle Road on graded gravel road.
Description: Easy access to lower Titus Canyon. Follow gravel road up wash 1½ miles through narrows or continue to Klare Springs and petroglyphs at 6.5 miles.

Fall Canyon
Length: 3 miles, one-way.
Difficulty: moderately strenuous
Start: Titus Canyon Mouth parking area, 3 miles off Scotty’s Castle Road on graded gravel road.
Description: Spectacular wilderness canyon near Titus Canyon. Follow informal path ½ mile north along base of mountains, drop into large wash at canyon’s mouth, then hike 2½ miles up canyon to 20’ dryfall. You can climb around the dryfall 300’ back down canyon on south side for access to best narrows. Canyon continues another 3 miles before second dryfall blocks passage. No trail in canyon.

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Death Valley Visitor Guide 7

Summer Hikes

Dante’s Ridge
Length: ½ miles to first summit, 4 miles one-way to Mt. Perry
Difficulty: moderate
Start: Dante’s View parking area
Description: Follow ridge north of Dante’s View for spectacular vistas and a cool place to escape summer heat. No trail for last 3.5 miles

Wildrose Peak
Length: 4.2 miles, one-way.
Difficulty: moderately strenuous
Start: Charcoal Kilns parking area on upper Wildrose Canyon Road.
Description: A good high peak to climb (9,064 ft.). Trail begins at north end of kilns with an elevation gain of 2,200 ft. Spectacular views beyond 2 mile point. Steep grade for last mile.

Telescope Peak
Length: 7 miles, one-way.
Difficulty: strenuous
Start: Mahogany Flat Campground at end of upper Wildrose Canyon Road. Rough, steep road after the Charcoal Kilns.
Description: Trail to highest peak in the park (11,049 ft.) with a 3,000 ft. elevation gain. Climbing this peak in the winter requires ice axe and crampons, and only advised for experienced winter climbers. Trail is usually snow-free by June.

Bristlecone pine on Telescope Peak.
Furnace Creek Inn & Ranch Resorts
(760) 786-2345
www.furnacecreekresort.com
Furnace Creek Inn & Ranch is privately owned and managed by Xanterra Parks & Resorts.
• Historic Hotel
• Motel
• Restaurants
• Bars
• General Store
• Gift Shops
• ATM
• Gas Station
• Diesel
• Propane
• Tire Repair
• Post Office
• Showers
• Laundromat
• Swimming Pool
• Horse Rides
• Carriage Rides
• Borax Museum
• Golf Course
• Tennis Courts
• Paved Airstrip
• Jeep rentals and tours
• Motel
• Restaurant
• Bar
• ATM
• Gift Shop
• Convenience Store
• Gas Station
• Showers
• Swimming Pool
• Paved Airstrip
• RV Hook-ups
• Campground
• Ranger Station

Scotty’s Castle
(760) 786-2392
www.nps.gov/deva/historyculture/scottys-castle.htm
Scotty’s Castle is operated by the National Park Service.
The Death Valley Natural History Association operates the bookstore.
• Daily Tours (fee charged)
• Trails
• Museum
• Bookstore
• Gift Shop

Panamint Springs Resort
(775) 482-7680
www.deathvalley.com/psr/
Panamint Springs Resort is privately owned and operated.
• Motel
• Restaurant
• Bar
• Gas Station
• Campground
• RV Hook-ups
• Showers

Stovepipe Wells Village
(760) 786-2387
www.stovepipewells.com
Stovepipe Wells Village is a park concession, operated and managed by Xanterra Parks & Resorts.
• Motel
• Restaurant
• Bar
• ATM
• Gift Shop
• Convenience Store
• Gas Station
• Showers
• Swimming Pool
• Paved Airstrip
• RV Hook-ups
• Campground
• Ranger Station

Campground Rules & Information
• Camping reservations are available only for Furnace Creek Campground and group campsites through National Recreation Reservation Service. Reservations can be made for the camping season of October 15 through April 15. Furnace Creek Campground reservations can be made six months in advance. Group campsites reservations can be made 11 months in advance.

Panamint Springs Campground Rules
• Generator hours are from 7 am to 7 pm, unless otherwise posted. Generators are not allowed at Texas Springs Campground.
• Sunset Campground: To assist us in the event of an emergency, please call in at your RV unit or use a pull-through site.
• RV Hookups are available only at the concession-run Stovepipe Wells RV Park and the privately-owned Furnace Creek Ranch Resort and Panamint Springs Resort.
• Texas Springs Campground (Upp er Loop) Limits on RV site use may apply in springtime to accommodate increased demand for tent camping space.

Campgrounds

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<th>Elevation</th>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahogany Flat*</td>
<td>Mar-Nov</td>
<td>8200’</td>
<td>free</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pit</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Accessible to high-clearance vehicles only. 4-wheel drive may be necessary.
**Furnace Creek Campground fee changes to $12 per night from mid-April to mid-October