



In Search of Eldorado

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



Hello to Family & Friends

It is said, that if you play this golf course, you are guaranteed your lowest score ever. Of course, they are referring to the elevation, not the strokes. Ha Ha.

I am starting to run short of the food I brought with me, so I had to resort to a bowl of cereal this morning.

It was chillier than I expected this morning, considering I was camped at about 200 feet below sea level. But it warmed up nicely as the day progressed.

Today is my last day in Death Valley National Park. I will continue back down the Badwater Basin Road until it ends.

My first stop, ironically, is Badwater Basin.



Day 11
Monday,
January 13th

Death Valley
National Park and
beyond

Weather
40's to 60's and sunny

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!'

Birth of Death Valley

Shake Down

This geographic region—known as “Basin and Range”—is spreading apart, fracturing the earth’s crust along parallel faultlines. Huge blocks of land between the faults tilt like seesaws as the extension continues. You are standing above the dropping edge of a fault block that is rising on its other side to create the Panamint Mountains. Behind you, the steep face of the Black Mountains is another rising fault block edge. These forces are still active. The next large earthquake could cause Badwater Basin to drop a few more feet below sea level.

Filling in the Gaps

Even as the basins and ranges form, erosion wears down the mountains. Debris from the surrounding area washes into this basin since it has no outlet to the sea. But erosion cannot keep up with the geologic forces that continue to create Death Valley—the basin drops faster than it fills. After millions of floods, nearly 9,000 feet (2,750 m) of sand, silt, gravel, and salt fill the valley basin.



Look south to the top of the alluvial fan where a series of gravel banks run parallel to the mountain face. The fault block, dropping during a massive earthquake, caused these fault scarps. At about 2,000 years old, the scarps are recent evidence of the forces that have created Death Valley.

Below Sea Level

Look on the cliff behind you. Can you find the sign that marks sea level? Sea level is the average elevation of the world’s ocean surface and is the standard from which all other elevations are measured. Regardless of tides, “sea level” remains constant.



Badwater Basin
Death Valley
California
-282ft -85.5m

Salton Sea
California
-227ft -69m

The Salton Sea is also on my list this trip.

Overlooking the salt flats from the summit of the Black Mountains, Dante's View is more than 5000 feet above you. Air temperatures there can be 25°F (14°C) cooler than at Badwater.



Badwater Pool

Good Life in Badwater

Water is rare and precious in Death Valley. Imagine the disappointment when a surveyor mapping this area could not get his mule to drink from this pool. He wrote on his map that the spring had "bad water," and the name stuck.

Badwater Pool is not poisonous just salty, as the presence of pickleweed, aquatic insects, and larvae proves. It is also home to one of Death Valley's rarest animals—the Badwater Snail. These tiny mollusks exist only in a few springs at the edge of Death Valley salt flats. To protect these creatures, please view the pool only from the boardwalk.

I didn't notice it until I uploaded the photos to the laptop, but the photo above actually looks like a canyon. But it's only the reflection of the Black Mountains in the water



Okay Morgan, I know you told me to restrict the wearing of these shorts to the golf course, but as I looked in the closet all I had left were khaki color shorts, and since I was wearing a gray T-shirt, and I know from the three of you that gray does not go with khaki, I put them on. Of course, I didn't know at the time that I would be having my picture taken. LOL



Above is just the expanse of the salt flats. Left is the difference between the trodden path and the untrodden flats.

Salt Flats

Crystal Power

The vast, surreal salt flats of Badwater Basin change constantly. Salt crystals expand, pushing the crust of salt into rough, chaotic forms. Newly formed crystals ooze between mudcracks, sketching strange patterns on the surface of the salt flat. Passing rainstorms wash off windblown dust and generate a fresh layer of blinding white salt. Floods create temporary lakes that dissolve salts back into solution, starting the process all over again.

Intense Concentration

The source of Badwater's salts is Death Valley's drainage system of 9,000 square miles—an area larger than New Hampshire. Rain falling on distant peaks creates floods that rush ever lower. Along the way, minerals dissolve from rocks and join the flood. Here, at the lowest elevation, floods come to rest, forming temporary lakes. As the water evaporates, minerals concentrate until only the salts remain. After thousands of years, enough salts have washed in to produce layer upon layer of salt crust.

Salt crusts are fragile. Please tread lightly.



Sodium Chloride—better known as table salt—makes up the majority of salts on Badwater Basin. Other evaporative minerals found here include calcite, gypsum, and borax.



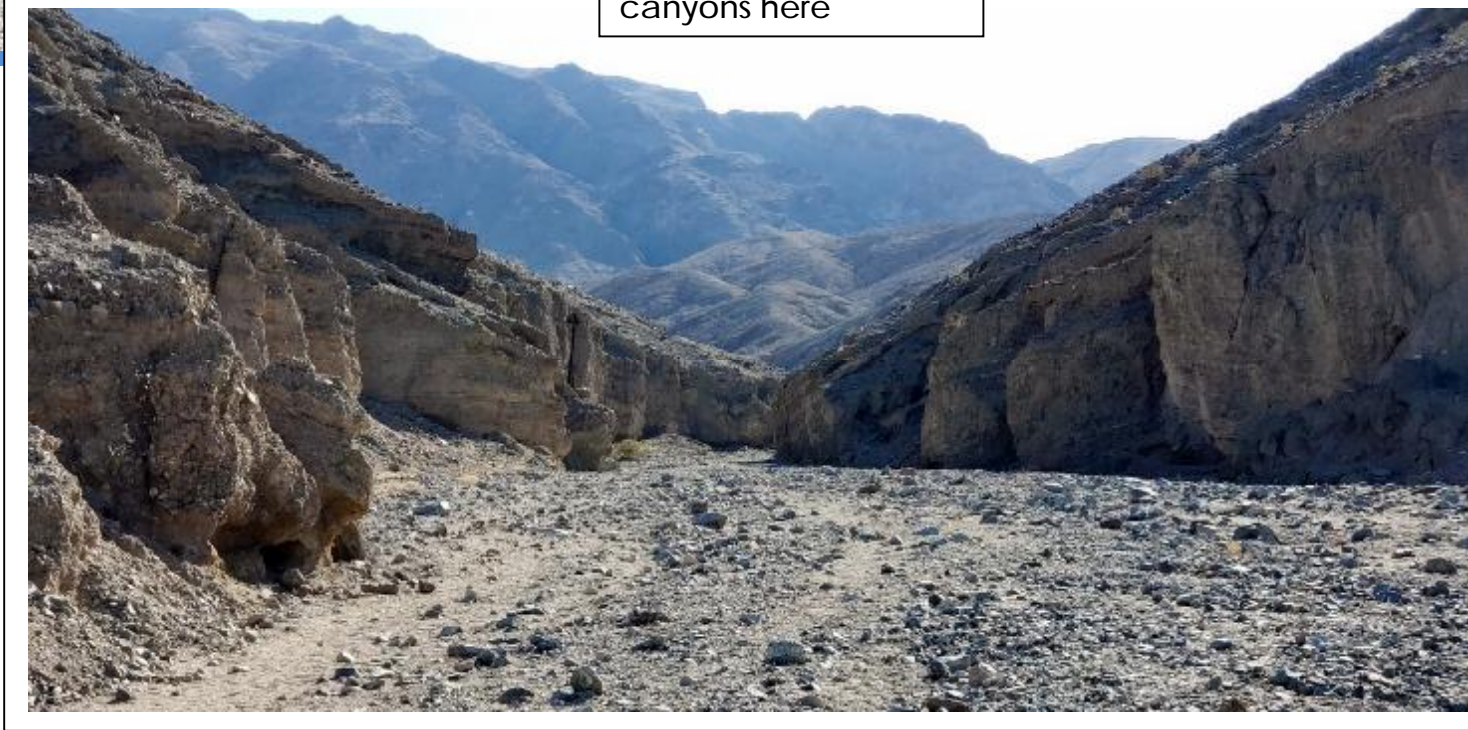
Why don't they scrape up some of this table salt and dump it on the icy road up to Dante's View. It would make people a lot happier.

At this point you can actually see the Amargosa River.





There are supposed to be some nice slot canyons here



First slot canyon





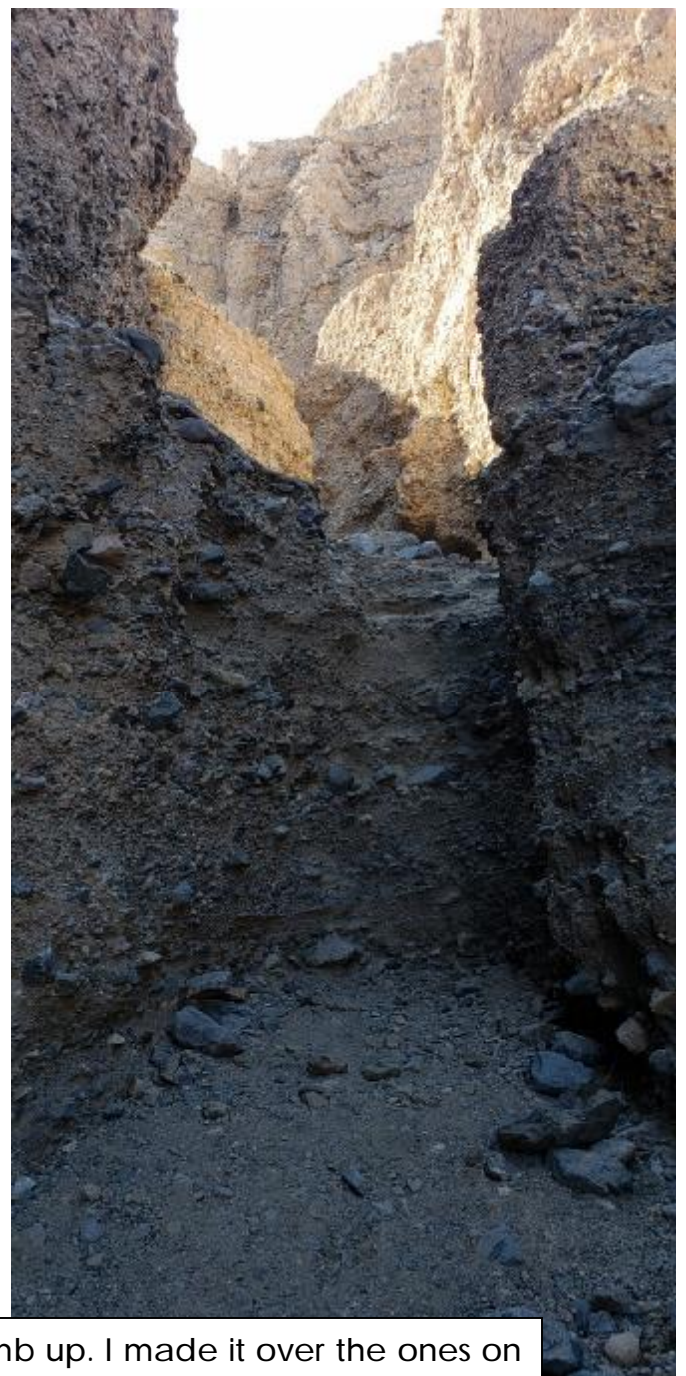
End of the line

Slot canyon #2



Slot canyon #3





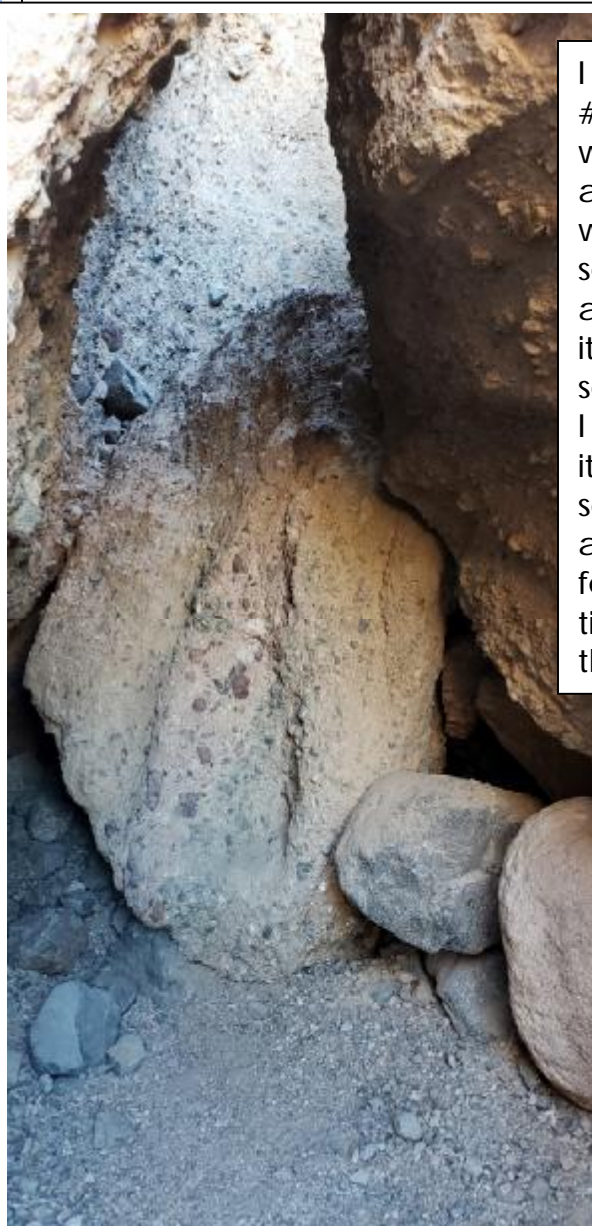
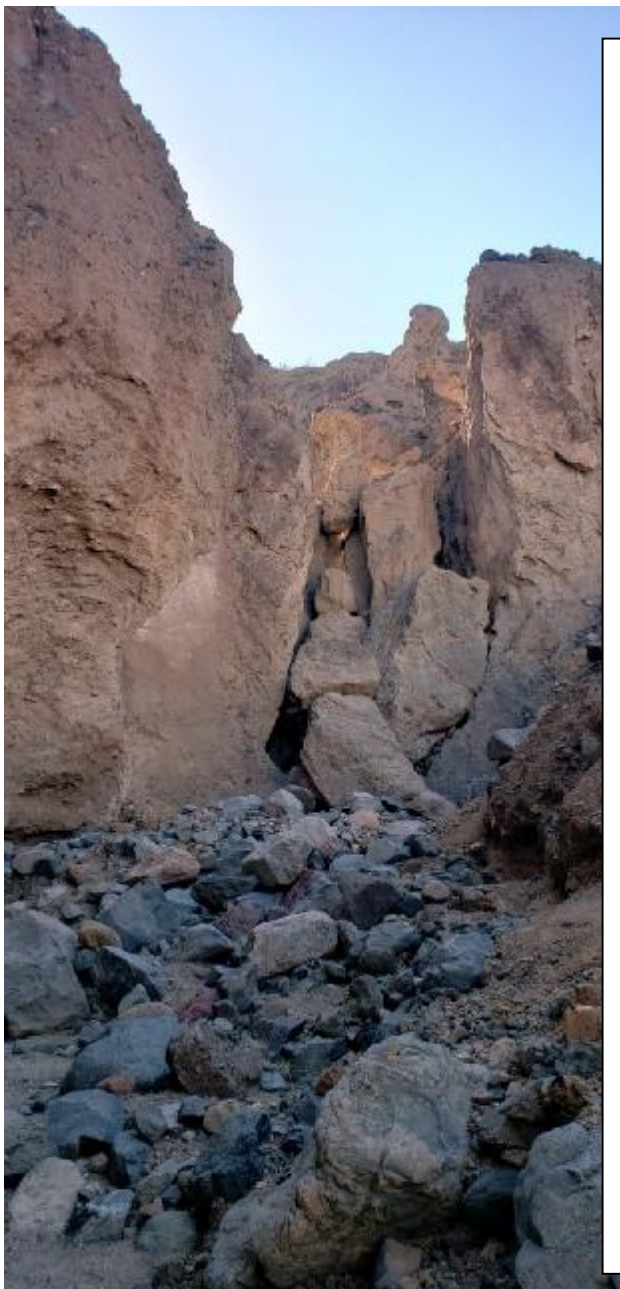
I ran into several of these walls to climb up. I made it over the ones on the left, but the one on the right was about 9' high. Sometimes I really do know my limitations. I turned around and walked away.

This is the first bush I have seen growing in a smaller wash





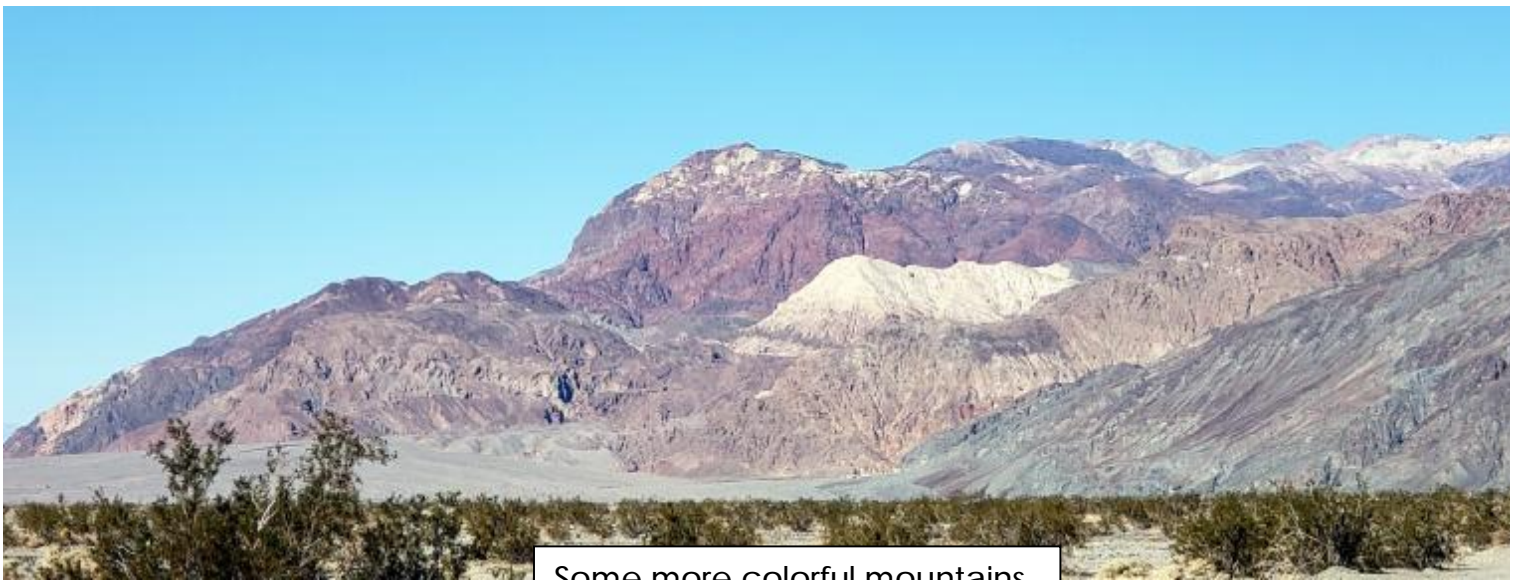
I found slot canyon #4 which after a short time ended here



I think this was slot #1 on the map. I was told to bring a headlamp and would have to scramble through a tight opening. If it was just scramble through I would have tried it. But it was scramble through and climb up six feet at the same time. I was not that interested.



Not a bad view as I leave Sidewinder Canyon



Some more colorful mountains



Prehistoric Lake Manly, fed by melting Sierra Nevada glaciers and surrounded by trees, would have looked very different from what you now see. With no exit from the valley, the lake grew to a depth of 500 to 600 feet and stretched for 100 miles, leaving Shoreline Butte as an island—and this spot was under 400 feet of water!

Today, ancient beach lines on Shoreline Butte mark the fluctuating levels of Lake Manly like rings around a bathtub. Wind-

driven waves deposited sand and gravel or eroded cliffs along the water's edge, creating features known as strandlines. Geologists have identified more than 12 strandlines, which are best observed when the sun is at a low angle. At the base of Shoreline Butte is the Amargosa River, an intermittent waterway that flows underground for most of its 185-mile length, or after heavy rainstorms drains into the valley.

This was just a wide point in the road that said "Point of Interest"

Runoff from cooler and wetter climate conditions during the Ice Ages created large lakes. As temperatures increased and moisture decreased, the lakes gradually disappeared.



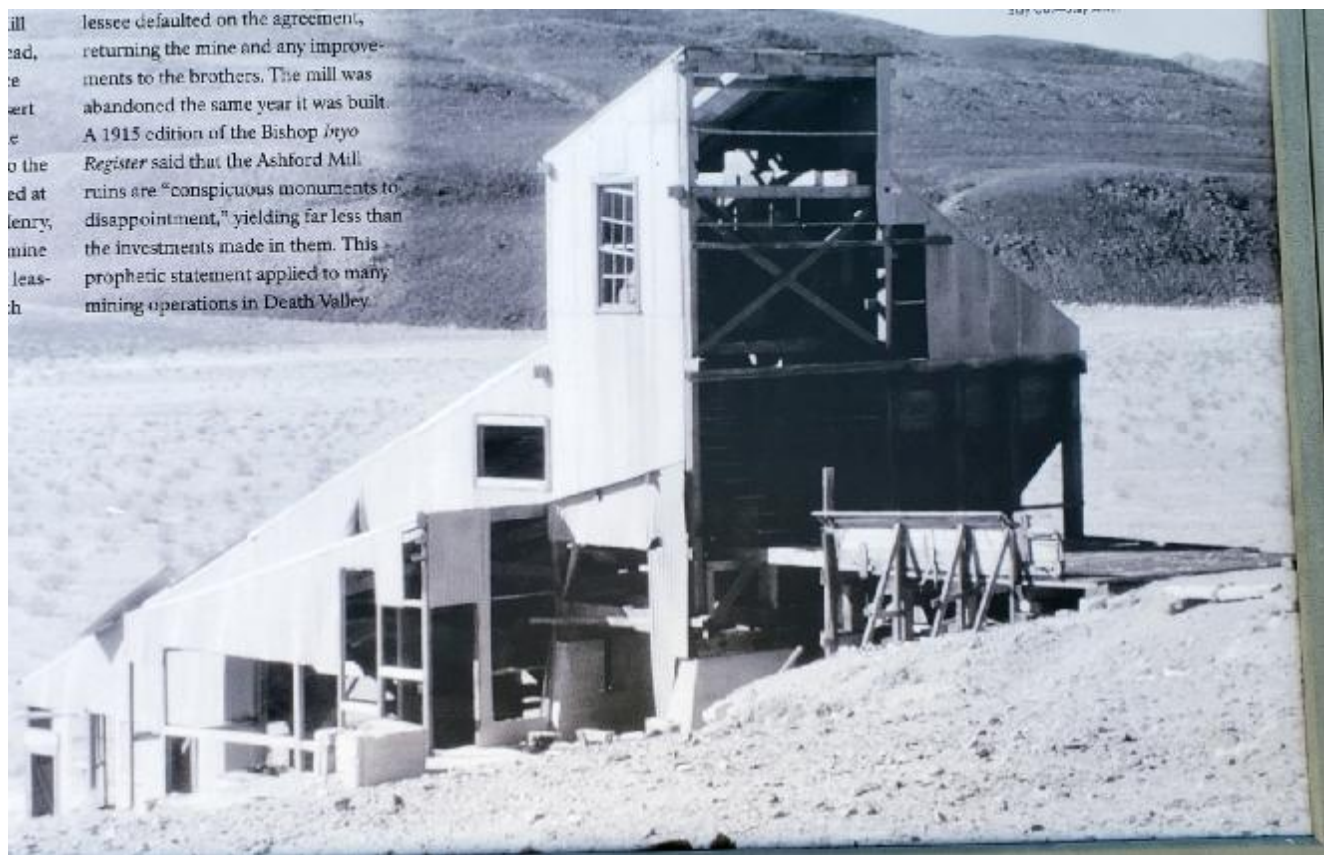


Fading Fortunes

The foundations of the Ashford Mill are set into the hillside directly ahead, with the concrete walls of the office building to the left framing the desert beyond. Ore hauled down from the Golden Treasure Mine five miles to the east in Ashford Canyon was crushed at the mill. The Ashford brothers—Henry, Harold, and Louis—acquired the mine in 1907, alternately working it and leasing it to a series of companies. Each

lessee defaulted on the agreement, returning the mine and any improvements to the brothers. The mill was abandoned the same year it was built. A 1915 edition of the Bishop *Inyo Register* said that the Ashford Mill ruins are “conspicuous monuments to disappointment,” yielding far less than the investments made in them. This prophetic statement applied to many mining operations in Death Valley.

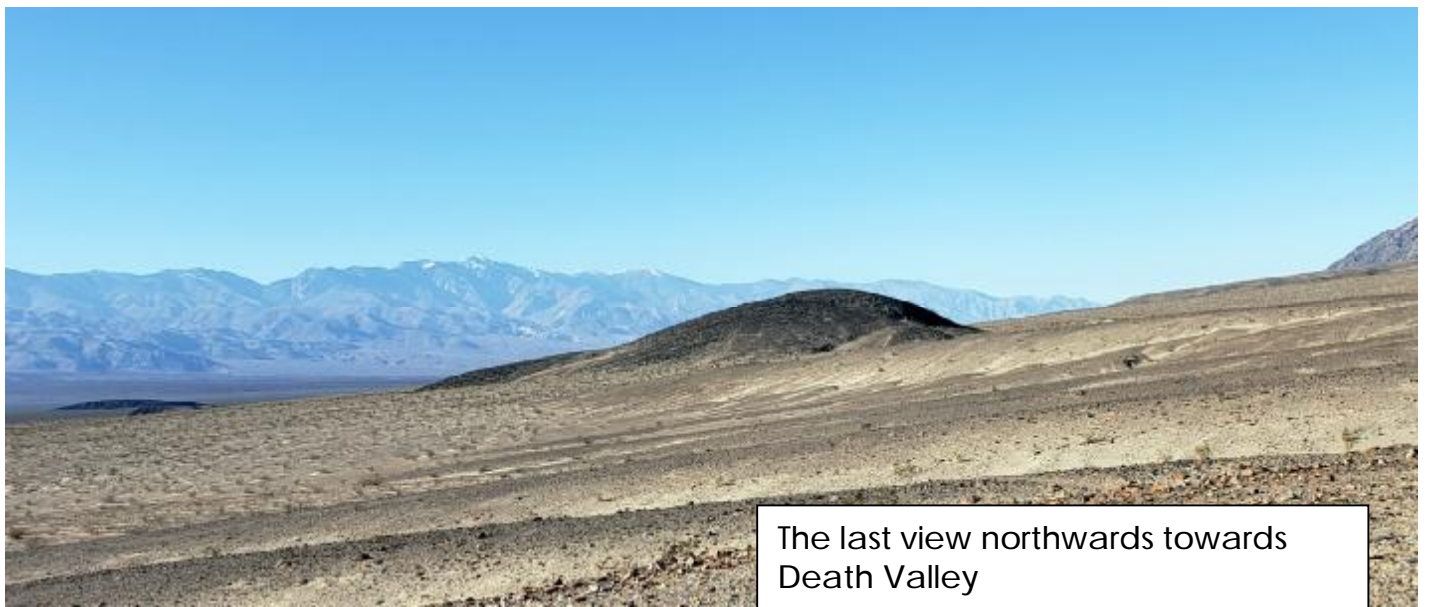
ill lessee defaulted on the agreement,
ad, returning the mine and any improve-
e ments to the brothers. The mill was
ert abandoned the same year it was built.
e A 1915 edition of the Bishop *Inyo*
o the *Register* said that the Ashford Mill
ed at ruins are “conspicuous monuments to
Henry disappointment,” yielding far less than
mine the investments made in them. This
leas- prophetic statement applied to many
h mining operations in Death Valley.





This is what's left





The last view northwards towards Death Valley





BUSINESS HOURS	
MON	9:00 TO 3:00
TUE	9:00 TO 3:00
WED	9:00 TO 3:00
THU	9:00 TO 3:00
FRI	9:00 TO 3:00
SAT	9:00 TO 3:00
SUN	9:00 TO 3:00

This is Shoshone, CA. One mile from the southern entrance. This has got to be my unluckiest town ever. 1) It was 3:04 when I pulled into the parking lot. 2) The Chevron station was getting new pumps installed and had no diesel available 3) She told me the closest gas was back in Pahrump, Nevada, 27 miles (54 round trip) but the gas would be \$1.67 cheaper per gallon. I am still good on gas for now. 56 miles to Baker and I still have 3/8th's of a tank 4) I asked about LP because I know I'm low and there was a tank outside. She shook her head and said "All we have is propane." I shook my head and said "It's the same thing." "Oh, the guys that do that go home at 1:30." Naturally, as I sit here writing this, the heat has stopped running. No LP. Oh sorry, I mean propane. 5) Only gallons of whole milk. I will survive.



I am a member of a free camping group called Harvest Hosts. They are wineries, museums, farms, etc., in other words working businesses that will allow you to stay overnight in their parking lot for free. Hopefully you will buy something or take a tour. Above is part of the road to get there. Incredible drive through some badlands.



In the 1890's a Chinese man named Ah Foo came to this canyon from the Borax Works in Death Valley. He developed a successful ranch, raising livestock.

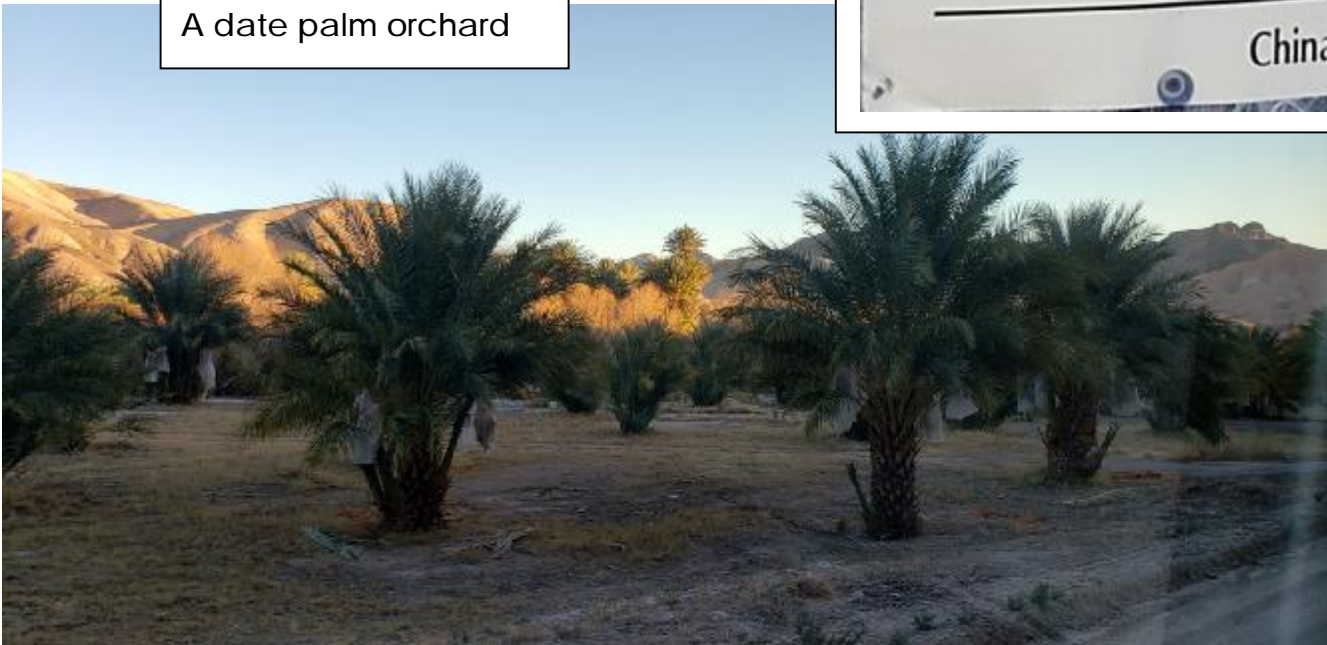
This is where my luck changed. I called up the China Ranch Date Farm and was told the Harvest Host member who had originally reserved for tonight had just called and canceled. So come on down.

In the 1890's a Chinese man named Ah Foo came to this canyon from the Borax Works in Death Valley. He developed a successful ranch, raising livestock, hay, fruits and vegetables to help feed the local silver miners and their draft animals. The "China Man's Ranch" became a favorite resting spot, with it's cool running stream and beautiful trees.

In 1900 Ah Foo disappears somewhat mysteriously, though the name has stuck. After many changes of owners and financially unsuccessful ranching attempts over the next 90 years, the current owners began planting young date palms in 1990, and opened China Ranch to the public in 1996. More history and information are available at the gift shop. Enjoy your visit!

China Ranch

A date palm orchard



Not a whole lot to pass on tonight. It was a little sad to leave Death Valley after five days, the weather was great, the scenery was great, the hiking was great, the overall experience was fantastic.

There was an item I did not mention yesterday because I ran out of room. In the Visitor Center, on my first day, there was a sign that mentioned the 'silence' of Death Valley. I could not get my head around that at the time, but after experiencing the silence at Dante's View, in Desolation Canyon, in Sidewinder Canyon, I can understand. No birds, no insects, hopefully no people. No sirens, no blaring horns, no noisy neighbors, no school bells, etc, etc, etc. The only sound you hear is the wind, and the beating of your own heart.

Although, today in Sidewinder Canyon I heard the sound of a jet engine. It was low and loud. Then it became even louder, then disappeared, then you could hear it again, sort of muffled, much further away north. I heard this two or three times while I was hiking. I am willing to bet it was those jets making a run through Star Wars Canyon where I was on Saturday. Darn, I sure would have liked to see that.

To be a good member I bought a couple date muffins and some date nut bread. Then went back for a date and chocolate chip shake with my dinner. It was pretty good.

I guess a couple extra blankets tonight will have to do to keep warm. Diesel and LP (propane) in Baker tomorrow.

Almost forgot. No internet for visitors at China Ranch, so this one will be sent out once I get to Baker.

Until next time.....