

California: Death Valley National Park

Bike Vacation Only

Cultural Highlights

- Admire views of Death Valley and the 11,049-foot Telescope Peak
- Hike the dramatic terrain of the Golden Canyon
- Be surrounded in quiet comfort in your private casita at the AAA 4-diamond rated Inn at Death Valley inside the National Park
- Swim in the resort's natural, spring-fed 84ft pool
- Tee-off at the lowest grass golf course in the world
- Ride to and through the other worldly Artist's Palette and Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes

What to Expect

We will be riding at elevations between 282 feet below sea level and 100 feet above sea level. Our rides are entirely on paved roads within the national park and we share the road with car traffic. Terrain is rolling. This vacation is ideal for more experienced cyclists. Please verify your bike selection for this tour as it is not always possible to change bikes once you arrive on tour. Travel with your friends and family—we can accommodate multiple guests on this self-guided vacation. Our 24/7 support system is available if needed.

Tour Duration: 4 Days

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Feb 74°/46°, Mar 82°/55°, Apr 90°/62°, Oct 93°/62°, Nov 77°/48°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Feb 0.4, Mar 0.3, Apr 0.1, Oct 0.1, Nov 0.1

DAY 1: Arrive in Death Valley / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Mesquite

Flat Sand Dunes

Make your own arrangements for travel to Death Valley. For suggestions on traveling to Death Valley, please refer to your VBT Handbook. As you begin biking Death Valley National Park, you'll meet your Local host and any other VBT guests arriving on the same day in the lobby of the Inn at Death Valley. At 2:00 p.m., join your VBT Local host for a Welcome Orientation. There will be time to enjoy the excellent presentations available at the Visitor Center during your four days in Furnace Creek. Then, your Death Valley cycling begins as you head out to explore this astounding landscape! If for any reason, you are delayed in meeting your Local host at the scheduled meeting time, please contact the first hotel on your itinerary as soon as possible with your expected arrival time.

One of the most popular sites in the park, the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes are at the northern end of the valley floor near the village of Stovepipe Wells. Because of the dune's easy access from the road and the overall proximity of Death Valley to Hollywood, these dunes have been used to film sand dune scenes for several movies including films in the Star Wars series. The largest dune is called Star Dune, whose depth at its crest is 130–140 feet. Other dunes in the area are up to 700 feet deep. There will be time to take in these towering wonders before riding to the inn.

The ride passes by the Harmony Borax Works. Here, you can walk the interpretive trail and learn how Borax deposits were discovered here in 1881. The Harmony operation, run by business associates Coleman & Smith, was best known in the 1880s—and now—for its 20-mule teams that hauled double wagons of borax along an overland route to the closest railroad in Mojave, California. The Harmony Works remained under Coleman's operation for just five years, until 1888, when his business collapsed.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Visitor Center to Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes — 23 miles | Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes to the Inn at Death Valley — 24 miles

What to Expect:

Ride north from the Furnace Creek Visitor Center through the heart of the park and to the site of the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes. Take time to leave the bike behind and walk into the impressive hills of shifting sand. You may choose to ride in both directions to the dunes, or shuttle one-way and ride the other. Our rides pass the former site of the Harmony Borax Works, also worth a visit. Today's ride is on CA-190, a well maintained state road, alongside vehicle traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 – 47 miles

DAY 2: Badwater Basin

After breakfast, perhaps taken on the inn's patios, we ride south, descending through the valley on relatively level and very scenic roads. Our destination is Badwater Basin.

Welcome to a high point of your Death Valley cycling—the lowest point in North America! Take some time to stroll the boardwalk over the salt flats here. From this lowest point in North America, it is possible on very clear days to view the highest point in the lower 48, Mount Whitney, standing just 85 miles away.

Badwater Basin gets its name from the salt-rich waters left behind when an ancient lake evaporated here. These salt flats, many of them etched into hexagonal grids, are still fed by an underground spring, but the water never stays for long with the valley's rapid evaporation rate. Despite that the water in the pool is undrinkable (hence the basin's name), it does harbor some animal and plant life. Pickle weed, aquatic insects, and the Badwater snail all thrive here.

The route retraces its way back to the inn.

Then there's free time to enjoy the oasis.

Options for dinner on your own include the inn's dining room or Pool Café, and the Last Kind Words Saloon, 1849 Restaurant, 19th Hole Bar & Grill or Ice cream Parlor, all located at the nearby Ranch at Death Valley.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning The Inn at Death Valley to Badwater Basin — 17 miles | Badwater Basin to the Inn at Death Valley — 17 miles

What to Expect:

Riding in the cool of the morning today, it's a gradual downhill ride on Badwater Road to Badwater Basin. Explore the salt flats at the lowest point in North America, some 282 feet below sea level. Return to the inn by bike or shuttle.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 – 34 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Golden Canyon / Zabriskie Point

Catch stunning views of Death Valley National Park and the surrounding mountains during a guided hike in Golden Canyon. We shuttle just five minutes from the inn to our trailhead this morning. Here we hike up from Golden Canyon to the top of Zabriskie Point (or vice versa depending on conditions). The hike offers spectacular views over the valley and surrounding mountains as well as an up close encounter with some of the park's unique geography. The 2.5-mile trail winds through twisting narrows and colorful rock formations, delivering us to a spectacular view of Manly Beacon and Red Cathedral.

Back at the inn, you may decide to get a massage, tour the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or visit the Borax Museum to learn about the tools and machinery that were used and left behind when the short-lived practice of mining borax ended.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Hike Zabriskie Point / Golden Canyon — 2.4 miles / 2 hours

What to Expect:

Though not far from the inn, once inside Golden Canyon, you will feel far away from civilization. We are hiking on packed sand and gravel trails. The popular hike pass through both narrow canyon and exposed ridge.

Cumulative Distance Range: 2.5 mile hike

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Artist's Drive / Departure from Death Valley / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

Up for a challenge on your last day in Death Valley National Park? You can take an invigorating spin along the steep, dipping, curving and narrow roadway known as Artist's Drive. This one-way circuit is a 9-mile jug-handle that is accessed off the Badwater Road. The highlight of this thrilling loop is a lookout point called Artist's Palette, where mineral deposits appear as brilliantly colored paint splotches against a drab "canvas." You return to the inn from the end of Artist's Drive by bike.

Alternately, you may decide to spend your final morning enjoying the quiet private terrace of your casita, going for a swim in the inn's spring-fed pool, or playing a round of golf at the par 70 18-hole course with

its palm-lined fairways and views of the surrounding mountains.

Your Death Valley bike tour ends with breakfast at the Inn at Death Valley. Check-out is at 11:00 a.m. Depart at your leisure. For suggestions on traveling from the inn, please refer to your VBT Handbook.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning The Inn at Death Valley to and through Artist's Drive — 18 miles | From end of Artist's Drive back to the Inn at Death Valley — 5 miles

What to Expect:

We rejoin Badwater Road this morning, for a gentle downhill start to our ride. The scenery and the riding gets kicked-up a notch when we join the one-way loop road known as Artist's Drive. The drive undulates up and down through some short, narrow canyons, offering colorful views of the mineral deposits in the surrounding hills. There are plenty of pull-offs from which to enjoy the view. And don't miss Artist's Palette Viewpoint.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 — 23 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

The Inn at Death Valley (Days: 1,2,3)

An elegant hideaway for more than 95 years, the mission-style Inn at Death Valley is truly a lush oasis. Relax in the spring-fed pool, stroll through palm gardens to the melody of the natural springs, watch a glorious sunset from one of the quaint stone patios or enjoy a cool drink from the Stargazers Deck. The inn is proud to be a member of the Historic Hotels of America and a 20+ year recipient of the AAA 4-diamond award. VBT guests are accommodated in recently completed private casitas. Located in the Oasis Garden, the casitas feature separate living spaces and private patios.