

Auto Accessories Answer Desert Dweller's Prayers

Living below sea level, like I do, puts some serious demands on your equipment. First there's the sun—oh my god the sun. Around here we get over 300 days of blazing sun each year and it rarely dips below 90 in the daylight. Then there's the wind, relentless and uncaring it whips up from the west. The frenzy of dirt and debris that it carries combines with the blistering sun to turn our days into a sandy blast furnace.

All I can say is that sometimes paradise comes with a price. You see, I'm one of the hardy residents of the famed Salton Sea out in the California desert. After my early retirement from the ACME wire hanger factory in Pasadena, me and the Mrs. decided to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. We heard about this enclave of retirees from some friends in Palm Springs who knew it would be the perfect spot for us.

Avid birdwatchers, the wife were overjoyed to settle in this beautiful little community known as the Salton Sea. Hailed as the "crown jewel of avian biodiversity," this area was perfect for us. Since it's smack in the middle of the Pacific flyway, the Salton Sea teams with American white pelicans and other fish-eating birds who stop on these salty shores for little snack. I'm currently writing a comprehensive study of these endangered birds, and the Salton Sea is pelican central.

Each day, we load our camera gear into our Toyota Camry and head out into the desert. Getting to the outskirts of our community is the best way to get some shots of these beautiful birds in action. This is when things get tricky. The temperature around these parts can skyrocket to over 120 degrees in the day and since there are no facilities nearby, we're required to gear-up for these outings.

The first thing we make sure to take along is our auto Sun Shade. We do of course bring shades for our heads and eyes, but the auto Sun Shade is also a must. When we leave the car for even a few minutes, things tend to heat up quickly. With the Sun Shade, the car's interior stays nice and cool. Without the shade in the windshield, the car resembles a crematorium more than it does a vehicle.

Another must-have accessory is one of those refrigerators that plug into the lighter. Since we don't smoke, unlike most Salton Seanites, we just keep that baby plugged in the whole time. That way, after a long, hot hike, we come back to cold beers, sodas and my wife's famous egg salad. It also makes a nice cool spot to store our film until we get it to the developer.

Once home, the car's still not out of danger. The trailer coach we live in lacks a garage of course, so I built a makeshift carport from an abandoned Quonset hut I found in the desert. It keeps most of the weather off the car, but I supplement the protection with a quality car cover. When that wicked wind kicks up from the west, the cover keeps my precious Camry snug as a bug.

Those are my tips for easy-livin', desert-style. My little desert flower and I are loading up the Camry and driving over to the early bird special at Rezac's in El Centro. In the meantime check here for [sun shades](#) and other [car accessories](#) designed to make your desert stay all the more pleasant. - David S. Brooks

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

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