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Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DEATH VALLEY

The tourist season has begun in Death Valley. Although this California desert is notorious the world over for its terrific summer heat, the weather from November to March or April, inclusive, is usually quite comfortable. On an average November day the temperature goes up to 74 and falls to 48. Temperatures below freezing have been recorded in November and in each of the winter months. At the hotel recently opened in the valley there is a fireplace in every bedroom, and open fires are often enjoyable in the evening.

Very different are the conditions in summer. Rarely does the temperature fail to reach 100 on a summer day, while readings from 110 to 120 are common. Here is the record of maximum temperatures for a certain week in 1913:

July 8	128
9	129
10	134
11	129
12	130
13	131
14	127

These were "shade" temperatures, measured with an accurate thermometer installed in a standard Weather Bureau screen placed four feet above alfalfa sod. The weather station is located at Greenland Ranch, alias Furnace Creek Ranch, near the eastern edge of the valley, where it is pretty certain the temperature does not rise so high as in the lower central district. Hence, although the above-mentioned reading of 134 on July 10, 1913, which was for some years a "world record", has been surpassed at a place in the Italian Sahara, it probably does not represent the worst Death Valley can do in the way of heat.

The average rainfall of the Valley, a little over an inch and a half a year, makes it the driest known place in North America.

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