



Death Valley

Sand Dunes, Canyons and Wildflowers

March 6–11, 2016



Itinerary

Sunday, March 6

Arrive in Las Vegas

Arrive in Las Vegas independently, and gather at 6:00 p.m. at the DoubleTree hotel for a welcome drink, introductions, and a trip orientation on the park by your study leader. Dinner will follow at the hotel.

DoubleTree Hotel (D)

Monday, March 7

Shoreline Butte, Badwater & Harmony Borax Works

Transfer to Death Valley National Park. En route stop at Ashford Mill for the chance to see wildflowers in bloom and to witness evidence of the shoreline of the historic Lake Manly. At its zenith 22,000 years ago, the lake was over 80 miles long and over 600 feet deep, but given the changing climate, it disappeared thousands of years ago. Stretch your legs at Badwater, at 282 feet below sea level this salt flat is the lowest place in the Western Hemisphere and the eighth lowest place on Earth! The dramatic depth is enhanced by the backdrop of the Panamint Range rising over 11,000 ft. After lunch at Furnace Creek, stop by the visitor center before touring Harmony Borax Works and learning about the mining history of “the white gold of Death Valley.” Enjoy a welcome dinner at the Furnace Creek Inn.

Furnace Creek Resort (B,L,D)

Tuesday, March 8

Dante’s View, Salt Creek & Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes

Experience Dante’s View located at 5,475 ft, and take in a stunning panorama of all 11,049 feet of Telescope Peak. Learn about the creation of the park’s many alluvial fans, the product of millions of years of sporadic, yet constant, erosion. Later visit Salt Creek and learn about the amazing pupfish, endemic to Death Valley and uniquely adapted to survive in the desert’s harsh environment. End the day’s activities with the chance to walk among the picturesque sand dunes. After dinner enjoy the chance of some stargazing and see firsthand why Death Valley is an officially recognized “Gold Tier” Dark Sky Park. *(B,L,D)*

Wednesday, March 9

Titus Canyon, Scotty’s Castle & Ubehebe Crater

Explore the Titus Canyon narrows and hike among the stratifications of rock marking millions of years of geological history. The opening of the canyon affords the best chance to see a chuckwalla in its natural habitat. These sizable lizards have evolved to inflate their bodies to wedge themselves in the cracks in the rock they live in so as to deter predators. Enjoy a history tour at “Scotty’s Castle” - a beautiful, Spanish-colonial style mansion constructed in the 1920s. Marvel at Ubehebe Crater, site of a massive volcanic explosion leaving a pit in the earth over 500 feet deep and a half a mile across. *(B,L,D)*

Thursday, March 10

Sunrise at Zabriskie Point, Golden Canyon & Sunset at Artist’s Palette

Wake just before dawn and transfer to Zabriskie Point to watch as the sunlight slowly illuminates the surrounding mountains. Return to Furnace Creek for breakfast. Hike through the multi-hued walls of Golden Canyon toward the Red Cathedral with the option to continue for a longer hike back through Gower Gulch. After lunch, relax at the hotel with the option to watch the film Amargosa. A finalist for a 1999 Academy Award Nomination for Best Documentary, the film provides the backstory in preparation for the visit to the Amargosa Opera House on Friday. This evening enjoy a sunset visit to the pastel-colored volcanic ash deposits of Artist’s Palette before our farewell dinner. *(B,L,D)*

Friday, March 11

Amargosa Opera House, Ash Meadows & Devil’s Hole

After breakfast in the park, visit the Amargosa Opera House, the passionate creation of a dancer and artist, Marta Becket. Transfer to the visitor center at Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge to learn of the plight of the pupfish and get a glimpse of Devil’s Hole. After lunch, return to Las Vegas for flights home. Please book your return flights for 6:00 pm or later. *(B,L)*



What to Expect

Average temperatures during this time range from 53-80°. Our transportation around the park is by vans. Travelers should be in active good health to participate in this trip. While walks are not too strenuous, they are over uneven terrain and may require the use of hands and feet to climb over obstructions. Our longest hike is about 2 miles, with approximately 500 feet in elevation gain. Most all walks are “out and back” so participants can go as far as they like, and then wait for the group to return. For those that would like more active hiking, we can help arrange that during your free time.



The Furnace Creek Ranch

The Furnace Creek Resort is situated in a lush oasis surrounded by the vast and arid desert of Death Valley National Park, California. The resort has two properties – the Ranch and the Inn. We have reserved deluxe rooms at the Ranch, which has been welcoming guests since 1933. The property has a gift shop, saloon, a spring-fed swimming pool, tennis courts, a children’s playground and the National Park Service Visitor’s Center is just a stone’s throw away. One mile away is the 4-diamond Furnace Creek Inn. Upgrades to the Inn are available.



Study Leader, Frank Ackerman

Study Leader, Frank Ackerman is a retired National Park Service Ranger who worked in Death Valley for four years. His 30-year career included posts at the Grand Canyon and Voyageurs National Parks, and he served as the Chief of Interpretation for Cape Cod National Seashore. Frank helped create an award-winning interpretative program as part of a joint venture between Amtrak and the National Park Service to provide educational commentary on select passenger trains in the Northeast. Frank is excited to teach you about the spectacular desert flora and fauna, and the geology and human history of Death Valley.



Trip Details

Dates:

March 6–11, 2016

Group Size:

Minimum 8, maximum 18
(not including staff)

Cost:

\$2,995 per person, double occupancy
\$3,495 per person, single occupancy

We are staying in deluxe rooms at the Furnace Creek Ranch. If you would like to upgrade to the Furnace Creek Inn, the supplemental charges are:

\$600 per person, double occupancy
\$975 single occupancy, added to single rate above

Included:


1 night at the DoubleTree, Las Vegas; 4 nights at the Furnace Creek Ranch; daily breakfast (5) at the hotel, 5 lunches and 5 dinners; welcome and farewell dinners with beer and wine; round-trip transfers from Las Vegas Airport to Death Valley National Park; tours, entrances, and events as specified in the itinerary; mini-bus transportation for all excursions; gratuities for hotel staff and restaurant staff; joining us all week will be expert guide Frank Ackerman; services of a professional Tour Manager; club host to assist you throughout the program (with a minimum of 15 travelers); the camaraderie of the Club’s travelers.

Not included:

Air transportation to and from Las Vegas, Nevada; meals and beverages other than those specified as included; gratuities to tour manager and drivers; optional excursions and other activities done independently; trip-cancellation/interruption and baggage insurance; personal items such as e-mail, telephone and fax calls, souvenirs, laundry and gratuities for non-group services.

Death Valley

RESERVATION FORM March 6-11, 2016

 **Commonwealth
Club Travel**
Phone: 415.597.6720
Fax: 415.597.6729

NAME 1

NAME 2

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

HOME PHONE

CELL

E-MAIL ADDRESS

SINGLE TRAVELERS ONLY:

If this is a reservation for one person, please indicate: I plan to share accommodations with _____
OR I wish to have single accommodations. OR I'd like to know about possible roommates. I am a smoker / nonsmoker. (circle one)

PAYMENT:

Here is my deposit of \$ _____ (\$500 per person) for _____ place(s). _____ Please upgrade me/us to the Furnace Creek Inn.

Enclosed is my check (make payable to *Black Sheep Adventures, Inc.*) OR

Charge my deposit to my Visa MasterCard AMEX Discover

CARD#

EXPIRES

SECURITY CODE

AUTHORIZED CARDHOLDER SIGNATURE

DATE

I/We have read the Terms and Conditions for this program and agree to them.

SIGNATURE

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM ALONG WITH YOUR DEPOSIT TO:

Commonwealth Club Travel

555 Post Street

San Francisco, CA 94102

You may also fax the form to 415.597.6729

Terms and Conditions:

DEPOSIT & PAYMENTS:

To make a reservation, a deposit of \$500 per person is required by check or credit card. Please mail your check (payable to "Black Sheep Adventures, Inc") or charge instructions, with your completed reservation form to the address on the reservation form. You may also fax in your reservation form or call our office or call (415) 597-6720. Final payment is due no later than December 28, 2015. If you want to pay your final payment by check there is a \$50 "payment by check" discount.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS:

Your deposit and payments are refundable, less the following cancel fees:

- 91+ days prior to trip start date, \$200 per person
- 61-90 days prior to trip start, \$500 deposit
- 0-60 days prior to trip start, No refund

We recommend trip-cancellation insurance; applications will be sent to you.

Tour can also be cancelled due to low enrollment. Neither CWC nor Black Sheep Adventures accepts liability for cancellation penalties related to domestic or international airline tickets purchased in conjunction with the tour.

MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Participation in this program requires that you be in good health. It is essential that persons with any medical problems and related dietary restrictions make them known to us well before departure.

RESPONSIBILITY:

The Commonwealth Club of California and our ground operators and suppliers act only as agents for the travelers with respect to transportation and arrangements, and exercise every care possible in doing so. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity in connection with the service of any automobile, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out this program or for the acts or defaults of any company or person engaged in

conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the program. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, *force majeure* or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as tour rates provide arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to make such alterations to this published itinerary as may be deemed necessary. The right is reserved to cancel any program prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded without further obligation on our part. No refund will be made for an unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The Commonwealth Club of California accepts no liability for any carrier's cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a nonrefundable ticket in connection with the tour.