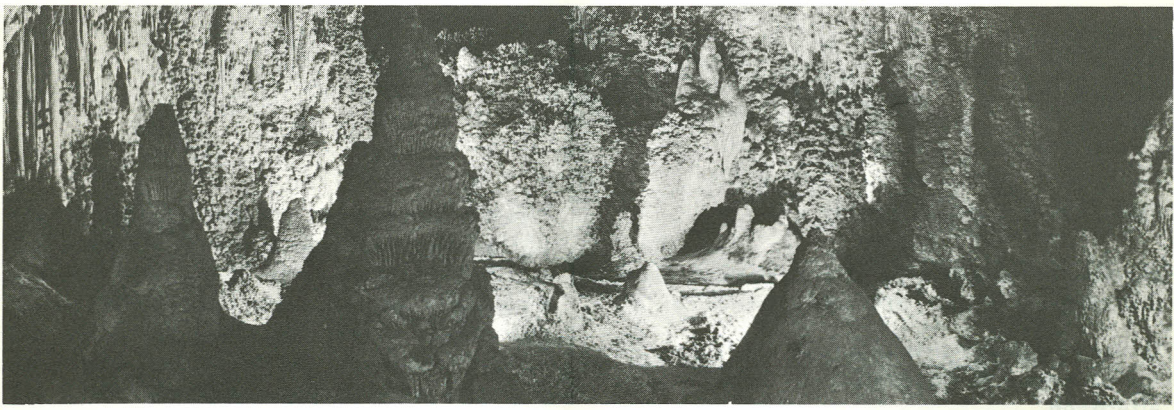


Carlsbad Caverns

NATIONAL PARK • NEW MEXICO

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Lying within the dry rugged foothills of the Guadalupe Mountains of southeastern New Mexico, Carlsbad Caverns National Park offers an experience of unparalleled contrasts. After strolling through the unworldly beauty of the huge underground chambers, never changingly cool and humid, you are not prepared for the quick return to the harshly contrasting Chihuahuan Desert landscape at the surface.

HOW THE CAVERNS WERE FORMED

The limestone in which the caverns formed was once a massive barrier reef at the edge of an inland arm of the sea. As millions of years passed, the reef was buried under layers of sediment.

Movements within the earth's crust slowly elevated the region. Thus, the long-buried reef was exhumed, and erosion began to cut away the overlying layers of sediment.

Rainwater and snowmelt soaked into the mantle of soil, where it absorbed carbon dioxide to become a weak carbonic acid, which continued to seep downward to the water table. Here, near the top of the permanently saturated zone, the action of the water was most effective, dissolving away the rock to create great rooms and immense galleries.

As the water table lowered and air filled the high reaches of the chambers, weakened rock masses collapsed to enlarge the rooms.

Mineral-laden water seeping into air-filled rooms decorated the chambers with countless beautiful stalactites and stalagmites wherever dripping or flowing water deposited a part of its load of dissolved limestone.

THE BAT FLIGHT

Each evening, from late spring to autumn, incredible numbers of bats spiral out of the natural entrance of the cavern. They fly southward over the rim of the escarpment to feed on night-flying insects in the valleys of the Black and Pecos Rivers. Size of the massed flights varies with weather conditions and the insect food supply. The species of bats at the caverns are beneficial to man because they feed on insects that are destructive to agricultural crops.

And each summer evening at the entrance to the caverns, just before the flight begins, a park naturalist explains the bat flight and discusses the bats in detail.

DESERT NATURE TRAIL

To become acquainted with the plants that live in this semiarid country, follow the self-guiding trail near the natural entrance to the caverns. It will lead you among plants that have adapted to the harsh conditions of the Chihuahuan Desert. A guide booklet, available at the visitor center, is keyed to numbered markers. It describes the plants and their peculiarities.

GENERAL REGULATIONS

Please pay strict heed to posted speed limits, as well as to the common prohibitions against littering, hunting or molesting of wildlife, use of firearms, and prospecting for mining claims. In addition, neither camping nor campfires are permitted within Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

Pets are not allowed within the caverns or public buildings. In other areas, they must be on leash at all times. During warm weather, it is inadvisable to leave pets inside closed automobiles. Kennel service is available.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

Carlsbad Caverns National Park is on U.S. 62-180 between Carlsbad N. Mex., and El Paso, Tex. Both cities are served by bus and plane, and both have bus service to the park. El Paso is also served by train.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND FACILITIES

A restaurant, curio shop, nursery, and kennels are in the park visitor center. They are operated by Cavern Supply Co. (address: Drawer Y, Carlsbad, N. Mex. 88220). This company also operates the underground lunchroom.

There are no overnight visitor accommodations in the park, but numerous motels, hotels, and trailer courts are nearby.

THE UNDERGROUND TOURS

Tickets for all tours must be obtained from the booth in the lobby of the park visitor center.

Uniformed personnel conduct trips through the caverns every day, morning through early afternoon.

A sweater or light wrap will add comfort to your walking trip in the caverns' year-round temperature of 56°, and you will need walking shoes for safety and comfort on steeply sloping trails.

The Walk-in Tour, a 3-mile-long, 3½-hour trip, is considered somewhat strenuous, for the steep switchback trail descends more than 800 feet. It leads to the Green Lake Room, King's Palace, Queen's Chamber, Papoose Room, and then to the underground lunchroom. The last part of the tour is the walk around the Big Room, a distance of about 1¼ miles that requires about 1½ hours. People on this tour, as well as those on all others, return to the visitor center lobby by high-speed elevator.

At the underground lunchroom, you may purchase a box lunch. There are restrooms here.

The Big Room Tour, which duplicates the last part of the walk-in tour, offers a shorter and less strenuous walk. After descending 754 feet by elevator from the lobby of the visitor center, you follow a relatively level and easy trail around the 14-acre Big Room, returning to the elevators in the underground lunchroom.

Cave photography. For safety reasons, neither flash nor time-exposure photography is permitted on the regular guided tours. Any of the uniformed employees will provide you with helpful information about photographing cavern scenes.

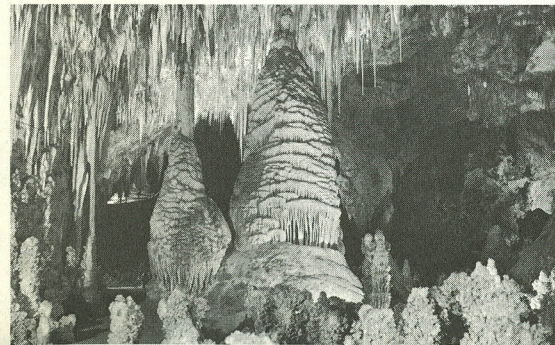
Protecting the caverns. Paved trails and handrails have been provided for your safety as well as for the protection and preservation of fragile cavern features. Please do not step from the paved surface for any reason whatsoever.

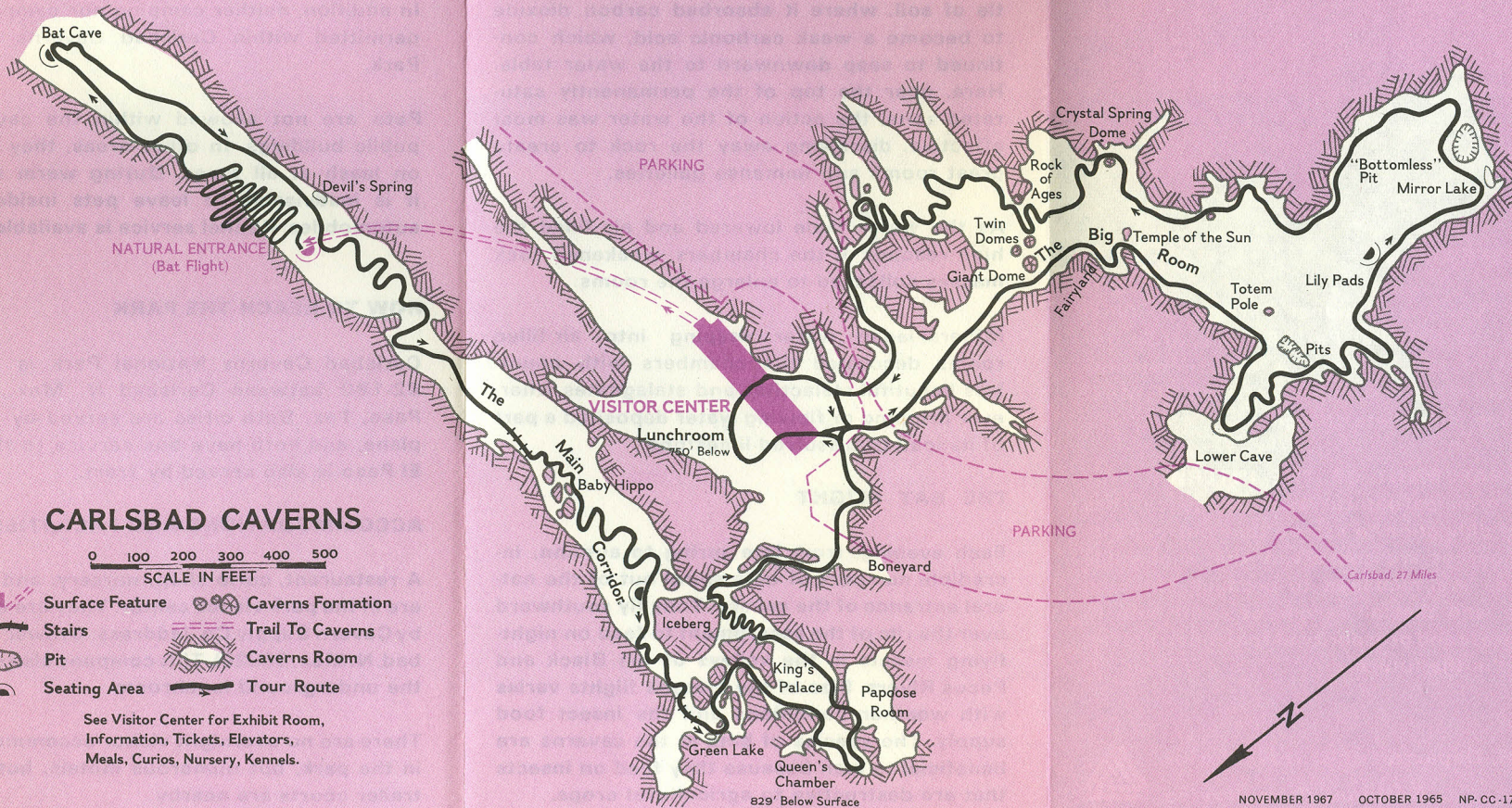
Canes, umbrellas, tripods, and similar implements may not be taken into the cave without express permission of the superintendent or one of his representatives in uniform.

Do not touch, pick up, or handle any rock or piece of cavern formation.

With the exception of the regular trips into Carlsbad Caverns under the guidance or supervision of employees of the National Park Service, no person shall enter any cave or undeveloped part or passageway of any cave situated within Carlsbad Caverns National Park without prior permission of the superintendent in writing.

Such permission will be granted only to individuals representing recognized scientific or educational institutions engaged in investigations which have demonstrable value to the National Park Service in its management and understanding of cave resources.





ADMINISTRATION

Carlsbad Caverns National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 1598, Carlsbad, N. Mex. 88220, is in immediate charge.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

