

**This card—Mini-Vacations Into—is Number 6 in a series of “Diversions for You and a Friend” by Arlene Harder, MA, MFT, Support4Change Blog.**

Being sick or having a major problem in your life is a pain in the neck. This is because, in large part, any situation that negatively impacts your life forces you to think about *it*, rather than more pleasant things. That is why this card is designed to **take your mind off your troubles**, at least for a while. It is also a way you can **share this diversion with family and friends who need a boost today.**



Zabriskie Point in Death Valley - By Arlene Harder, 2004

The second card in the diversions for you and friends introduced you to Step-Into-Pictures. Today the picture introduces you to “Mini-Vacations.” You see, although you may not be able to actually go away on vacation, that doesn’t prevent you from *imagining* you can.

For something a bit different, you may choose Death Valley, the lowest, hottest and driest place in North America. It has a special place in my heart because that’s where Bob and I spent our honeymoon. Since my husband was a student at

Caltech at the time, we could only afford a motel room at Furnace Creek Ranch, the hub of Death Valley. Since we were married on January 2, we didn't have to contend with the infamous heat of summer.

### **A Lovely Time to Visit**

I took this picture at Thanksgiving when we visited my niece, who worked for the park service, and whose boyfriend at the time was head chef at the Ranch. (He gave me a recipe for the best pumpkin soup I've ever tasted.)

Fall, winter and spring are definitely the best times to visit the park. Summer is not, unless you are like foreign visitors who seem to enjoy having their picture taken as they stand on the porch of the Furnace Creek Ranch next to a large thermometer reading 120°F (49°C) in the shade. 'Course, you can always cool down when the night temperature dips into the 90s°F (mid 30s°C).

### **Warm Water for Toilets and Swimming Pools**

It wasn't until we had a bit more money that we could celebrate our 40th anniversary at the luxurious Furnace Creek Inn, just up the road from our honeymoon motel. The inn has a luxurious heated pool, with water from an underground spring, a fact I learned when I accidentally put my hand on the toilet tank and found it was warm!!!

I was impressed that they heated water for the toilet. However, warm diverted spring water not only fills the toilets, but also, twice a day, the inn's swimming pool and, because it is clean coming out of the ground, they don't have to add chlorine. In addition to filling up two swimming pools, it is used to keep the golf course very green.

Unfortunately, it doesn't take a genius to see that with (1) an average rainfall of less than 2 inches, (2) an average evaporation rate of 150 inches a year in the bottom of Death Valley, and (3) competition for the aquifer's water by areas like Las Vegas and Pahrump, Nevada, — with some of the fastest growth rates in the United States — the area is going to run out of water in the not-too-distant future.

## **Stand on Zabriskie Point and Just Imagine What You Can See**

When you climb to the top of Zabriskie Point, you can get a smaller sense of the size of the park. With 3.4 million acres of desert and mountains, it is the largest national park in the contiguous United States. The possibilities for discovery are endless!

For one thing, Death Valley has more miles of roads than any other national park. Though 91% of the park's 3.4 million acres are protected in wilderness areas without roads, there are nearly one thousand miles of paved and dirt roads that provide ample opportunities for recreation and exploration.

Titus Canyon is my favorite road and begins outside the park east of the park boundary. It is one of the largest and most scenically diverse canyons in the park. Before starting down its one-way 27 miles through multi-colored volcanic deposits, a ghost town, petroglyphs, bighorn sheep, and deep, winding narrows, you must be careful to check weather conditions; rain storms in one part of the park can cause flash floods in canyons many miles away.

You would certainly want to go to Badwater Basin, which is the lowest place in North America and one of the lowest places in the world at 282 feet below sea level. (The Dead Sea is the lowest at 1371 feet below sea level.)

You wouldn't want to miss the Devil's Golf Course, so named because "only the devil could play golf" on its rough surface, which was created from large crystal formations when minerals dissolved in the lake were left behind as the lake evaporated.

Another place associated with the devil in Death Valley is the Devil's Cornfield, which derives its name from a species of arrowweed whose former roots have been exposed as the ground subsided and was blown away around them.

You might consider visiting Scotty's Castle, which is a window into the life and times of the Roaring '20s and Depression '30s. It was an engineer's dream home, a wealthy matron's

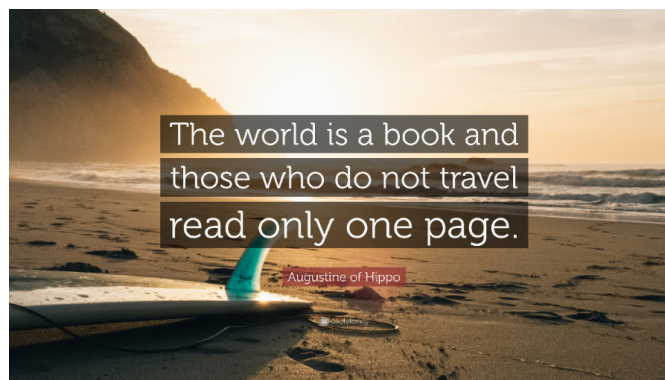
vacation home and a man-of-mystery's hideout and getaway.

And you would certainly want to check out the Death Valley Park Center where you will be introduced to stories not only of those travelers whose comment, as they left this desolate and spectacular place, gave the area its name, but of others who left their mark on the land: Native Americans, Black Forty-niners, Chinese Workers in silver and borax mines, Basque settlers, and Japanese American Internees.

You might want to see the rare pupfish in Salt Creek, a stream of salty water in the Furnace Creek area. This is the only home for these fish and it is best to see them in the spring; in summer the stream dries up and in winter the fish are dormant.

Perhaps you would like to climb Telescope Peak, named by Dr. Samuel George in 1861. After climbing the 11,049 foot peak, he said that he could see so far that it reminded him of looking through a telescope. I think Zabriskie Point is like that, too.

If you haven't been to Death Valley, I hope this gives you an idea of a place where you can take a "mini-vacation," although some parts of it can make you feel as though you are on another planet.



*May you find peace, joy and love.*