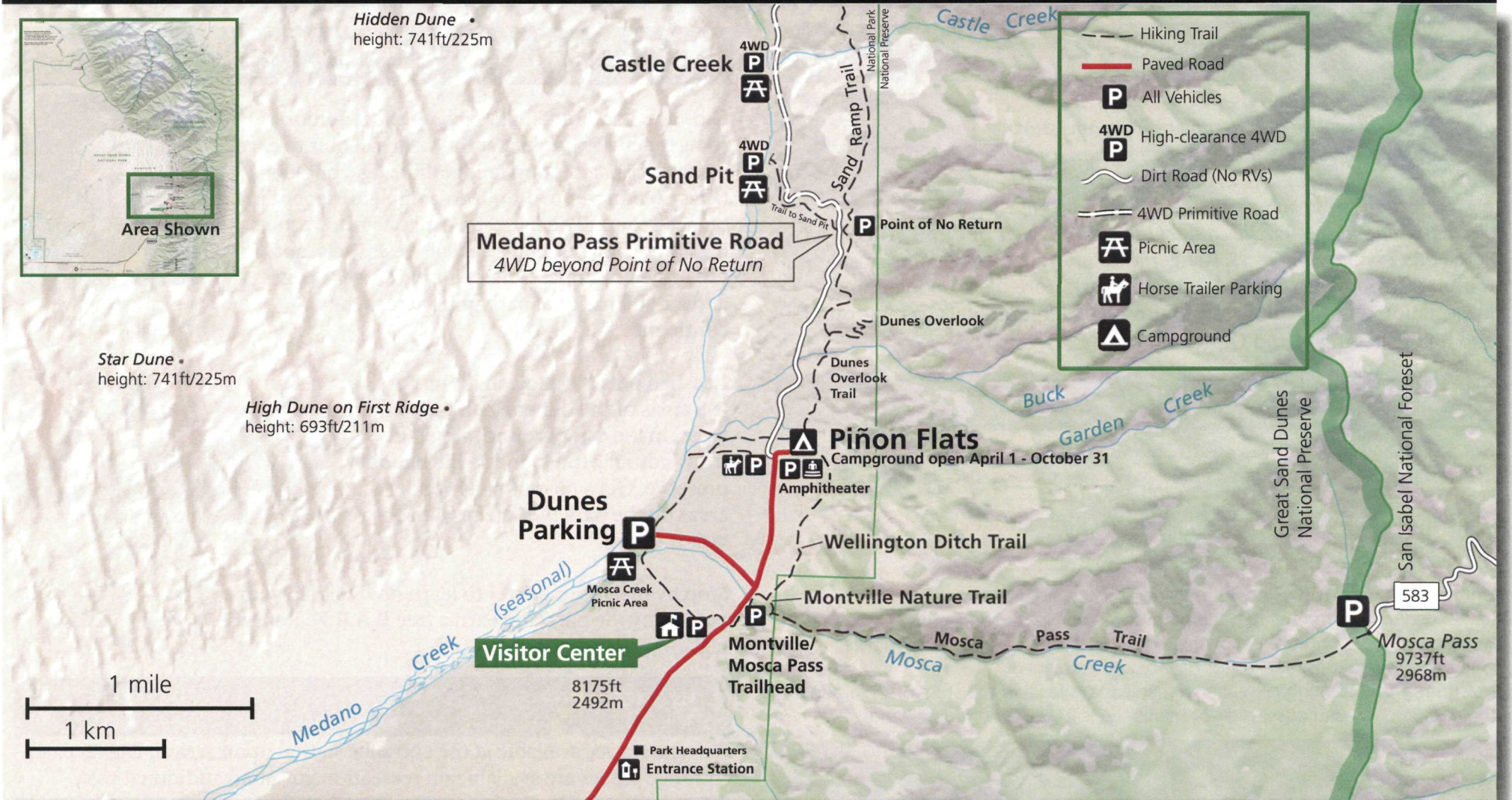


Hiking and Exploring the Main Use Area



Arrive early to avoid crowds at popular destinations in the main use area. Parking areas fill quickly on busy summer days.

from Dunes Parking Lot

Exploring the Dunes

- Hike early morning or evening to avoid 150°F (66°C) sand temperatures, high winds, or lightning
- No trails or markers
- Hike on tops of ridges for easier travel



High Dune on First Ridge, July

High Dune on First Ridge

- Not the highest or tallest, but a popular hike with a view of the entire dunefield
- Round trip hike: 2.5 miles (4 km)
- Elevation gain: 693 feet (211 m)
- Average Time: 2 hours
- GPS: 37.74908, -105.532775



Star Dune, September

Star Dune

- One of two tallest dunes in North America, it rises well above other dunes in the area
- Round trip hike: 6 miles (9.6 km)
- Elevation gain: 741 feet (225 m)
- Average Time: 5 hours
- Hike down Medano Creek bed 2 miles, then ascend ridges to its summit.
- GPS: 37.7517639, -105.5580583

from Visitor Center

Sand Sheet Loop Interpretive Trail

- Short interpretive trail
- Round trip hike: 0.25 miles (0.2 km)
- Elevation change: 50 feet (15 m)
- Average time: 20 minutes



Grasslands along the trail, July

from Montville/ Mosca Pass Trailhead



Mosca Pass, late September

Montville Nature Trail

- Forested trail along a small creek
- Borrow a trail guide at the trailhead
- Round trip hike: 0.5 mile (1 km)
- Elevation gain: 200 feet (61 m)
- Average time: 30 minutes

Mosca Pass Trail

- Views of forest and wildflowers
- Round trip hike: 7 miles (11 km)
- Elevation gain: 1400 feet (427 m)
- Average time: 3.5 hours



View from Wellington Ditch Trail, June

Wellington Ditch Trail

- View of first ridge of dunes
- Round trip hike: 2 miles (3.2 km)
- No elevation gain
- Average time (including Montville Trail): 1.5 hours

from Piñon Flats Campground, Loop 2

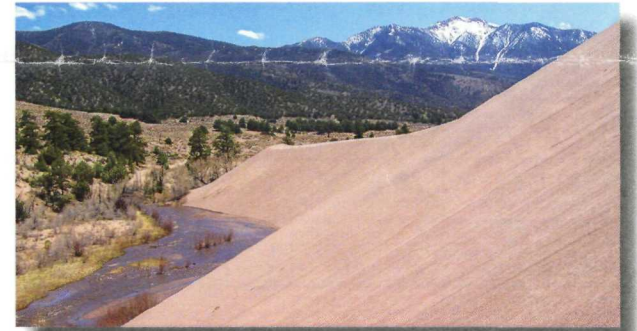


View from Dunes Overlook, August

Dunes Overlook

- View of first ridge of dunes
- Round trip hike: 2.3 miles (3.7 km)
- Elevation gain: 450 feet (137 m)
- Average time: 2 hours

from Castle Creek Picnic Area (4WD only)



Dune slope, Castle Creek Picnic Area, June

Eastern Edge of the Dunefield

- Tall dune faces rise from Medano Creek
- Round trip hike: 1 mile (1.6 km) to the top of the ridge for views of the entire dunefield
- Elevation gain: 400 feet (121 m)
- Average round trip time: 1 hour
- Vault toilet at picnic area
- Access Castle Creek Picnic Area on foot from Point of No Return. Hike down to Sand Pit Picnic Area, then continue along the creekbed to Castle Creek. This hike is 3 miles (4.8 km) round trip, with an average round trip hiking time of 1.5 hours.



Hidden Dune, late April

Hidden Dune

- Round trip hike: 4 miles (6.4 km) - no trails
- Elevation gain: 741 feet (225 m)
- Average Time: 5 hours
- Hike west/northwest into the dunefield from Castle Creek Picnic Area
- Vault toilet at picnic area
- GPS: 37.775916, -105.531912
- Can also be accessed from Dunes Parking Lot by hiking north/northwest 3 miles (4.8 km) into the dunefield. A false summit, at left in the photo, hides Hidden Dune for much of the hike.

General Information

Visitor Center and Park Store

The visitor center restrooms, lobby, exhibit areas, and park store will be undergoing renovations starting August 2022. A temporary contact station and park store will be available in the visitor center parking lot. Portable restrooms will be available during restroom renovation. Please contact the visitor center at 719-378-6395 for hours and available services. Ranger assistance, passport stamp, lost and found, restrooms, limited exhibits, and park store. Pick up maps and information on Medano Pass Primitive Road, Pinon Flats Campground, and hiking in Great Sand Dunes National Preserve.



Junior Ranger and Bark Ranger Programs

Kids age 3 and older can pick up a free Junior Ranger activity booklet at the visitor center to earn a badge or patch upon completion. The booklet takes 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete, depending on age group. The park store in the visitor center has Junior Ranger items such as vests, hats, and other memorabilia. Collect junior ranger badges at over 400 national park units across the continent!



Junior Ranger with collectible badge

Safety Tips and Reminders

Hot Sand Sand temperatures can reach over 60 degrees hotter than the air temperature, up to 150 degrees F (66C). In warmer months, hike during morning or evening to avoid heat exhaustion and burned feet.

Lightning Lightning can occur anytime during the warmer months (especially July – August), when afternoon storms approach the dunes. Avoid fatal lightning strikes by experiencing the dunes and other open areas during morning hours.

Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) It is illegal to launch, land, or operate an unmanned aircraft from within the boundaries of Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve or other national park units. This law is to protect wildlife, emergency operations, and visitor privacy and enjoyment.

Marijuana Even though recreational marijuana is legal in the state of Colorado, the consumption and possession of marijuana is ILLEGAL on federal lands.

Leashed pets are allowed in the day use areas of the dunefield, in the picnic areas, in the campground, along the front-country trails, and in the national preserve. Get a map of pet-friendly areas on the park website or at the visitor center.



Dog on leash climbing the dunes

Stop by the visitor center to learn how to help your pets enjoy the park and earn a free B.A.R.K. Ranger tag!



Weather

Plan your visit according to daytime and nighttime highs and lows, possible precipitation, and potential wind. Check weather forecasts on the park website or at the visitor center.

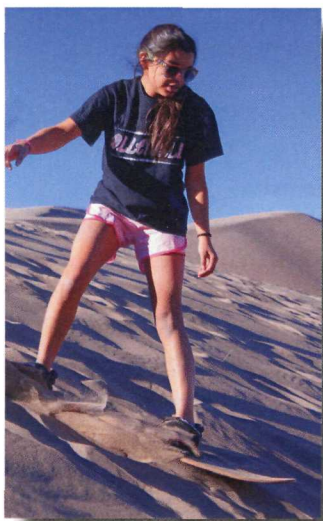
Month	Average High	Average Low	Precipitation	Snowfall
April	56°F (13°C)	28°F (-2°C)	0.9 in (2 cm)	5.5 in (14 cm)
May	66°F (19°C)	37°F (3°C)	1.1 in (3 cm)	1.3 in (3 cm)
June	76°F (24°C)	45°F (7°C)	0.9 in (2 cm)	0
July	81°F (27°C)	51°F (10°C)	1.9 in (5 cm)	0
August	78°F (25°C)	49°F (9°C)	2.0 in (5 cm)	0
September	71°F (22°C)	42°F (5°C)	1.2 in (3 cm)	0.1 in (0.2 cm)
October	60°F (15°C)	32°F (0°C)	0.9 in (2 cm)	2.8 in (7 cm)

Entrance Fees

Park passes are available at the entrance station upon arrival. Digital park entrance passes are available on recreation.gov at no additional cost.

7-day pass	Fee
Non-Commercial Vehicle and Occupants	\$25
15+ passenger vehicle, age 16+	\$15/person
Motorcycle and riders	\$20
Annual Passes	Fee
Great Sand Dunes Annual Pass	\$40
Interagency Annual Pass	\$80
Interagency Annual Senior Pass	\$20
Active Military, 4th grader, Veteran, Gold Star Family	Free
Lifetime Passes	Fee
Interagency Senior Lifetime Pass	\$80
Interagency Access Pass (permanent disability)	Free

Sandboarding and Sand Sledding



Sandboarding, August

Please note: The National Park Service does not rent sand sleds or sandboards.

Rental equipment from local businesses is the best way to make your sledding or boarding experience a success. Snow sleds and cardboard do not slide on dry sand. Contact the following businesses to rent proper equipment:

- Oasis Store, near park entrance on CO 150. Open seasonally, 719-378-2222
- Spin Drift Sandboard Rentals, Blanca, 25 miles (40 km) from the park on US 160. Open seasonally, 719-379-4410
- Sand Dunes Swimming Pool, Hooper, 32 miles (51 km) from the park on CO 17. Open year round, 719-378-2807
- Kristi Mountain Sports, Alamosa, 35 miles (56 km) from the park on US 160. Open year round, 719-589-9759

Splash in Medano Creek (seasonal in spring)



Medano Creek, late May

- Follow current and forecast flow on the park website: nps.gov/grsa. In an average year, the creek flows at the Dunes Parking Area April through June, with peak flow around late May.
- Medano Creek is easily accessible from the Dunes Parking Area with a standard 2WD vehicle, or Sand Pit and Castle Creek Picnic Areas with 4WD high-clearance vehicles.
- ‘Surge flow’ is a globally rare phenomenon, occurring during high flow. Small sand dams form in the creek, breaking about every 20 seconds.
- **Avoid May and June weekends due to especially large crowds and long traffic lines.**
- **Mosquitoes may emerge in large numbers when water levels are low from mid-June through July.**

Experience the Night

- To protect our dark skies, there are no outdoor lights illuminating the parking areas or dunes.
- Carry a flashlight at all times, but keep flashlight use to a minimum to protect your own night vision as well as that of other visitors and wildlife. Don't use your phone flashlight; preserve its battery in case of emergency. If possible, use a red light, which does not affect night vision.
- Be sure to note the location of the Dunes Parking Area in relation to the line of cottonwood trees so you can find your vehicle when you return.



Milky Way over Dune Ripples, September. Great Sand Dunes is certified as an International Dark Sky Park. Whether you explore the dunes under a full moon, or stargaze on a moonless night, experiencing the night here can be inspiring.