

Safety

Be prepared for the weather during your visit to Scotts Bluff National Monument.

Summer weather can bring high temperatures and low humidity. It is important to have plenty of water with you to prevent dehydration, especially during longer walks or hikes. Wear a hat and light-colored clothing to help regulate your body temperature.

Winter weather varies greatly. October, November, and April are generally mild; December through February are the coldest months. Wind chill is the most dangerous factor of winter weather. During cold weather, do not leave skin exposed to the air, and dress in layers to avoid overheating.

Weather Averages by Month						
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
High	37	44	50	61	70	82
Low	11	16	22	31	41	52
Prec.	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.6	2.8	2.6
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
High	88	87	77	65	50	38
Low	58	56	45	34	22	12
Prec.	2.1	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.6

Elevations at Scotts Bluff National Monument			
	Feet	Meters	Rise in Elevation
North Platte River	3,880	1,183	Local base level
Scotts Bluff Visitor Center	4,224	1,288	344 feet (105 meters) above river
Scotts Bluff Summit	4,659	1,420	435 feet (133 meters) above museum

Scotts Bluff National Monument 190276 Old Oregon Trail P.O. Box 27 Gering, NE 69341	(308) 436-9700 nps.gov/scbl
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Prairie rattlesnakes, while common, do not pose great danger to humans. If given the chance, they will try to avoid humans.

- If you encounter a rattlesnake, stop where you are. This gives the snake time to find a way to escape from you. This also allows you to locate the snake and be able to move away from it safely.

-To keep small children safe, do not allow them to walk unattended, either ahead or behind you.

-Avoiding tall grass, cracks or holes in rocks, and not putting hands or feet into places you cannot see into, will help you to avoid snakes altogether.

If bitten by a rattlesnake, do not panic. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.



Common Animals and Plants

Mule deer	Rocky Mountain juniper
White-tailed deer	Ponderosa pine
Eastern cottontail rabbit	Great Plains yucca
Rattlesnake	Winterfat
Bull snake	Needleandthread grass
Black-billed magpie	Blue grama
American robin	Side-oats grama
Townsend's solitaire	Western snowberry
Rufous-sided towhee	Blackroot sedge

Scotts Bluff

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Monument
Nebraska

Hiking Trails



Throughout time, Scotts Bluff has been viewed as a landmark for those trekking a trail through history. Even a short walk at Scotts Bluff National Monument offers a glimpse of the varied resources of the area. Short and mixed-grass prairie, wildflowers, native trees and shrubs, geologic features, historic features, and many species of birds and mammals are some of the things you may encounter during your visit.

This is a national monument, so all birds, animals, plants and rocks are protected by law and cannot be removed or harmed.

- Please do not deface the bluff or take any rocks as souvenirs.
- The wildlife of the area is best viewed quietly from the trails. Harassment of the wildlife is illegal.
- Please do not gather wildflowers or other plant parts. These plants are a very important part of the fragile mixed-grass prairie ecosystem.
- Help us to keep the scenery striking and litter-free.

The trails are open from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week, year round. All private vehicles, hikers, and bicycle riders entering the monument are required to purchase a park entrance fee pass. Inquire at the visitor center about hiking the South Bluff area or the north side of the monument. For more information, contact the visitor center at (308) 436-9700, extension '0'.

Pets are allowed on the trails, but must be kept on a leash at all times, which shall not exceed 6 foot in length. This helps to ensure the safety of your pets, the wildlife that lives here and other visitors to the monument.

For your safety, please stay on the trails. The rock along the Summit Trails and Saddle Rock Trail is soft and crumbly; leaving the paved trails can be extremely dangerous.

Prairie rattlesnakes are common in the area. They are generally shy and avoid humans, but will strike if threatened. The snakes can easily be seen from the trail. Off-trail they may be hidden by the vegetation.

Summit Trails

On clear days, from the summit parking area you can see two prominent landmarks. To the east is Chimney Rock, 23 miles (37 km) away. To the west is Laramie Peak, 100 miles (158 km) away. Two paved trails lead from the parking area to either the North or South Overlooks.

North Overlook Trail

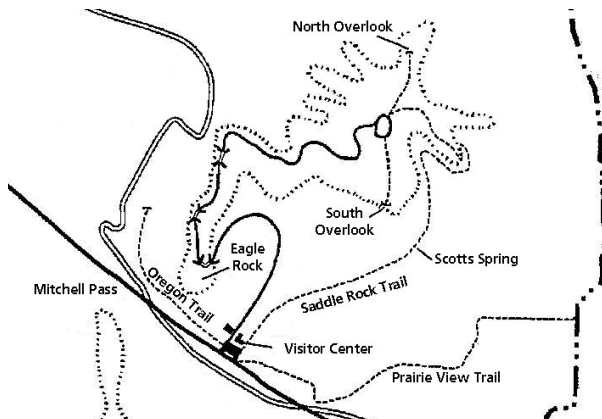
Length: 0.5 miles (0.8 km), one way
Surface: Asphalt

The North Overlook provides one of the most amazing views of the North Platte River Valley and the badlands that forced wagon trains to detour through Mitchell Pass. Along the trail, the highest point on the bluff is marked at 4,659 feet (1,420 m) above sea level. This marker now sticks up above the surface of the surrounding rock, showing the amount of erosion that has occurred in the 75 years since the marker was placed. It is easy to see how soft the rock is and why it is important to stay on the paved trails in this area.

South Overlook Trail

Length: 0.13 miles (0.2 km), one way
Surface: Asphalt

The viewpoint at the end of this trail allows you to see Mitchell Pass, the visitor center and remnants of the Oregon Trail. The trail also offers you a view of the geological layers of the bluff. Two volcanic ash layers are visible in the rocks. Can you find them?



Saddle Rock Trail

Length: 1.6 miles (2.6 km), one way
Surface: Asphalt
Strenuous
Elevation Change: 435 feet (133 m)

This trail leads from the visitor center area to the summit of Scotts Bluff. The first one-third of the trail is relatively level as you travel across the prairie to Scott's Spring. According to one legend, the spring is one of the sites where the remains of fur trapper Hiram Scott may have been found in the early 1800's. The spring is fed by a natural "cistern" that collects rain and snowmelt runoff from the bluff and releases it to the surface.

The steepest portion of the trail is the next half-mile (0.8 km), from the spring to the foot tunnel. The tunnel and trail, along with the summit road and visitor center, were built in the 1930's as federal works projects. This part of the trail passes through a very active rock fall area. Rocks break off regularly here, and slide or fall down the steep side of the bluff.

Walking off trail or climbing on the rocks is prohibited. Please stay on the trail. This area is occasionally closed following rock falls until the debris can safely be cleared. Check at the visitor center for conditions.



Oregon Trail Pathway

Length: 0.5 miles (0.8 km), one way
Surface: Asphalt
Moderate
Elevation Change: 85 feet (26 m)

The Murphy, Conestoga, Studebaker wagons and Mormon Hand Cart (displayed April through October) in front of the monument administrative building mark the start of the trail. When the trail surface changes from asphalt to dirt, you begin walking "on" the Oregon Trail. Today, after nearly 150 years of erosion of the soft rocks, individual wheel ruts are not visible. What is visible is called a "swale", which is the deep roadbed that was created by wagons travelling single file through Mitchell Pass.

After crossing Mitchell Pass, the trail becomes paved again, and the Oregon Trail is marked with wooden posts. Near the end of the hiking trail is the site of where William Henry Jackson camped and sketched while working as a bullwhacker on a wagon train in 1866.

Some of the more common plants along this trail include great plains yucca, skunkbush sumac, wolfberry, juneberry, Rocky Mountain juniper and rabbitbrush. Poison ivy and prairie rattlesnakes are common in the tall grass and brush along the sides of the trail, making it important to stay on the trail.



Prairie View Trail

Length: 1.2 miles (1.9 km), one way
Surface: Asphalt
Moderate
Elevation Change: 50 feet (15 m)

This trail leads from the visitor center area to the east boundary of the monument. This is the only trail in which bicycles are allowed. As you travel east, the trail gives some of the best views of Saddle Rock. Turn around and look behind you and you will see Mitchell Pass, Eagle Rock and Sentinel Rock.

After about one-half mile, the trail crosses a large ravine, which shows that the base of the bluffs is eroding along with the top and sides of the bluffs. Notice how juniper and other shrubs are found only within the ravine in this area. The ravine offers shelter from the sun and wind and has more abundant moisture, allowing the trees and shrubs to survive. Only the hardy prairie grasses and plants can survive the dry, windswept prairie above the ravine.

Some of the more common plants along this trail are the Great Plains yucca, Rocky Mountain juniper, and the grasses common to mixed-grass prairie such as western wheatgrass, little bluestem, buffalo grass, side-oats grama and needle-and-thread grass.

