



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

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# Amargosa Canyon

Amargosa River Basin - Your Recreation Destination - Barstow Field Office

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## Overview

Often called the "Crown Jewel of the Mojave Desert," the Amargosa River is the only free-flowing river in the Death Valley region of the Mojave and provides a rare and lush riparian area in the desert. The narrow Amargosa Canyon is known for its dense greenery and the shallow Amargosa River, complete with "hanging gardens" and a small waterfall. The Amargosa River flows year-round dropping south from Nevada and finally flowing into Death Valley National Park.

About 30 miles of the Amargosa River is federally designated as a Wild and Scenic River. It flows in a part of the Mojave Desert declared an Area of Critical Environmental Concern to protect plants and animals listed as threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

## Grimshaw Trail

The Amargosa Basin is a hiker's dream with slot canyons and waterfalls. Much of the trail follows the historic Tonopah & Tidewater rail bed from the China Ranch trailhead deep into Sperry Wash. Along the trail there are interpretive signs to guide your walk, and visitors can follow the same path as early explorers who traveled on the Old Spanish and Mormon Trails.

## Wildlife and Plants

The Amargosa Basin is home to bobcat, coyote, fox and more than 134 species of birds. The least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher are listed as state and federally endangered, and the State of California lists the yellow-billed cuckoo, Swainson's hawk and Amargosa niterwort as threatened. Two desert fish species, designated as sensitive species, also live in this segment of the river.

This canyon is also home to the endangered Amargosa vole, a small rodent found only near Tecopa, California. This mammal only lives in the thick bulrush vegetation that grows around natural springs and nearby pools. It breeds mostly in spring and summer and faces extinction if its habitat is degraded or lost. The Amargosa vole was listed as an endangered species by the State of California in the 1980s and by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1984.

## Off-Highway Vehicle Travel

Visitors can explore the Amargosa River Canyon Basin on off-highway vehicles. Stay on designated open routes marked by brown signs. Cross country and off-route travel is prohibited.

## Travel Know Before You Go

- Bring plenty of water. The area is hot and arid and summer temperatures range from 100 to 120 degrees.
- Wear sun protection even in winter. There is very little shade.
- Keep cats and dogs under control and out of the marshes.
- Do not modify pool banks/streams; remove sediment; or disturb vegetation.
- No campfires: fire can destroy vegetation used by many animals for shelter.
- Follow Leave No Trace principles —pack it in, pack it out.

## For More Information

Contact the BLM Barstow Field Office  
(760) 252-6000

<https://www.blm.gov/barstow>

