

ABOUT THE CENTER

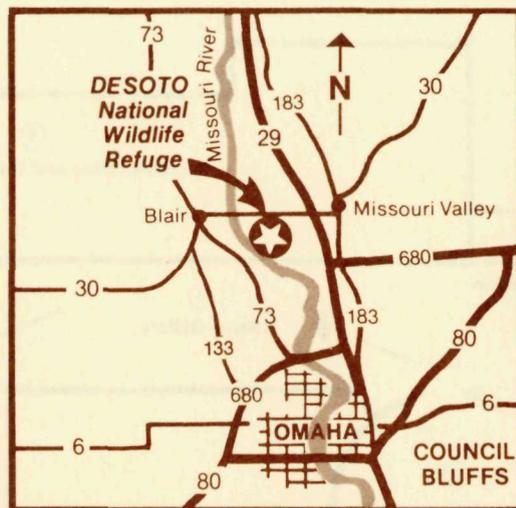
Both DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge and the DeSoto Visitor Center are operated free of charge by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency within the Department of Interior. The center's design was begun in 1978 by Astle Ericson and Associates of Omaha, Nebraska. Actual construction was initiated in 1979 by Lueder Construction Company, also of Omaha.

The DeSoto Visitor Center is the permanent home of the artifacts recovered during the 1968-69 excavation of the steamboat *Bertrand*. The 26,000-square-foot building contains exhibits interpreting the importance of the *Bertrand* as part of the historical development and ecological change that occurred within the Missouri River Basin. In addition to artifact storage and exhibit areas, the building houses a laboratory for artifact treatment, a collection records area and library.

Ever since the *Bertrand* excavation began in 1968, there has been a need to establish a secure storage facility for what is now recognized as the finest collection of Civil War-era artifacts in existence. Congress appropriated nearly five million dollars to complete the visitor center beginning in 1978. The DeSoto Visitor Center was opened to the public on July 11, 1981, after four years of planning and nearly two years of construction.

For more than a decade the *Bertrand* collection has undergone extensive treatment to preserve it for future generations. The visitor center provides both the security and controlled environmental conditions necessary for the continued preservation of this unique historical resource. Visible storage of the *Bertrand* artifacts and exhibits depicting the history and wildlife of the Missouri River Basin tell the story of Western Expansion. The opportunity to observe hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl and dozens of eagles during the fall and winter, coupled with the chance to see resident wildlife, has made the DeSoto Visitor Center a major regional attraction.

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge is midway between Blair, Nebraska, and Missouri Valley, Iowa, on U.S. Highway 30. The refuge is located approximately 30 miles north of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area via Interstate 29, Highway 73 or Highway 133. The visitor center is conveniently located one mile south of the refuge entrance on U.S. Highway 30.



The DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily, except New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Additional interpretive displays are located at the *Bertrand* excavation site three miles south of the visitor center. The excavation site and other recreational facilities are open daily from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. during the refuge's public use season (April 15 through September 30).

For further information please contact:



Refuge Manager
DeSoto National Wildlife
Refuge
Rt 1, Box 114
Missouri Valley, Iowa 51555
Telephone: 712-642-4121



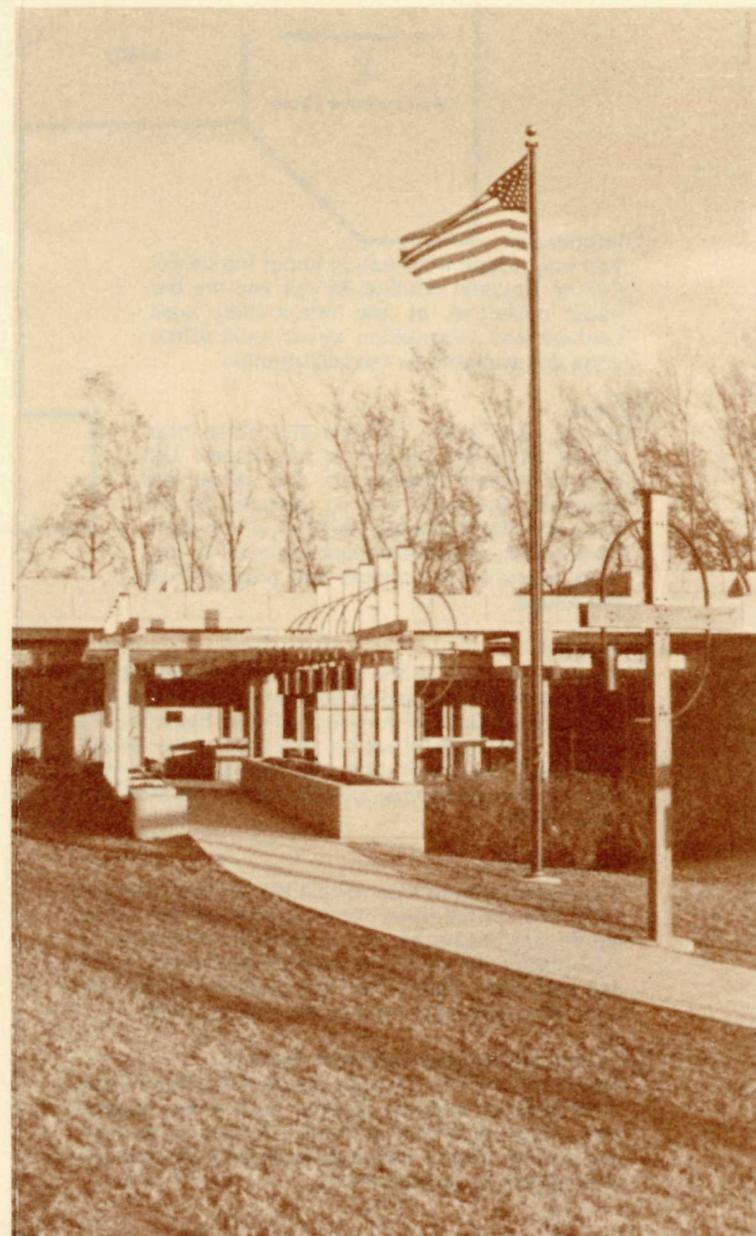
Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

VISITOR CENTER RULES

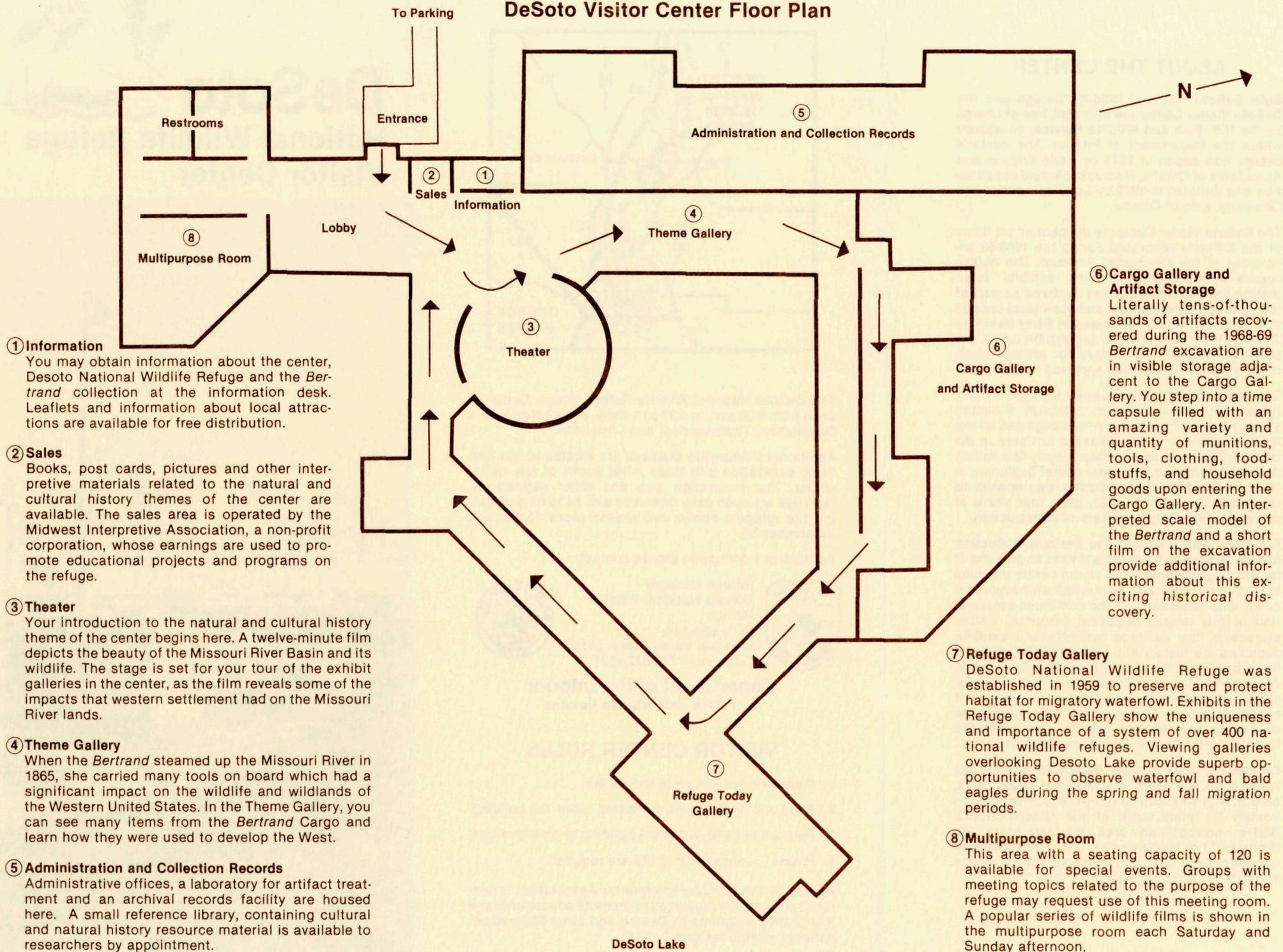
1. Please do not smoke in the center.
2. Food and drink are not permitted within the building.
3. Pets are not allowed in the building or on the refuge.
4. Please . . . shoes and shirts are required.

Printed by the Midwest Interpretive Association, a non-profit corporation organized to promote educational and interpretive programs at DeSoto and other Midwestern national wildlife refuges.

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center



DeSoto Visitor Center Floor Plan



① Information

You may obtain information about the center, Desoto National Wildlife Refuge and the *Bertrand* collection at the information desk. Leaflets and information about local attractions are available for free distribution.

② Sales

Books, post cards, pictures and other interpretive materials related to the natural and cultural history themes of the center are available. The sales area is operated by the Midwest Interpretive Association, a non-profit corporation, whose earnings are used to promote educational projects and programs on the refuge.

③ Theater

Your introduction to the natural and cultural history theme of the center begins here. A twelve-minute film depicts the beauty of the Missouri River Basin and its wildlife. The stage is set for your tour of the exhibit galleries in the center, as the film reveals some of the impacts that western settlement had on the Missouri River lands.

④ Theme Gallery

When the *Bertrand* steamed up the Missouri River in 1865, she carried many tools on board which had a significant impact on the wildlife and wildlands of the Western United States. In the Theme Gallery, you can see many items from the *Bertrand* Cargo and learn how they were used to develop the West.

⑤ Administration and Collection Records

Administrative offices, a laboratory for artifact treatment and an archival records facility are housed here. A small reference library, containing cultural and natural history resource material is available to researchers by appointment.

⑥ Cargo Gallery and Artifact Storage

Literally tens-of-thousands of artifacts recovered during the 1968-69 *Bertrand* excavation are in visible storage adjacent to the Cargo Gallery. You step into a time capsule filled with an amazing variety and quantity of munitions, tools, clothing, food-stuffs, and household goods upon entering the Cargo Gallery. An interpreted scale model of the *Bertrand* and a short film on the excavation provide additional information about this exciting historical discovery.

⑦ Refuge Today Gallery

Desoto National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1959 to preserve and protect habitat for migratory waterfowl. Exhibits in the Refuge Today Gallery show the uniqueness and importance of a system of over 400 national wildlife refuges. Viewing galleries overlooking Desoto Lake provide superb opportunities to observe waterfowl and bald eagles during the spring and fall migration periods.

⑧ Multipurpose Room

This area with a seating capacity of 120 is available for special events. Groups with meeting topics related to the purpose of the refuge may request use of this meeting room. A popular series of wildlife films is shown in the multipurpose room each Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

DeSoto Lake