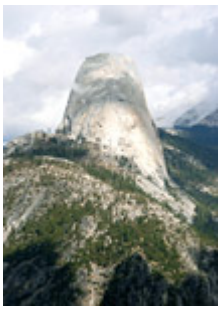
California is home to, among others, Yosemite National Park, which is famous for its granite domes, to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, where you'll see some of the world's largest trees, and to Death Valley National Park, home of the hottest and lowest place found in the Western hemisphere. When we first visited Yosemite and Sequoia in 2000, we did not take the drive to Death Valley. It wasn't until our trip last month when we returned to Nevada, Arizona and Utah that we ventured across into California and got to visit that incredible park. It was a detour too close to pass up. And it was totally worth it.

Yosemite National Park:

El Capitan



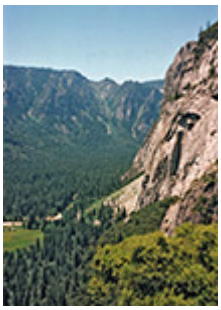
Half Dome



Lower Falls



Yosemite Valley



Yosemite National Park is is located in the central Sierra Nevada of California. It takes approximately 3.5 hours to drive to the park from San Francisco and approximately 6 hours from Los Angeles. Yosemite Valley represents only one percent of the park area, but this is where most visitors arrive and stay. Here is where you find one of the most popular rock climbing destinations in the world, El Capitan, a prominent granite cliff that looms over the valley, along with granite domes such as Sentinel Rock and Half Dome, which rise 3,000 feet and 4,800 feet, respectively, above the valley floor. You'll also find many powerful waterfalls, including three of the world's highest.

General info.: http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/index.htm
http://www.yosemitepark.com/

Accommodations:
Inside the park: http://www.webportal.com/ahwahnee/
Other: http://www.tenayalodge.com/?ic_campID=329&ic_pkw=Yosemite.Com_2008

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks:

General Sherman



Giant Forest



The Sentinel



Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are administered together. Their main attraction are its giant trees. And most of them can be found in the heart of Sequoia, the Giant Forest. It is there that you'll find the General Sherman, the largest living thing on Earth. The tree weighs over 2,000 tons, has bark up to 3 feet thick and is 272 feet high. But the majority of these national parks protects a large part of the Sierra Nevada range with canyons, lakes, waterfalls and high mountains, including Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the contiguous United States.

General info.: http://www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/index.htm
http://www.visitsequoia.com/destination.aspx

Accommodations:
Inside the park:
http://www.nationalparkreservations.com/sequoia_wuksachi.htm

Death Valley National Park:

Badwater – lowest point

Salt pans

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Death Valley National Park is a desert. It is the lowest, driest and hottest valley in the United States. It is also the location of the lowest elevation in North America at Badwater, which is 282 feet below sea level. It holds the record for the highest reliably reported temperature in the Western hemisphere – 134 °F. But despite its reputation, this is a place of amazing

beauty with many colorful rocks and canyons, miles of pristine sand dunes, unique evaporative salt features and even a diverse range of wildlife. It is by far the wildest place I've ever visited.

General info.: http://www.nps.gov/deva/planyourvisit/index.htm
http://digital-desert.com/death-valley-national-park/

Accommodations:
Inside the park:
http://www.furnacecreekresort.com/

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