

Death Valley: smart spring break alternative



Christina Maggio
The Clackamas Print

Spring break is just around winter's corner, and for college kids, that often means sand and surf on beaches such as Miami, Cancun and Cabo.

But what about Death Valley?

Every spring break, Life Science Director Jennifer Bown leads a class of approximately 22 students to Death Valley, Calif., for a nine-day camping trek through the desert to research and experience what the region, though seemingly desolate, has to offer.

Why camping?
"That's part of the allure of it," Bown said, chuckling. "... the students work as a team. We live together for nine days, going through the extremes, living and thriving in the desert ecosystem."

The trip is a four-credit transferable lab science. Participating students learn everything from geology, biology and zoology to archaeol-

ogy and some history.
"For the past 30 years, Clackamas has offered this trip," Bown said. "John Snively, its founder, started the program as a field-based science course to really show both biology and geology of the natural world."

Snively is retired now, but Bown annually continues his course, which is entitled "Natural History of Southwestern Deserts."

The class will leave the Thursday of finals week during Spring Term, March 20, and will return on March 29. Prior to leaving, each student will prepare a lecture and research project on anything he or she has learned throughout his or her stay in the Valley, as well as give a 15 to 20-minute presentation along with other on-site speakers.

Trip applications can be found in the biology department. Students are encouraged to register as soon as possible

due to the popularity of the trip. Spots are reserved on a first-come-first-serve basis.

So pack your bags - minus the swimsuit - and forget spring break's clichéd hype. Death Valley may not have surf, but it definitely has sand and plenty of thrills for a nine-day stay.



Photos contributed by Jennifer Bown



Black helps the disconnected

Emily Walters

The Clackamas Print

"What I love to do is bring people together."

This is what truly embodies Leslie Black, who is currently a human services instructor and the Bridges Program coordinator at the college. "I have been a part-time faculty member since 1986," Black said.

She originally came to Clackamas for sabbatical replacement but ended up staying.

The Bridges Program is "designed to help people transition," she explained.

Black helps people who "do not feel connected" discover their personal identity - she encourages them to change and grow.

"Supporting people through transition is big for me," she said. "Bottom line is that I help people connect to themselves."

Black may have been inspired to do what she does because it was done for her when she was about the same age as many of her students.

"High school was not a great time for me. There was actually a teacher for me [who] looked at me with unbiased eyes [and] encouraged me with my next step," she

said.

When Black is not working, she usually can be found indulging in one of her many hobbies.

"I am passionate about what I do," she said.

She especially enjoys the form of folk dance.

"If I could not express myself, I would feel dead," she added.



BLACK

Photo by Emily Walters, Clackamas Print

While in Guatemala, Black "took a bus all the way alone; the experience became a cherished memory. Being "part of a summit in Costa Rica" is unforgettable.

But although Black has had many opportunities to travel, she is a Portland native, and always plans to come back eventually.

Perhaps part of the reason she loves her career at the college is because of the work she does.

"I am at Clackamas because the work warms my heart," she

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