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Strange RV Encounters: Millions of Dead Fish



The Werid, the Wacky, and the Wonderful



Juliana Mathews, Yahoo Contributor Network
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After you've seen [the cement ship at Seacliff State Beach in Aptos, California](#), head south for something truly wacky -- and smelly.

You probably know how bad a dead fish smells, and maybe you can even imagine how a couple dozen dead fish might smell. But can you imagine how millions of dead fish might smell?

Salton Sea State Beach is one of the nicest of California's state parks at which I've camped. It's clean, the staff is friendly, it's not crowded, and the view is stunning. But it is also one of the smelliest. The odor is not one of those you can sort of tolerate, but it's rather a pungent aroma that seemingly burns your nasal passages while simultaneously making your eyes water.

The smell is due to millions of dead fish. Millions is not an exaggeration. Literally millions of fish die every year at the Salton Sea. Odd as it may seem, this weird annual event is not brought on by [pollution](#) but by nature herself.

Every summer when the temperatures reach over 100 degrees, natural chemical reactions remove oxygen from the water, and millions of tilapia die. The dead fish cover the beach, their little eyeball-less carcasses staring up at you as you try to gingerly walk around them.

This mass exodus to "the other side" has been going on for some time, as evidenced by the shoreline made not of sand, but of billions of dead fish bones. Layers and layers and layers of tiny fish bones cover the shore. (I recommend wearing close-toed shoes rather than flip-flops like I did.)

Sounds lovely, right? Actually, the park is lovely, and I would definitely stay there again, smelly fish or not.

While you're in the area, drive about an hour south, and you'll visit the strangest place I've been yet: [Slab City, California](#), the last free city in America.

To see more photos, [follow more of my weird, wacky, and wonderful RV adventures on Flickr](#).

My next stop: [Strange RV Encounters: I Found Mollie's Nipple Near Purgatory](#).

Read how it all began: [Strange RV Encounters: An Introduction](#).

Published by [Juliana Mathews](#)

In the summer of 2011, Juliana bought an RV, gave up most of her possessions and began traveling around the country with her cat, seeing all the weird, wacky and wonderful roadside attractions. She writes... [View profile](#)

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