



Death Valley
Cottonwood-Marble Canyons
Loop

Death Valley Cottonwood-Marble Canyons Loop

Death Valley is one of the three National Parks near Bishop, but also one of the lesser known and lesser visited ones. But it is our backyard and after decades of adventuring here ourselves, we have recently obtained permits and expanded our offerings to include showing you this remarkable place.

Death Valley has a reputation. What comes to mind are pioneers struggling across the valley abandoning supplies and barely escaping alive. The hottest temperatures recorded on earth. Blinding white salt flats and waterless, parched "desolation".

This might be true. But there is another side to the Valley. Superb desert hiking into shaded canyons where roses grow and unique species such as pupfish live. Deeply eroded canyons with polished limestone grottos and dry waterfalls. Telescope Peak rising in one massive sweep from below sea level to over eleven thousand above, holding snow all winter long. Petroglyphs scratched into canyon walls by a people who long ago figured out how to survive here.

We can help get you there and show you Death Valley. Expand your backpacking horizons and your "off season" hiking opportunities as experienced guides show you around.

The Cottonwood-Marble Canyon Loop

This a three day loop trip that takes us up Cottonwood Creek past small desert springs and over a pass and back down well named Marble Canyon with a sandy wash between soaring grey marble walls and hidden traces of past civilizations.

Itinerary:

Day 1. 8.5 miles +2300', -360'

We meet at Stovepipe Wells on the west side of Death Valley, do an equipment check and then shuttle to the start of the hike in Cottonwood canyon. The road approach is rough and sandy and we will need to make sure we have the right vehicle to get there. How far we get up the road depends upon the vehicles and road condition. But we hope to make it all the way to the junction of Cottonwood and Marble Canyons.

From here we make our way up an old road bed and dry alluvial wash to the spring at the end of the old road and set up camp for the night there under Cottonwood trees and willows.

Day 2. 9.5 miles, +2020', -1679'

We can relax in the morning some since this is not a huge day and enjoy waking up to the sights and sounds of the desert.

We follow up Cottonwood Creek, past Cottonwood springs and over a gentle pass, the high point of the trip at 4780 feet and drop down to Deadhorse Canyon and camp at a small spring there.

Day 3. 8.5 miles, +250', -2980'

We set off early in the cool morning and our route is mainly downhill with a few diversions from the main wash and a short 8 foot dryfall to negotiate. The canyon narrows between soaring gray limestone walls as we walk wondering what is around the next bend. It finally opens out into the lower Marble Canyon wash and the 1.8 miles to the vehicles. We plan to get to the vehicles early afternoon giving you time to head home, with the quietness of the desert echoing in your ears.

Meeting place and time:

We will meet at the Stovepipe Wells Store on the west side of Death Valley on Highway 190 at 9.00am. Plan to be breakfasted up and ready to go. Your guide will do a gear check, distribute group equipment then everyone will carpool to the trailhead.

What We Provide:

Price includes guiding, permits, all necessary group gear, tents, kitchen gear and breakfasts, lunches and dinners (you

200 South Main Street, P.O. Box 95, Bishop, CA 93515

office@sierramountaincenter.com

760.873.8526

www.sierramountaincenter.com

bring hot/cold drinks and snack items).

Dates and Prices:

Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Motel/hotel accomodation is not included

Notes and other information:

This is true desert hiking. Come mentally prepared but dont worry about snakes, scorpions, spiders and all those oth-
er denizens of the dry lands. The chances are you will never encounte rthem and if you do they are probably more
ocncerned with having as little to do with you as possible.

Equipment List for Death Valley Cottonwood Loop

The following list is a general guide and will assist you in packing for the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment or if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. When backpacking paying attention to the details and creating a personal system will lead to success. Consider the month, weather patterns, and snow conditions. **Think lightweight.**

Essentials

- ❑ Footwear. Please bring sturdy hiking boots that you have broken in, or trail shoes that you have worn heavy packs with. The main difference between trail runners and boots is foot support vs. blisters. If your feet blister notoriously please consider wearing a trail runner. If you have weak ankles or need additional foot support please wear boots. Your feet are your transportation and can make the difference between surviving and thriving on any hiking trip.
- ❑ Camp Shoes for around camp. Sanuk sandals, Crocs, or light tennis shoes are all appropriate. The camp shoes will make hanging out in camp more comfortable, and lessen the impact we leave on the sites. Open toed flip flops are not acceptable.
- ❑ Internal Frame Packs. A 40-50 liter pack will suffice. Internal frame packs are the norm these days and the most comfortable.
- ❑ Sleeping Bag. Death Valley is generally warm but we will be at 4,000 feet or so. Highs average in the 60s and lows in the low 40s. If you are cold at night a sleeping bag liner can add significant warmth with minimal additional weight. We recommend a down-bag as opposed to a synthetic one due to weight differences. Pair this with a compression stuff sac to reduce volume.
- ❑ Sleeping pad. A 3/4 length Ultralight inflatable pad paired with a foam pad is our favorite combination. If bringing an inflatable pad also bring a repair kit to fix leaks. The desert is prickly so take care of your equipment

Clothing

- ❑ 3 pairs of socks. Blister prevention is crucial so the clean third pair for camp is excellent preventative care. A mid-weight, non-cotton sock is ideal, such as a Smartwool or Darn Tough hiking specific sock. Please do not bring low-cut ankle socks as they can lead to rubbing on the heel.
- ❑ 1 mid-weight long-sleeve top. Capilene, Merino or other synthetic.
- ❑ 1 pair of long-johns or tights. Capilene, Merino or other synthetic.
- ❑ 1 warm shirt. Synchilla or 200 weight works well.
- ❑ 1 warm jacket for the evenings.
- ❑ Waterproof Jacket and Pants - Lightweight and non-bulky. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. Jacket must have a hood. If the forecast is clear will leave this behind.
- ❑ 1 pair of hiking pants. Convertible pants that can convert to shorts can also be nice to have on the trail.
- ❑ 1 long-sleeve sun shirt. We recommend a "hoody" style though anything that covers your arms and is synthetic is great.
- ❑ 1 short-sleeve T-shirt. Synthetic, not cotton, so it can dry quickly and wick sweat from your body on sweaty, but windy, days.
- ❑ 1 lightweight pair of polypropylene or similar gloves.
- ❑ 1 warm hat/beanie. Synthetics are less itchy than wool.
- ❑ Sunhat. Better to cover up than just rely upon sunscreen.

Etc.

- ❑ Sun glasses. Good quality. If using prescription lenses consider a backup pair.
- ❑ Water carrying system with a capacity of 3 liters A combination of a

bottle and hydration system works well. We recommend a 2 liter bladder for daily trail use but also bringing a 1-2 liter metal bottle since bladders can develop leaks and water supply is critical.

- ❑ Headlamp. With a spare set of batteries.
- ❑ Eating and drinking equipment. We recommend a container with a lid. Plastic sporks will break - titanium does not.
- ❑ Swiss army style knife. No giant "multi-tools" tools!
- ❑ Personal toiletries including toothbrush, toothpaste (travel sized), baby wipes and floss. Keep it minimal.
- ❑ Hand sanitizer- a personal travel size bottle.
- ❑ Toilet paper! You will be required to carry your used toilet paper out. The used toilet paper will go in a paper bag, which then goes in a ziplock, which you carry in your pack.
- ❑ Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip screen actually contains a sunscreen.
- ❑ Basic first aid supplies such as ibuprofen, moleskin, and tape. Your guides will have extensive first aid kits so please don't go overboard with your personal kits. If you tend to take NSAID's regularly please bring your own, or if your feet require constant blister attention please bring tape and moleskin.
- ❑ Camera/phone camera.
- ❑ Trekking poles. These are not essential, but can be handy on the trail. It is your choice, but they do save wear on the knees.
- ❑ Reading material, journal or Kindle. Do not bring "War & Peace"
- ❑ Ear plugs. Handy to block flapping tents (or noisy partners).

Food

- ❑ We include meals from lunch on Day 1 through lunch on Day 3. Bring your own snack items like cliff bars, power bars, or gorp concoctions for all days. Also bring your favorite hot drinks (tea, hot chocolate, cider etc.). A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

Shared Equipment Provided by SMC

- ❑ Shelter. We will provide lightweight tents. If you have your favorite, by all means bring it, but we do want to pair people up where possible to reduce weight. Or just do as the guide does and sleep outside under the stars
- ❑ Stoves, kitchen and cookware.
- ❑ Water purification. The group will have access to a variety of different ways to treat water. Chemical treatment, such as Aquamira or Iodine, will be carried by the guide. Gravity filtration bags will be distributed amongst the group for use in camp.

You specifically don't need

- ⊗ Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one).
- ⊗ Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.
- ⊗ Items that are not on this list.