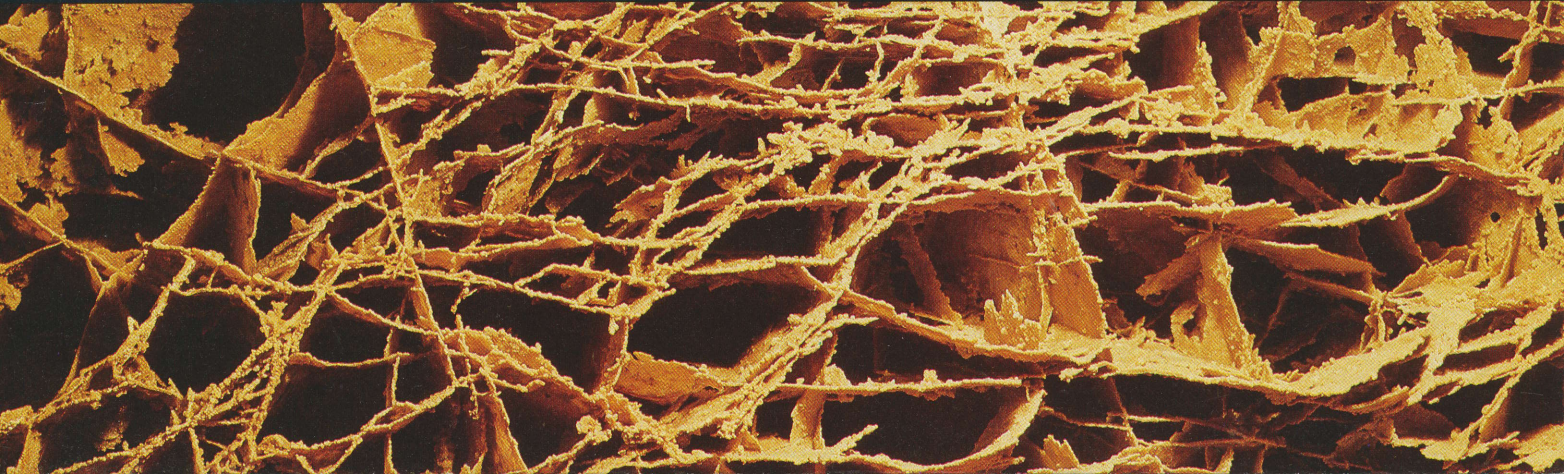
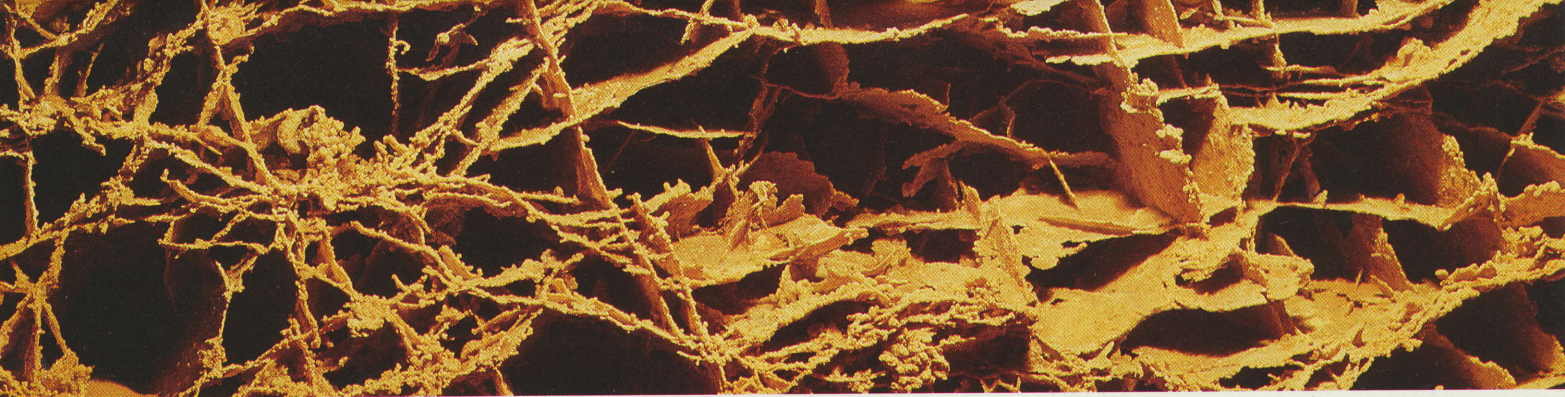


Wind Cave

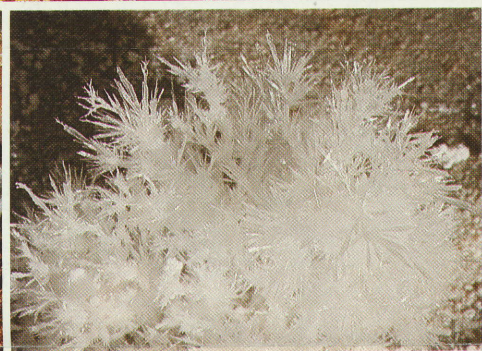
National Park
South Dakota

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

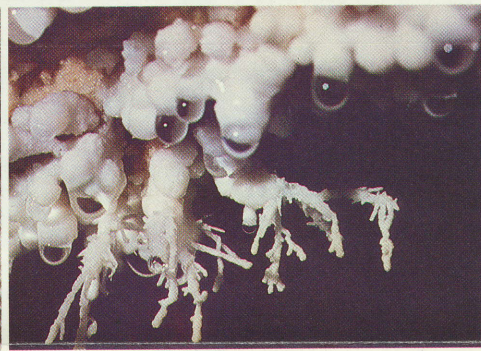




Flowstone and stalactites



Frostwork



Popcorn and helictites



Helictite "bush"

"... we made our way down the stairway against the very strong wind and then began our descent proper, into the wonderful, indescribably wonderful cave—down, down into the very 'bowels of the earth.'"—an early explorer of Wind Cave, 1890.

What tempted the first explorers of Wind Cave to leave behind their safe, familiar world and venture into the dark, unknown, almost lifeless depths of Wind Cave? Was it a search for hidden natural treasures?



Alvin McDonald was not yet 18 when he began exploring Wind Cave in 1890. The diary he kept of the cave's "inside workings" documents this systematic probe, which opened up many passages.

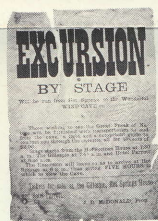
Curiosity? Was it the thrill of going where no man or woman had gone before?

Records of the earliest excursions into Wind Cave suggest that people entered the cave for all these reasons. Today visitors come to Wind Cave National Park to meander through some of the cave's more than 60 kilometers (37 miles) of passageways seeking similar experiences.

However, don't let the park's name fool you. There is much more to Wind Cave National Park than its underground geological wonders. A diverse mix of wildlife, including bison, pronghorn, and prairie dogs, dwell in the 11,352 hectares (28,060 acres) of rolling grasslands, pine forests, hills, and ravines that cover its sunlit upper layer. Here you can see a small remnant of prairie and begin to imagine the scene that greeted westward-bound 19th century pioneers—not farms and cities, as today, but open plains stretching across the middle of the continent. A piece of that prairie is preserved here in its almost natural state.

The Wind Cave area has been protected since 1903 when it became our seventh national park. Although native Americans may have known of the cave, it was not discovered by white men until 1881 when two brothers, Jesse and Tom Bingham, heard a loud whistling noise. The sound led them to a small hole in the ground, the cave's only natural opening. A wind was said to be blowing with such force out of the hole that it knocked Jesse's hat off. That wind, which gave the cave its name, is created by differences between atmospheric pressures in the cave and outside. This wind can still be noticed at the cave entrance.

It was left to later adventurers like Alvin McDonald to follow that wind and unearth the cave's extensive network of passageways containing "boxwork," "popcorn" and "frostwork" formations, and other delicate, irreplaceable features. Young Alvin and others who explored the cave before the turn of



Wind Cave's early popularity gave rise to commercial ventures such as a stagecoach trip to the cave from Hot Springs. Handbills proclaimed the cave "the Great Freak of Nature."

the century were fascinated by what they found—chocolate-colored crystals, formations resembling faces or animals, and chambers that inspired names such as the "Garden of Eden" and the "Dungeon."

Reports of these discoveries drew a stream of curious tourists to the cave. Local entrepreneurs, including the McDonald family, blasted open passages and guided tourists through for a fee. Cave specimens were removed and sold. Today the cave's fragile features are protected.

To witness the beginning of the formation of

Wind Cave, one of the world's oldest caves, you would had to have been here at least 60 million years ago. Then, the same tremen-



Visitors who toured Wind Cave before it became a national park in 1903 were led by private guides who provided candles to light the way. Groups often stopped to pose for a souvenir photograph.

dous forces that uplifted the Black Hills cracked this area's limestone layers. Over millions of years water trickling through these fissures dissolved the rock and carved out the complex labyrinth of the cave.

It was after the cave formed that most of the colorful cave formations began to decorate its walls. One of the most prominent features in Wind Cave is "boxwork" (see top photograph)—thin, honeycomb-shaped structures of calcite that protrude from the walls and ceilings. Nowhere else in the world can such a large display be seen. Some of the better known cave formations, such as stalactites and stalagmites, are rare here.

You might wonder if after more than 100 years of exploration there is anything new to discover in Wind Cave. There are more than a thousand passages yet to be explored. In 1891 Alvin McDonald wrote in a diary of his cave trips: "Have given up the idea of finding the end of Wind Cave." The better-equipped spelunkers of today have not given up. They are continuing to push farther and farther into the cave's cool, black recesses.

A Sanctuary for Wildlife



Pronghorn



Prairie dogs



Coyote



Mule deer

Vast open prairies can look deceptively empty. But take a closer look. A small dark shape on the horizon may actually be a bison grazing knee-deep in bluestem and other grasses. You may glimpse a well-camouflaged coyote hunting among the prairie dog "towns." Slowly comes the realization that the nutrient-rich plants of the plains support an abundance of wildlife.

When first established, Wind Cave National Park's main purpose was to protect the cave and assist visitors in enjoying it. But by 1912 the protection and reestablishment of native wildlife within the park's boundaries was recognized as an equally important goal.

Among the park's foremost missions as a wildlife sanctuary was the restoration of populations of bison, elk, and pronghorn to the Black Hills. By the late 1800s these animals had been eliminated from this part of their range, largely because of uncontrolled hunting. The story of the bison's return reflects the success of the park's management programs. Starting with 14 bison donated by the Bronx Zoo in 1913, the herd today numbers about 350.

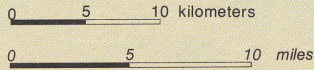
Other wildlife, including mule deer, cottontail rabbits, and many kinds of birds, live in the prairies, forests, and hills of Wind Cave. Located near the middle of the country, the

park embraces animal and plant species common to both the East and West. Don't be surprised to see pinyon jays and ponderosa pines—both Western natives—and eastern bluebirds and American elms here.

Regulations have been established to protect you and park wildlife. Chasing or harassing wildlife is prohibited. Animals such as bison are wild and unpredictable, and may attack if disturbed. Prairie dogs may bite. Feeding wild animals is prohibited because it harms the animals. Rattlesnakes sometimes live in prairie dog burrows and can strike without warning. View animals at a safe distance and always be alert.



Touring the Park



- Paved Road
- Tunnel
- Unpaved Road

Campground

Warning Tunnels along two area routes—U.S. 16A and State Route 87—are too low for some trucks and trailers to pass through safely. Vehicles more than 3.2 meters high or 3 meters wide (10½ feet

high or 10 feet wide) should avoid using U.S. 16A. Vehicles more than 3.5 meters high or 2.7 meters wide (11½ feet high or 9 feet wide) should avoid Rt. 87. See map for tunnel locations.



To Devils Tower NM and Yellowstone NP

WYOMING
SOUTH DAKOTA

To Belle Fourche, S. D., Theodore Roosevelt NP, and Canada

To Newell, S. D.

Bear Butte State Park

To Wall, S. D. and Badlands NP

To I-90 and Yellowstone NP

Black Hills National Forest

Jewel Cave National Monument

Mount Rushmore National Memorial

Custer State Park

Wind Cave National Park

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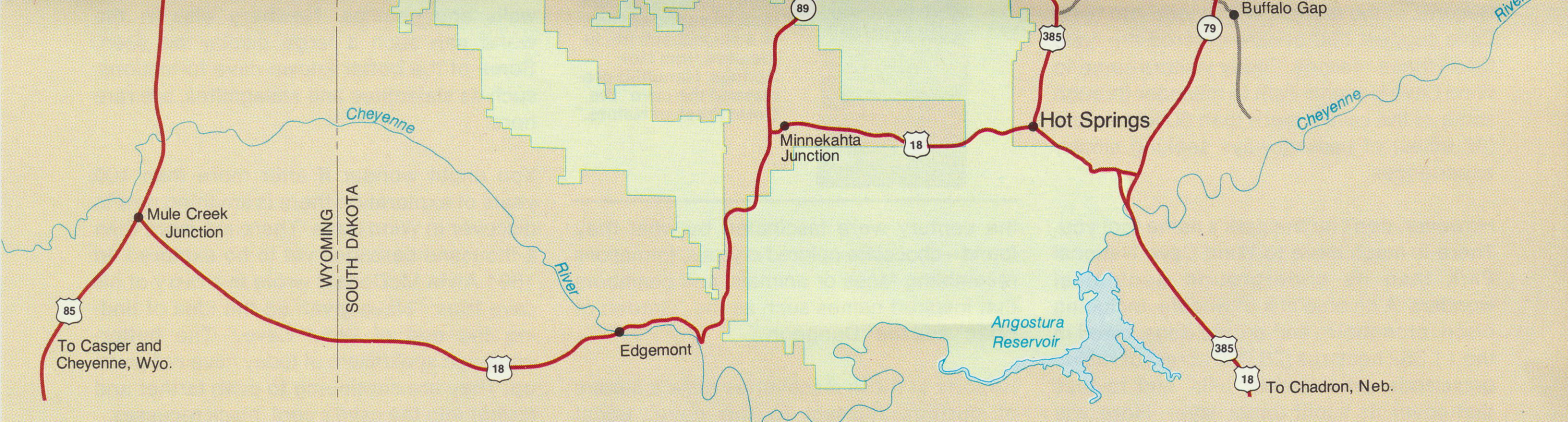
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Visitor Center

Obtain a schedule of activities and cave tour tickets. Human and natural history exhibits are displayed. Concessioner sells food in summer.

Activities

Rangers give campfire talks nightly in the sum-

mer besides leading cave tours. Two self-guiding trails are available. Roadside exhibits explain park features.

Places to Stay

Elk Mountain, the park campground, is open on a first-come, first-served basis. A fee is charged. Water, wood,

picnic tables, rest-rooms, and fireplaces provided. Primitive camping in winter.

Private and public campgrounds are available outside the park. Motels, hotels, camp supply stores, and service stations are in Hot Springs and Custer, S.D.

Handicap Access

The visitor center and campground are accessible to wheelchairs.

Regulations

Build fires only in campground fireplaces. Don't leave them unattended. Camp only in the campground. Pets must always be physi-

cally restrained and are not allowed in buildings or the cave. When stopping along the road, use a pulloff. Driving off the road is prohibited; it damages the prairie. Obey traffic signs. Dump waste water in special sinks in restrooms, not on the ground. Guns and other

weapons must be packed to prevent their use. Hunting is prohibited.

Touring the Area

From Wind Cave you can easily visit Custer State Park, Jewel Cave, and other sites. See map.

Touring the Cave

Approximately 13 kilometers (8 miles) of the more than 60 kilometers (37 miles) of passages known to exist in Wind Cave are shown.

When Wind Cave was first explored in the late 1800s, it demanded strenuous effort, some climbing and sliding, and a willingness to put aside fears of the unknown. For most visitors today, the experience is not as challeng-

ing, but it is still an intriguing adventure.

You will not enter the cave through its one natural opening, but instead through a man-made entrance nearby. Dim lighting, concrete stairs, and asphalt walkways have been added along the routes to make your visit more enjoyable. An elevator will return you to the surface at the end of the tour.

Cave Tours

Rangers lead cave tours several times daily between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Tours are offered less often during the rest of the year. Contact the park for the tour schedule at these times. A fee is charged. Purchase tour tickets at the visitor center.

Regular tours follow the first passages explored in Wind Cave 100 years

ago. Rangers lead 0.8-kilometer (0.5-mile) trips (as shown in red on the map) lasting 1¼ hours and 1.6-kilometer (1-mile) trips (shown in blue) lasting 1½ hours. Special cave tours for handicapped visitors may be arranged by calling park headquarters.

For Your Safety

Because the cave is dimly lit and the trail is often damp, wear low-

heeled, non-slip shoes. Do not wear sandals or shoes with leather or hard composition soles. The cave temperature is always about 12° C (53°F), so a light jacket or sweater is suggested.

Cave Regulations

All park features are protected, including rocks and minerals, both in the cave and on the surface. The cave is very fragile and easily damaged. Do not dis-

turb or remove any rocks or cave formations. Delicate crystal growth and boxwork are easily destroyed and skin oils discolor cave rock.

Smoking is prohibited.

For more information write: Superintendent, Wind Cave National Park, Hot Springs, SD 57747. To telephone park headquarters, call (605) 745-4600.

