



CLOCKWISE, FROM UPPER LEFT Wood on the Mesquite Dunes in Death Valley ♦ Teapot Junction in Death Valley ♦ Dwight Caswell surveying the dunes in Death Valley ♦ Miner's hut at Leadfield, Titus Canyon in Death Valley.

David Campiche photos

BELOW A view from Death Valley National Park.

Austin DeWitz



Continued from C8

A volcanic eruption 50 miles away created the Ubehebe Crater, a half-mile bowl surrounded by striated cliffs. When the rains came, the water etched fantastical patterns into the sides of the 400 foot depression. The beauty is impossible to miss, but so is the reality of time and place – from time immemorial, the universe has thrown hardballs.

Native Americans lived in these valleys and canyons and left petroglyphs. For thousands of years, they survived in this untamed land – they continue to live here today and write new stories.

In the center of the valley lies the Mesquite Sand Dunes, which we explored on foot in the early dawn, Caswell's favorite time to shoot with his big box camera. The man is patient. On a good day, he

might take only a couple of photographs. The landscape is inspirational. What part of this hothouse isn't? But capturing all that on film or canvas is the artist's perpetual challenge.

Back to the sea

At home, it continues to rain. Lightning flashes, followed inevitably by thunder. The rain falls harder now, and the sandy ground gathers up the sky's tears, drinking them in like the thirsty humans I imagine wandering the parched oasis, Death Valley.

There is a price to pay for undisturbed beauty, for the privilege of viewing a harsh, stunning landscape. We were lucky. Death Valley offered up its best. So far from home, we opened our eyes to a rare and harsh wilderness and were rewarded – our thirst for adventure quenched in one of the driest places on Earth.



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