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Life and Death

The name may sound ominous, but time in Death Valley will breathe life into you and your marriage.

BY SUSAN B. BARNES

a honeymoon in Death Valley, California, involves being outdoors in wide-open spaces, away from crowds, and essentially forging your own paths—what better metaphor for the two of you facing a future of endless possibilities?

About two hours west of Las Vegas, Death Valley was first designated as a national monument in 1933, encompassing nearly two million acres. Sixty-one years later, another million-plus acres were added to the protected area, and Death Valley was named a national park in 1994, making it the largest national park in the contiguous United States.

For the nearly one million yearly visitors to Death Valley, there are more than three million acres to explore, just as gold prospectors and pioneers did in the mid-1800s. After a few days of making your way along some of the 785 miles of paved roads—some days seeing no more than a handful of other cars—traversing hiking trails, climbing peaks, and descending to the lowest place in North America, you'll be awed thinking of those who were there more than 150 years earlier.

There are plenty of natural wonders to see, including Artist's Palette, a range of hillsides

seemingly awash in pastel paints; the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes, which rise nearly 100 feet; and, perhaps most incredible, Darwin Falls, a year-round spring-fed waterfall. Titus Canyon is a challenging scenic drive best done by Jeep, but the views are well worth it, from peaks offering stunning views to valleys and narrows similar to those found in Utah's Zion National Park, without the flowing water. Although it's man-made, Scotty's Castle is a wonder of a different ilk. The 1920s-era, Spanish-style mansion was a vacation home built by a wealthy Chicago businessman and is maintained to its original

splendor complete with furnishings—and stories—from its heyday.

Overnight options in Death Valley include the elegant, four-diamond Furnace Creek Resort, which encompasses two hotels, an RV park, and a campground. The historic, 66-room Inn at Furnace Creek is a true oasis from



LIVING IT UP IN DEATH VALLEY

The area offers breathtaking views, varied terrain, and luxury accommodations.

the rugged desert beauty that surrounds it. A spring-fed pool is perfect for cooling off after days of exploration, and the dining room will fuel you for the days ahead. The rooms are spacious and extremely comfortable.

When the sun sets over the desert and the temperatures cool down—if only a bit—millions of stars begin to twinkle overhead. With little to no light pollution, Death Valley is the world's largest international dark sky park. There's no need for high-power telescopes to see the galaxy's brilliance, either; simply throw down a blanket, lay back, and watch the show above. 🌌



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