

Black Rock and Smoke Creek

The Smoke Creek and Black Rock deserts are in the far northwest corner of Nevada, one of the least populated and remote regions of the state. The region comprises two very large playas (dry lake beds) and many very rugged and mostly barren mountain ranges.

It is a land of extreme beauty and extreme contrast. There is little vegetation. Most precipitation falls in the winter as cold rain or snow. Visibility often seems unlimited.

It is possible to drive on the playa most of the year, and this can be a very disorienting experience since there is nothing nearby to give a clue to speed or distance to the horizon.

The only communities of any size in the region are Gerlach, and the now closed down company town of Empire, which is owned by US Gypsum and supported a gypsum plant. There is limited cattle ranching and some mining in this part of the state.

This is a place of wide horizons, big skies, profound silence, and deeply saturated color fields as the sun rises and sets.