



In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



Day 10

Sunday,
January 12th

Death Valley
National Park

Weather

40's to 60's and sunny

Hello to Family & Friends

Above is my campsite at one mile off of HWY 190 on Echo Canyon Rd. Kali & Claire camped down this same road a year or so ago when they were here. Ironic.

What good is life if you don't add a little adventure to it? This was my chance for Dante's View. I was up early and headed back east.



Who cares if the gate is closed. I want to get there and I will.

Who cares if its steep. My mind is made up.



In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'



I drove down to the trailer parking area and pulled the bike off the rack. The stocking hat and gloves are because the temp dropped 10 degrees from campsite to here. It will rise another 4000 feet higher and it is bound to be chilly. The bike helmet is self-explanatory. Hiking pack with water, Gatorade, tripod, and snacks. Both hiking poles. Lock and cable – just in case. Phone and battery pack. Long pants, sweatshirt and winter jacket. I think I'm ready to roll. While I was prepping a Jeep came along and went around the gates. Then another Jeep came back from up the mountain. Then my friend in the faded red van with the surfboard snuck back around. Guess I'm not the only one who can't wait.



This is the reason the road is closed, about 100 yards of ice. Don't they know what road salt is in Death Valley?



I have not ridden the bike for about 8 months and now I have to pedal it up 6 miles of mountain road and about 3500 feet of elevation change. The arrows are guard rails.

The reason I show you the road ahead is because as I reached the ice patch, the bike still showed 5 bars of battery charge. I had to walk it across the ice and when I turned it back on there were NO bars. I still don't know what happened. I was able to get to the point of the picture above where there was another trailer parking area and a restroom. I had to leave the bike there and decide if I wanted to hike that last ¼ mile and 15% grade. It was a tough decision. But I told myself, "Self, you never know when or if you'll be back. You came this far, just do it." So I packed everything onto my person and started up. Since there was no traffic I imagined I was on a switchback and zig zagged up the road. It probably made it a ½ mile, but the grade was much easier. Do you think the view was worth it?



Looking west, Telescope Peak, the highest point in the Panamint Range, is 20 miles away. On a clear day Mt Williamson, further north in the Sierra Nevada, is sometimes visible at 100 miles.

Basin and Range

Standing on the spine of the Black Mountains at Dante's View, the mountain range is one in a series of alternating and parallel north-south trending mountains and valleys, forming what geologists call the Basin and Range Geologic Province. It stretches from Utah to California and from Idaho to Mexico.

This satellite image shows the basin and range topography of the Western United States.

The basin and range topography reveals the story of the earth's crust, stretched from east to west and cracking along north-south lines. Parts of the earth were forced upward, forming mountain ranges, while others dropped, creating deep valleys. The floor of Death Valley is a dropped fault block that is also tilted to the east toward the Black Mountains. As the mountains rose upward, gravity and water began to wear away at them, slowly filling in the valley floor with sediment at the same rate the mountains were uplifted.

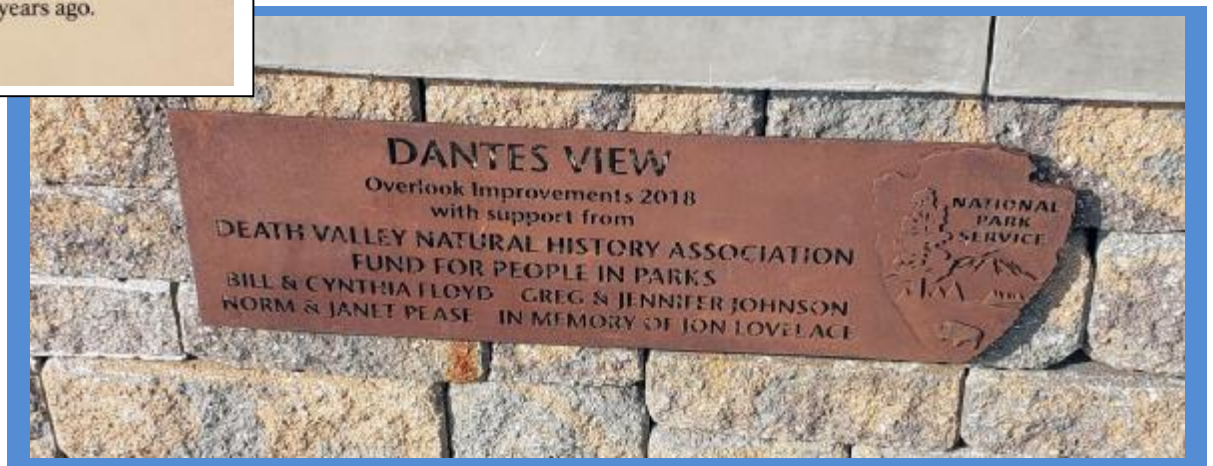
You Are Here



A Hidden River

The bed of the Amargosa River is dry for most of its 185-mile length. The river flows underground until it encounters solid rock layers that force it to the surface, or the occasional flash flood fills the channel. Its name is shortened from the Spanish *agua amargosa* (bitter water). The Amargosa River originates in the hills north of Beatty, Nevada, and flows south before making an abrupt turn west and north near the Dumont Dunes, California, ending its journey in Badwater Basin, directly below you.

One of several rivers that once flowed into Death Valley, the Amargosa contributed to the creation of prehistoric Lake Manly. Isolated populations of desert pupfish in Death Valley, Amargosa Valley, Owens Valley, and the lower delta of the Colorado River suggest that all these river systems were linked at one or more stages of the last major Ice Age, which ended 10,000 years ago.



Below is about a 180 degree panoramic, south to north, looking across the Badwater Basin from Dante's View. How did it all begin? In 1926 several businessmen wanted to promote Chloride Cliff as the quintessential view of Death Valley. Government was close to okaying funding for "The Rim of Hell" as the road was to be called. On their way back to LA they stopped in Shoshone and spoke to prominent citizen Charles Brown for his opinion. Brown said, "I don't pay much attention to scenery. But I know one view that made me stop and look." And he took them to what is now called Dante's View, based on Dante's trip through purgatory. It did match other names in Death Valley; Devil's Golf Course; Coffin Peak; Funeral Mountains; Furnace Creek; etc.



On the left is a screen shot from the 1947 film THE THREE GODFATHERS starring John Wayne. That's Duke in the frame.

Below left is my picture from today. Almost from the same spot 73 years later. Obviously the movie had some sort of camera platform to get a higher angle.





This is my hilarious attempt to re-create the same shot. My tripod is only about 8" high. There are no trees to attach it too. There is no one else here to take the picture. So I tried to make a selfie stick out of the tripod and a hiking pole. Then I tried to balance the poles against each other, but of course they fell over. Can't blame a fella for trying, can you?

Left - See that little, itsy, bitsy black square near the end of the arrow? That's the restroom I left the bike leaning against.



The best thing I can say about, sort of, breaking the rules? I had the entire Dante's View to myself for as long as I wanted. It was FANTASTIC!!!



A little more adventure. Remember, the ride up here was all uphill. Up a mountain in fact. Now I get to ride my bike down. The battery is dead of course, but I don't think I'll need it anyways. I probably won't even have to pedal. I just hope I can keep it under 40 MPH without wearing out the disc brakes or hitting a stone.



I really think the park service should find a better way of telling people the gate is closed. During my time in the trailer parking lot, there must have been 8-10 vehicles which drove up and turned around.

My next hike starts below.





When I first rounded the corner, I thought the canyon mouth left was my destination. It looks really enticing. It is quite a distance away which makes those walls in the shadows about 50' tall. But no, I was relegated to the open space pictured above.

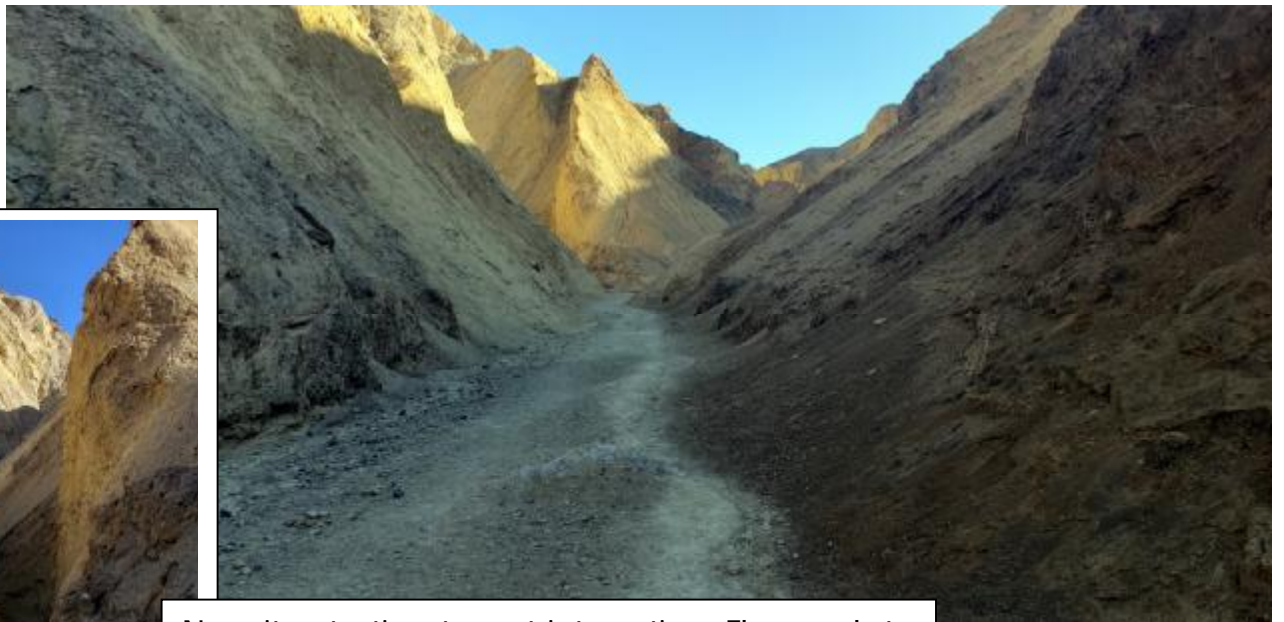
Yes, it still looks kind of boring. So I took the opportunity to take one of the smaller washes on the left.



I followed it to the end, moved right to the next wash, and took that one back down to this main trail. Ho Hum.



I felt it was kind of, strangely interesting, to find a boulder of this size and this color sticking out of the ground. Nothing near it matches. Who knows, maybe it's the very peak of a pink mountain and extends 5000 feet below ground.



Now it's starting to get interesting. The wash to the left look very promising also, but I obeyed the law this time and did not venture into it.

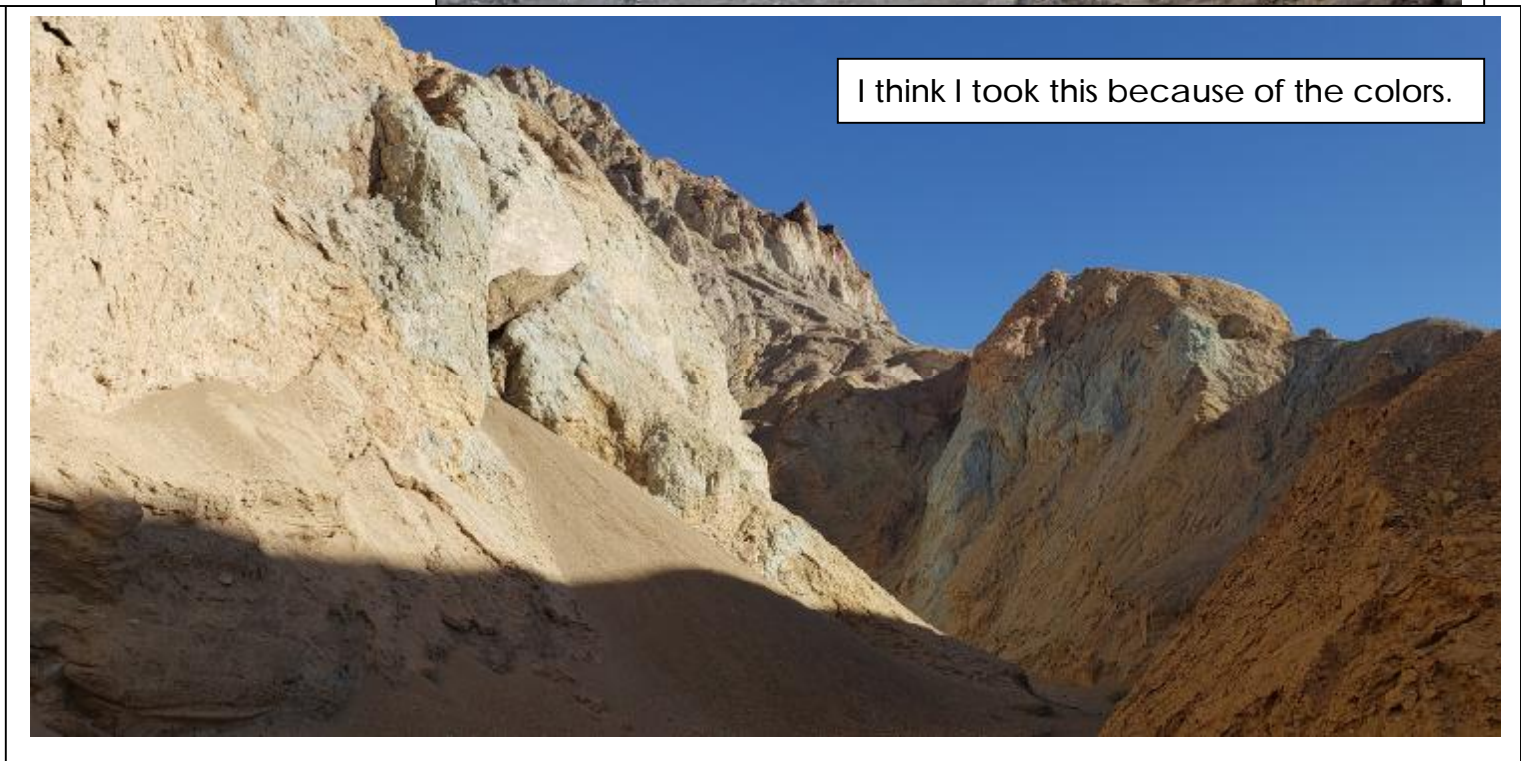




The cracks in that mud were at least 8-10 inches deep.



My first thought was, really? You've got to be kidding me. I'm actually supposed to climb that and continue on? It was the first of five, but it was the toughest and tallest one. On my way back I fell. No blood, no scrapes, probably because I fell on my brains. I just got up, dusted my pants off, and continued on.



I think I took this because of the colors.



Okay, I know this is America, but patriotic rocks? It truly looked like white, red and blue.



This time it feels as though I've been transported into an Indiana Jones movie.

The picture below is a panoramic from the end of the hike.



Ok, so the RV is 25' 8", and, well, the bike rack adds another two feet or so on to that. I will not let length dissuade me from going where I want to go



Every road in America should be just like the one below: One way; well paved; and goes through beautiful scenery.



I guess when they say DIP in Death Valley, they really mean it!





This was a very fun, colorful and scenic drive.







Crystallized salts compose the jagged formations of this forbidding landscape. Deposited by ancient salt lakes and shaped by winds and rain, the crystals are forever changing.

The Death Valley saltpan is one of the largest protected salt pans in North America. Salt continues to be deposited by recurring floods that occasionally submerge the lowest parts of the valley floor.

Delicate salt formations (**right**) are hidden among the harsh and rigid spires. Close inspection may reveal the tiny salt structures. Take care—one curious touch can cause them to crumble.

Be careful! Walking on the Devils Golf Course is very difficult. A fall could result in painful cuts or even broken bones.



This is one STRANGE environment. I have never seen anything like this before. And it covers such a large area. Golf would definitely be very difficult to play here, and that is how the area was named.



How's that for sunset over Death Valley? Is that a shot or what? I Might have to frame that one.

Well it was quite a day. I have a list of 28 things I wanted to see or do here in Death Valley. So far I have completed 17 of them. There are 6 I crossed off for one reason or another, like Darwin Falls and Mosaic Canyon as described yesterday. The Charcoal Kilns are closed due to road conditions (and when has that ever stopped me. LOL) Panamint Dunes are too rough for the RV and the Keane Wonder Mine is just too long of a gravel road. All of those sights remaining are off of Badwater Basin Road, including the Badwater Basin itself, the lowest point in North America. So as I was leaving the Devil's Golf Course I had a decision to make. Drive about 40 miles south and camp off the grid again, not knowing the road conditions. Or, twelve miles back to Furnace Creek and the Furnace Creek Campground for the night. Since I was hoping for electricity to get everything charged back up, I chose Furnace Creek, site 82. No electric. I could have stayed right down the road at Sunset Campground for eight bucks less and had no electric. But I wanted to get settled and try to find the game.

I did see portions of it. There is still very spotty cell service here. Even though the phone has all five bars and the 3G shows good both ways, it sucks. I had to follow on a play-by-play basis from FOX, which also sucked. But, WAY GO PACK!!! Kick the 49er's butts next week!

With about .75 miles at Dante's View and 3.6 miles in Desolation Canyon, I clocked 4.25 miles hiking today. Add another 9 miles on the bike (ok, ok, so 4.5 of that were downhill where I never even moved the pedals. It still counts) makes it a day full of exercise.

Just a note on the sunset photo. I had just backed into my site and was organizing things inside when I noticed an orange/red glow coming in the windshield. Wondering what was the cause, I quick look took me outside for that one shot. It pays to be lucky.

Tonight and tomorrow are unplanned days here. I expected to only spend three and it will end up being five. But I should finish my list tomorrow and head south into Shoshone.

Until next time.....