



## Death Valley National Park News Release

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### Record Visitation Spurred by Centennial, Flowers and Social Media

DEATH VALLEY, CA – A record number of people visited Death Valley National Park in 2016. While last spring’s wildflower “superbloom” attracted visitors, autumn months were also unusually busy.

“We noticed a lot of first-time park visitors this year,” said Mike Reynolds, superintendent of Death Valley National Park. “It’s rewarding to think that a new audience of people are experiencing and caring for our nation’s most special places.”

Death Valley National Park welcomed 1,296,283 people from around the world last year. This was a 12% increase in visitation over 2015’s visitation and 5% increase over the park’s previous record. The park’s last visitation record—1,227,583— was set in 1999. Visitation dropped below one million a few years later and continued falling to a low of 704,122 visitors in 2007. Park usage has been climbing rapidly since then.

Some of the park’s spike in visitation can be attributed to the spectacular wildflower season last spring, known unofficially as a “superbloom.” Over 209,000 people visited the park in March, 60% more than any other single month in the park’s history.

“Only 128,000 people came to the park for the last superbloom in March 2005,” said Abby Wines, park spokesperson. “Flowers alone don’t explain how busy the park was last spring. We attribute it to social media. Park visitors posted photos and encouraged their friends to visit. This snowballed until Death Valley’s flowers made international news.”

The park set monthly visitation records in March, September, October and December. “Clearly the fall visitation wasn’t due to wildflowers,” Wines said. “Some of the increase was probably due to special events and publicity related to the centennial of the National Park Service in 2016.” The park hosted special events to celebrate the NPS centennial, including the Celestial Centennial Mars Fest, Bioblitz, Preservation 50, and smaller events.

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Visitation was up in most national parks across the nation in 2016. The National Park Service welcomed nearly 331 million people in 2016, up 7.7% over the previous record set the year before. This is the third year in a row of record-setting visitation. Death Valley National Park was one of the 20% of NPS sites that reported new visitation records last year.

Superintendent Reynolds said, “While the unprecedented visitation was exciting, it also overwhelmed the park’s campgrounds, visitor center and restrooms. At times it was extremely challenging for park staff trying to ensure park facilities were prepared for the 200,000 additional visitors who came to Death Valley last year.”

“There were weekends last spring that every campground in the park was full and the closest available hotel rooms were two hours away,” said Wines. “Google maps even reported delays due to traffic congestion! We’ve never experienced that in Death Valley before.”

Thinking of visiting Death Valley National Park this spring? “The weather’s perfect in spring,” said Superintendent Reynolds. “Although the bloom on the valley floor is unremarkable this year, the salt pan, canyons, sand dunes and mountains in the park are beautiful year-round. Many visitors tell us they’ve never seen so many stars.” He added a tip: “To see the Milky Way, go online and time your visit for when the moon won’t be up.”

Hotels in the park and surrounding communities can be fully booked in spring, so the park recommends advance reservations. Furnace Creek is the only campground in the park to accept reservations. All other campgrounds are first-come, first-served. Texas Springs and Mesquite Springs are very popular, but the larger Sunset and Stovepipe Wells Campgrounds almost always still have campsites available for late arrivals.

-[www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva)-

*Death Valley National Park is the homeland of the Timbisha Shoshone and preserves natural and cultural resources, exceptional wilderness, scenery, and learning experiences within the nation’s largest conserved desert landscape and some of the most extreme climate and topographic conditions on the planet. About two-thirds of the park was originally designated as Death Valley National Monument in 1933. Today the park is enjoyed by about 1,300,000 people per year. The park is 3,400,000 acres – nearly as large as the state of Connecticut. Learn more at [www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva).*

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