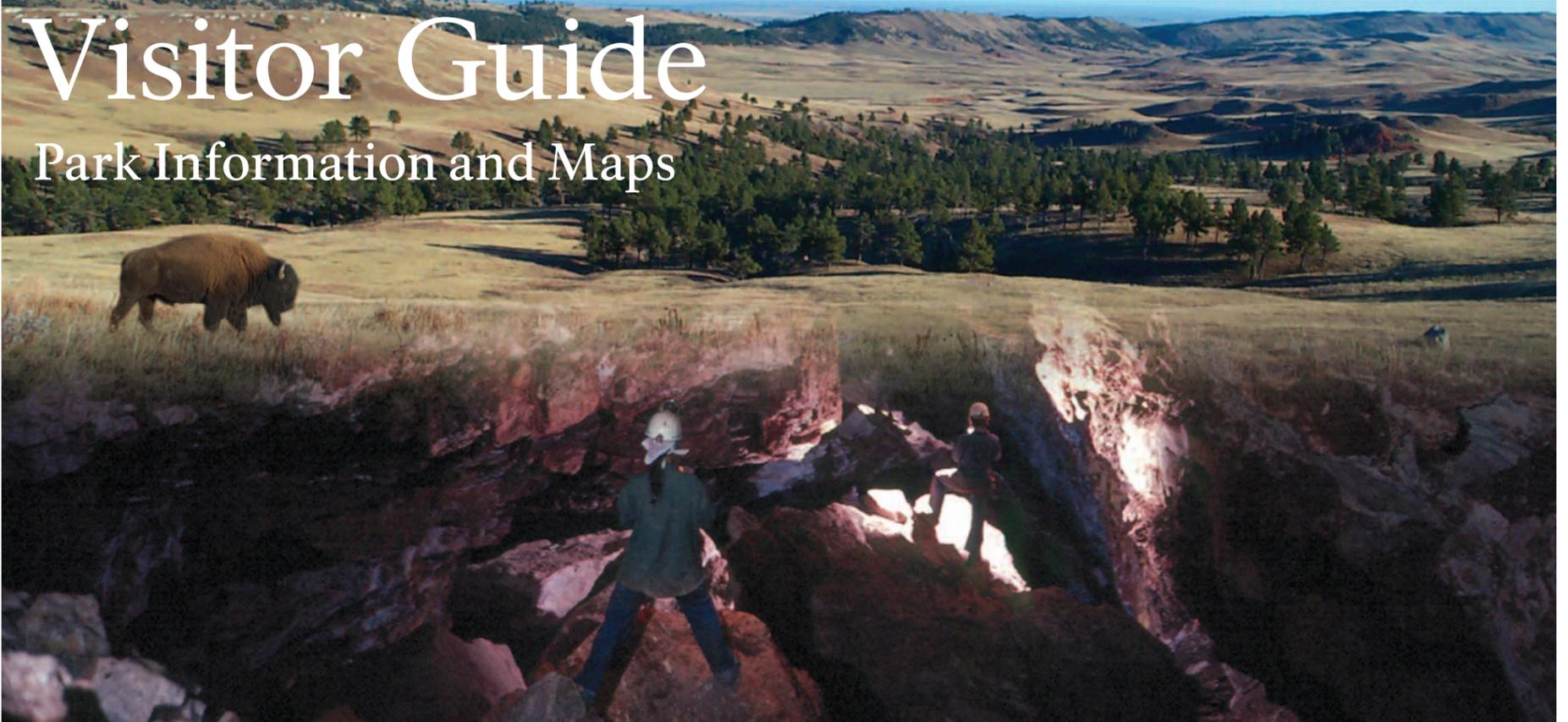




Visitor Guide

Park Information and Maps



Welcome to Wind Cave National Park!

This national park is one of the oldest in the country. Established in 1903, it was the eighth national park created and the first set aside to protect a cave.

While Wind Cave is the major attraction with its unique boxwork and significant underground cave passageways, the surface resources, including both natural and cultural resources, are also worth the stop. The buildings around the visitor center date back to the 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps. The wildlife such as bison, elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, prairie dogs, and black-footed ferrets are also exciting to view.

Today, visitors from around the world come to see these two parks in one. Our hope is that you have a safe and enjoyable visit to Wind Cave National Park, take plenty of pictures, participate in our programs, and leave nothing but footprints.

Travel Safe,

Vidal Dávila
Superintendent

Call 911 for Emergencies

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The Best of Both Worlds

What Lies Below?

Wind Cave National Park is host to one of the longest and most complex caves in the world. Currently over 142 miles of twisting passageways reside under only 1.2 square miles of surface area, creating a maze of tunnels deep under the rolling hills of the park. The cave is famous for a rare formation composed of thin calcite fins known as boxwork. Currently 95% of the world's known boxwork resides within the vastness of Wind Cave.

Portions of Wind Cave are believed to be over 300 million years old, making it one of the oldest known caves in the world. The cave has undergone many geological changes and those processes continue today. Geologists have many questions yet to answer before we can fully understand the rich, incredible world below our feet.

Back From the Brink

Many national parks are great places to view wildlife. However, that has not always been the case. In the early 1900s, many animal populations were nearing extinction because of loss of habitat or hunting pressures.



With the establishment of the Wind Cave Game Preserve in 1912, wildlife that once flourished in the area were reintroduced back to their native habitats. Because of this, and continuing efforts today, Wind Cave National Park is home to elk, bison, pronghorn, black-footed ferrets, prairie dogs, and an abundance of other wildlife. Visitors nowadays have many opportunities to see the diversity of wildlife that call Wind Cave National Park home.

From Tips to Tours

Wind Cave is considered sacred and culturally significant to many American Indians, and throughout the centuries, many tribes lived and traveled within reach of what would become Wind Cave National Park. Who discovered Wind Cave is lost to time, but in 1881, Tom and Jesse Bingham rediscovered the cave when they were attracted to the entrance by whistling noises coming out of the cave.

In 1890, the South Dakota Mining Company established a mining claim at Wind Cave and hired J.D. McDonald to manage it. The mining was unsuccessful, but McDonald realized they could make money by giving cave tours. One of J.D.'s sons, Alvin, only 16 years old, spent much of his time exploring the cave.

On January 3, 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill creating Wind Cave National Park. It was the eighth national park created and the first ever created to protect a cave. The parklands at that time were small and there were no bison, elk, or pronghorn. They came later as the park boundaries expanded.

The Endless Unknown

The night sky is an important part of the Wind Cave National Park experience. The park is a Class I airshed, meaning that there is little air pollution. Here as the day fades into night, stars and planets shimmer to life. Even for those with limited knowledge of astronomy, the night sky is a part of the park experience. It gives us a place and time to sit back and enjoy what our ancestors would have experienced, peering into the endless unknown.

Experiencing the prairie while surrounded by the inky blackness of the night, interrupted only by the glow of the northern lights or a distant lightning storm, is a tie to our past. It gives us insight into the moods of the world around us.

Where Does that Hole Go?

What tempted the first explorers of Wind Cave to leave behind their safe, familiar world, and venture into the dark, unknown depths of Wind Cave? We continue cave exploration and mapping because since the beginning of man, people have gone into areas they have known little about. The desire to explore has been prompted by many different reasons, including necessity, curiosity, and even the desire for riches.



You might wonder if after more than 100 years of exploration there is anything new to discover in Wind Cave. The cave offers limitless opportunities to venture where no one has gone before. Caves are one of the last frontiers on Earth and there is still much to be learned about these unique ecosystems.

A Sea of Grass

Wind Cave National Park is a place where one can still see a remnant of a mixed-grass prairie and 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 natural state.

Within Wind Cave National Park you can find an excellent example of a mixed-grass prairie. A mixed-grass prairie is an ecotone characterized by a mixture of the tall grass species of the eastern tall grass prairie and the short grass species of the western high plains. The mixed-grass prairie provides a home for a diversity of plants and animals and allows us to step back in time and imagine the immensity of what was once the Great Plains.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wind Cave National Park

Located in the southern Black Hills of South Dakota, Wind Cave National Park encompasses 33,851 acres of mixed-grass prairie and ponderosa pine forest, as well as one of the longest, oldest, and complex cave systems in the world.

Superintendent Vidal Dávila

Wind Cave National Park
26611 US Hwy 358
Hot Springs, SD 57747-0129 USA

Park Phone

(605) 745-4600

Website

www.nps.gov/wica

Email

wica_interpretation@nps.gov



This Visitor Guide is published by the Black Hills Parks and Forests Association, a not-for-profit organization that assists the National Park Service in its educational, interpretive, and scientific programs. For more information, see page (7).

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

Planning Your Visit

Visitor Center

The Wind Cave Visitor Center is a great place to start your park visit. The visitor center is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily, with extended hours during the summer. The visitor center is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. All cave tours begin at the visitor center and are offered daily. Exhibits, maps, book sales, backcountry permits, horse permits, information about cave tours and ranger programs, lost-and-found services, and Federal Recreational Lands Passes are all available here.

Ranger Programs

When visiting the park, plan to attend a ranger-led program. Cave tours are offered year-round while other ranger-led programs vary seasonally; see page 4 for more information.



Campground

The Elk Mountain Campground is located one mile north of the visitor center. Campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis; **generally the campground does not fill**. Each site accommodates up to eight people and two vehicles. Two accessible sites are available. The fee for camping is \$18 per night, per site. In the off-season, when facilities are limited, the fee is \$9 per night. Holders of Senior or Access passes pay half price. Group camping is available by reservation; contact the park for reservations. The campground has restrooms with water and flush toilets but no showers, electrical hookups, or dump stations. Firewood is made available for campers; the collection of firewood is prohibited. During the summer months, park rangers present campfire programs at the campground amphitheater.

Backcountry Camping

Wind Cave National Park's backcountry offers visitors an excellent opportunity to experience and enjoy the abundant resources of the park. Backcountry camping is permitted in the northwestern part of the park. **Backcountry campers must have a permit**. Permits are free and can be obtained at the visitor center.



For your safety, and for the protection of park resources, follow all regulations during your stay. Leave no trace of your visit. **Pets are not permitted in the backcountry.**

Hiking

When hiking park trails make sure to carry plenty of water; temperatures in the summer can exceed 100°F (38°C). Water is not readily available along the trails and any water found in the backcountry should be treated or boiled before drinking. Flies, mosquitoes, and wood ticks can be found in the wetter areas of the park. Be watchful for prairie rattlesnakes in prairie dog towns and near cliffs and rocky areas. Rattlesnakes will not usually strike unless provoked.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is a wonderful way to experience the park's backcountry. **All horse and pack animal use requires a free permit** which may be obtained at the visitor center. Almost all of the park is open to riding; however, **riding is prohibited directly on the hiking trails, near water sources, on roadways, and in the campground and picnic areas.**

Bicycling

Bicycling is limited to roads which are open to public motor vehicle access. **Bicycling off road, on trails, or in the backcountry is prohibited.** When bicycling, be aware that animals roam freely through the park. Keep a safe distance from bison and all wild animals. Traveling the park's back roads, NPS 5 and 6, provides a great opportunity to see the prairie area of the park.

Picnicking

The park's picnic area is located ¼ mile north of the visitor center and is open year-round. The picnic area contains tables, fire grates, and pit toilets. Drinking water is available in the summer months.

Restrooms

Restrooms are available year-round at the visitor center and in the summer months at the Elk Mountain Campground. Pit toilets are available at both the picnic area and the campground year round.

Trash and Recycling

Trash receptacles are available at the visitor center, the picnic area, and the Elk Mountain Campground. Recycling facilities are also available at these areas. The park recycles glass, aluminum cans, steel cans, and plastic containers with PETE 1 or HDPE 2 markings. Please rinse recyclables before placing them in containers.

Area Services

There are no lodging, gasoline, grocery, or restaurant services in the park; although, the visitor center has vending machines. Full services are available in the nearby towns of Hot Springs (15 minutes south) and Custer (25 minutes north), and partial services in Custer State Park (bordering Wind Cave National Park). For information on Hot Springs, call 800-325-6991; for Custer, call 800-992-9818; for Custer State Park, call 605-255-4515.



Safety and Protecting Park Resources

Protecting the Park

Park resources are for everyone to enjoy. **Do not disturb or remove plants, wildlife, antlers, bones, rocks, or any other natural or cultural feature; they are protected by federal law.** These resources are all part of the park's ecosystem and are important to the park's history and to the survival of animals and plants. Please leave these objects undisturbed so the next visitor can enjoy them.

Pets

Pets are prohibited in the backcountry and on most hiking trails. Pets are permitted on the Elk Mountain Nature Trail and on the Prairie Vista Nature Trail. Please clean up after your pet. Pets may not be left unattended and must be on a leash at all times. **Do not leave your pets in your vehicle for any length of time.** Kennel space is available in Hot Springs or Custer.

Weapons

Federal law allows people who can legally possess firearms under federal, South Dakota, and local laws to possess firearms while visiting Wind Cave National Park. **Hunting and the use of firearms is prohibited.** It is the visitor's responsibility to understand and comply with all applicable state, local, and federal firearms laws. **Federal law prohibits firearms in public buildings within this park;** these locations are posted with signs.

Wildlife

Animals in the park are wild and unpredictable. Do not approach or attempt to feed them. Feeding animals causes them to become dependent on handouts and attracts them to highways. Bison roam freely within the park and can be dangerous. Stay a safe distance from all wildlife – at least 25 yards from bison and elk.

Traveling in the Park

All vehicles (including bicycles) must remain on roadways. Off-road driving or bicycle riding is prohibited. Slow down and enjoy the view! When driving park roads, **obey all speed limits.** Speed limits are strictly enforced to protect you and the wildlife. In the last twenty years, over eighty bison have been struck and killed by motor vehicles. For your own safety, federal and state seatbelt laws are enforced.



Wind Cave through the Seasons

Summer is generally thought of as the time to travel; however, this makes it all too easy to forget that many national parks, like Wind Cave National Park, are open year-round. Each season at Wind Cave National Park offers a different experience and offers unique insights into this special landscape.



Winter

Icy winds, short days, and snow. South Dakota winters can be harsh, but the rewards of visiting Wind Cave National Park in the winter can be great. Photographers will find a special treat in the winter. Fresh snow and sparkling hoarfrost enliven the landscape. The sun sets early in the winter and provides a glorious range of color set against a muted prairie palette. Meanwhile, bison, deer, and pronghorn remain active in the winter, along with prairie dogs. Coyotes grow a thicker coat of fur and are frequently seen prowling the prairies. Elk, normally shy and rarely seen, congregate in the park during the winter and are frequently seen in large herds at dawn and dusk.

Despite such weather, the Wind Cave National Park Visitor Center is open 362 days a year, only closing on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days. Hearty visitors who come between Thanksgiving and late February generally find they only need to share the park with our resident bison. Luckily for those visitors, the weather is always good underground in Wind Cave, where temperatures stay near 54°F regardless of the outside temperature and it never snows underground (although you might spot some “frostwork” on your tour). The park also hosts special winter hikes and children’s programs; contact the park for a schedule.

Spring

Warm days and chilly nights are punctuated by sudden snow storms, only for the sun to melt the snow the next day. Spring is a season of change in the Black Hills and within Wind Cave National Park. A foot of snow will be quickly replaced by green prairie grasses and wildflowers. Pasqueflowers bloom and are then replaced by phlox and coneflower.

Spring may well be the best season to view wildlife within Wind Cave National Park as animals become more active. Migratory birds will be moving through the area on their way north, while summer residents such as burrowing owls are starting to arrive. Bison, elk, deer and pronghorn give birth in the spring and lucky visitors may see red-hued bison calves playing in the prairie.

Spring also brings more visitors to the park: environmental education programs are offered for school groups and the cave tour schedule is expanded, but only slightly so plan to arrive early. Hiking trails can be muddy, but spring is a great time to take a hike before hot summer temperatures take hold.



Summer

Long, hot summer days are punctuated by sudden thunderstorms, while warm nights bring out a variety of wildlife. Summer is the season in the Black Hills: when the most recreational opportunities are available, weather is the warmest, and wildlife is very active.

Wind Cave receives 75% of its visitation in the three summer months, for most of June through August the full diversity of cave tours and other programs is available. Even on the hottest day, the cave is still 54°F (12°C) and provides welcome relief from temperatures outside! Summer is also a good time for hiking and camping, but be sure to plan ahead. Dangers such as heat, thunderstorms, rattlesnakes, and ticks are at their height during the summer season, but the expanse of prairie is at its most splendid and sunsets can be magic.

Fall

Warm, dry days and cool nights, pierced by the haunting bugle of elk announce the arrival of fall, which comes as a welcome relief in the Black Hills. Temperatures begin to cool off after the hot summer, local attractions and parks are not as busy, and the elk are entering into their mating season.

Fall is a pleasant time to visit Wind Cave National Park, with daytime temperatures staying fairly moderate and less of a chance of precipitation than during other seasons. However, as visitation slows down, so too does the schedule of cave tours; be sure to check the schedule prior to visiting. A unique ranger-led program is offered only in the fall, the Elk Bugling Program, which gives visitors a chance to listen to and learn about the elk.



Weather

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Average High Temp.	38°F 3°C	42°F 6°C	50°F 10°C	61°F 17°C	71°F 22°C	81°F 27°C	89°F 32°C	88°F 32°C	78°F 26°C	66°F 19°C	50°F 10°C	40°F 6°C
Average Low Temp.	11°F -12°C	15°F -9°C	21°F -6°C	32°F 0°C	42°F 6°C	51°F 11°C	57°F 15°C	55°F 13°C	45°F 7°C	34°F 1°C	23°F -5°C	14°F -10°C
Average Precipitation (snowfall)	0.3" (6.6")	0.4" (5.9")	0.9" (7.4")	1.8" (7")	3.1" (2")	3.2" (0)	2.4" (0)	2.1" (0)	1.5" (0.5")	1.5" (1.5")	0.5" (5.1")	0.4" (6")

Cave Tour Information

General Information

All cave tours are ranger-guided and leave from the visitor center. The cave temperature is 54°F(12°C) year-round. A jacket or sweater is recommended. Shoes are required. Sandals are not recommended. Any clothing, footwear, or gear worn in other caves is not permitted on any cave tour due to white-nose syndrome. Tickets are sold at the visitor center. **Tickets must be purchased at least five minutes before tour times.**

Garden of Eden Tour 1 hour; 1/4 mile

This tour is the least strenuous, with only 150 stairs. It is a wonderful sample of Wind Cave. Small amounts of all of the beautiful cave formations – boxwork, popcorn, and flowstone – are seen along the trail. The tour is ideal for people with limited time or abilities. This tour enters and exits the cave by elevator.

Natural Entrance Tour 1 1/4 hours; 1/3 mile

This tour includes a visit to the only known natural entrance of Wind Cave, giving visitors the opportunity to see how the cave got its name. Participants enter the cave through a man-made entrance and journey through the middle level of the cave. Wind Cave's famous boxwork is abundant throughout this trip. Popcorn and frostwork can also be seen along the trail. Most of the 300 stairs along this route are down. This tour is moderately strenuous and exits the cave by elevator.

Fairgrounds Tour 1 1/2 hours; 1/2 mile

This tour explores both the upper and middle levels of Wind Cave. Boxwork is abundant along the trail in the middle level of the cave. In the upper level, the trail winds through large rooms and into areas where popcorn and frostwork can be seen. This is the most strenuous walking tour. There are 450 stairs along the route with one flight of 90 steps up. The tour enters and exits the cave by elevator.

Candlelight Tour 2 hours; 1 mile

Reservations strongly recommended.



Experience the cave by candlelight. This tour takes place in a less developed, unlit part of the cave. Each participant will carry a candle bucket. Shoes with non-slip soles are required. No sandals of any kind are permitted. This tour is limited to 10 people and the minimum age is 8. This strenuous tour covers one mile of rugged trail.

Accessibility Tour



The cave is partially accessible to people with limited mobility. Please call ahead to make special arrangements or ask at the information desk for an accessible tour. Limited areas of the cave are accessible to wheelchairs. The fee for the tour is \$5.00 for adults and half price for Senior or Access pass holders. Sign language tours are available with prior notice.

Wild Cave Tour 4 hours; 1/2 mile Reservations required.



Explore the cave away from the developed trails. On this strenuous tour, visitors will be introduced to the basics of safe caving while also getting to see many of the formations which are common in Wind Cave. Wear old clothes and gloves, as much of the trip includes crawling. Long pants, long sleeved shirts, and sturdy, lace-up boots or shoes with non-slip soles are required. No sandal of any kind is permitted on this tour. The park provides hard hats, lights, and kneepads. Please do not bring jewelry, watches, or other valuables on the tour. Clothing worn on the Jewel Cave Wild Caving Tour is not permitted in Wind Cave. Clothing and gear used in areas with potential white-nose syndrome contamination are not permitted in the cave. This tour is limited to 10 people and the minimum age is 16. We require a signed parental consent form for participants 16 and 17 years old.

Interagency Passes Issued Here



Cave Tour and Program Schedule	
January 2, 2014 - April 19	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	10:00, 1:00, 3:00
April 20 - May 3	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	9:30, 11:30, 1:30, 3:30
May 4 - May 23	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Natural Entrance Tour	9:00, 10:30, 11:30, 1:30, 2:30, 4:00
May 24 - May 26, Memorial Day Weekend	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	10:00, 12:00, 2:00
Natural Entrance Tour	8:40, 9:20, 10:30, 11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:00
Fairgrounds Tour	11:00, 1:00, 3:00
May 27 - June 7	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30
Natural Entrance Tour	9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 1:00, 2:00, 4:00, 5:00
June 8 - August 2	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	10:40, 12:40, 2:40
Natural Entrance Tour	8:40, 9:20, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, 5:00, 5:30, 6:00
Fairgrounds Tour	9:40, 10:20, 11:40, 12:20, 1:40, 2:20, 3:40, 4:20
Candlelight Tour	10:30, 1:30
Wild Cave Tour	1:00
Campfire Program	9:00 p.m.
August 3 - September 1	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	10:30, 1:40, 3:40
Natural Entrance Tour	9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, 5:00
Fairgrounds Tour	9:30, 11:20, 1:20, 3:20
Candlelight Tour	1:30
Wild Cave Tour	Weekends Only: August 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30, 31
Campfire Program	Nightly, call for times.
September 2 - September 20	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Natural Entrance Tour	9:00, 10:30, 11:30, 1:30, 2:30, 4:00
Evening Activity	7:00 p.m., starting on September 9th, Tue., Thu., Sat.
September 21 - October 11	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	9:30, 11:30, 1:30, 3:30
October 12 - December 31	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	10:00, 1:00, 3:00
Early 2015	
Visitor Center	8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Garden of Eden Tour	10:00, 1:00, 3:00
Schedule subject to change; please call 605-745-4600 for current schedule.	

Reservations

Tickets for most cave tours are sold on a first-come, first-served basis; however, reservations are accepted for schools or large groups. Reservations are strongly recommended for the more strenuous Candlelight Tour and required for the Wild Cave Tour. Reservations are accepted beginning one month before the tour and must be made by phone. Call 605-745-4600 for information or reservations.

Cave Tour Fees					
Tickets must be purchased at least five (5) minutes before schedule tour time.					
	Garden of Eden Tour	Natural Entrance Tour	Fairgrounds Tour	Candlelight Tour	Wild Cave Tour
Adults (17+)	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$30.00
Children (6-16)	\$5.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	**	Not Permitted
5 and Under	Free	Free	Free	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
Senior/Access Pass*	\$5.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	
* Price applies <i>only</i> to cardholders.					
** Minimum age for Candlelight Tour is 8 years old . Tickets for children 8-16 cost \$6.00					

The Wonderful Wind Cave

Wind Cave is unique from many other caves in that it generally has less active water flow, and thus fewer of the dripstone formations, or speleothems, such as the stalactites and stalagmites that are so common in other caves. In a large cave, such as Wind Cave, more common speleothems can still be found hidden amongst other cave formations. The following list of speleothems only covers a small percentage of the many formations found within Wind Cave, some of which are commonly found along tour routes and others of which are buried in the far reaches of the cave.

Boxwork



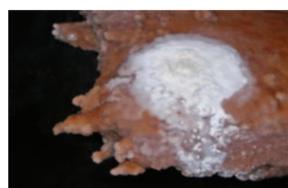
Although this cave formation is one of the most common sights in Wind Cave, it is extraordinarily rare elsewhere. In fact, 95% of the known boxwork worldwide is found within Wind Cave. Adding to boxwork's mystique, it is not a true speleothem, but a speleogen, having formed before the cave itself!

Vugs



Vugs are pockets in the limestone cave walls that can be lined with crystals. The crystals can be large or small, clear or colored, quartz or calcite, dogtooth spar or nailhead spar, but they are all beautiful. Visitors with sharp eyes will spot these formations hidden in the walls along all tour routes.

Moonmilk



Moonmilk's origins are almost as strange as its name. This cave formation looks somewhat like cottage cheese splattered on the cave walls. It has been hypothesized to be either the result of bacterial action on limestone or hydrated calcite precipitates.

Calcite Rafts



Rock generally can't float on water, but calcite rafts do. Although a lump of calcite would sink instantly in water, calcite rafts are thin sheets of calcite which coalesce around specks of dust floating on the top of still water within a cave. Perfect stillness of calcite saturated water is required for rafts to form. If the sheet of calcite becomes too thick (more than 1mm) or ripples form in the water, this floating rock formation will quickly sink.

Gypsum Flowers



Gypsum is a common mineral in limestone caves, but it is only found in drier areas. However, when conditions are right, gypsum can form unbelievably delicate crystals, including gypsum flowers. Gypsum flowers are curling gypsum crystals which appear to be "blooming" out of the cave walls!

White-nose Syndrome

A disease called White-nose Syndrome (WNS) is spreading through the United States, killing bat populations. Although this disease does not affect humans, it has been associated with the deaths of more than 6 million bats in just eight years. WNS has been linked to a fungus that forms a white covering on bats' muzzles as well as other body parts. The fungus seems to prefer cold temperatures and strikes bats when they are most vulnerable-during hibernation. The fungus causes affected bats to wake and use up energy reserves before spring comes, resulting in death by starvation or freezing.

WNS was first identified in a cave in New York State in 2006, has spread southward and westward, and has now been confirmed in Missouri and Iowa. Scientists warn that its appearance in western states may only be a matter of time. It is believed that humans may contribute to the spread of WNS by visiting contaminated caves or mines and then wearing the same clothing or carrying the same objects to unaffected sites, thus transporting spores from one place to the other.

You can help us protect the bats in Wind Cave by not wearing any shoes, clothing or other items that have been in another cave or mine within the last five years.

Dripstone



Dripstone is a general term for a whole class of cave formations, all of which are formed by the action of water as it drips into a cave. Dripstone formations, which include stalactites, stalagmites, columns, popcorn, flowstone, and draperies (cave bacon), are uncommon within Wind Cave. There are, nonetheless, some very active wet areas within the cave, including along the Garden of Eden tour route and off-trail areas such as the aptly named Dripstone Delight.

Frostwork



Technically a type of dripstone, frostwork is formed as airflow interacts with droplets of mineral-rich water. Frostwork is formed from a mineral known as aragonite, whose crystals form delicate branches of needles or frost-like structures. In places within Wind Cave, frostwork has grown 8-10" tall crystals which resemble frosted Christmas trees!

Popcorn

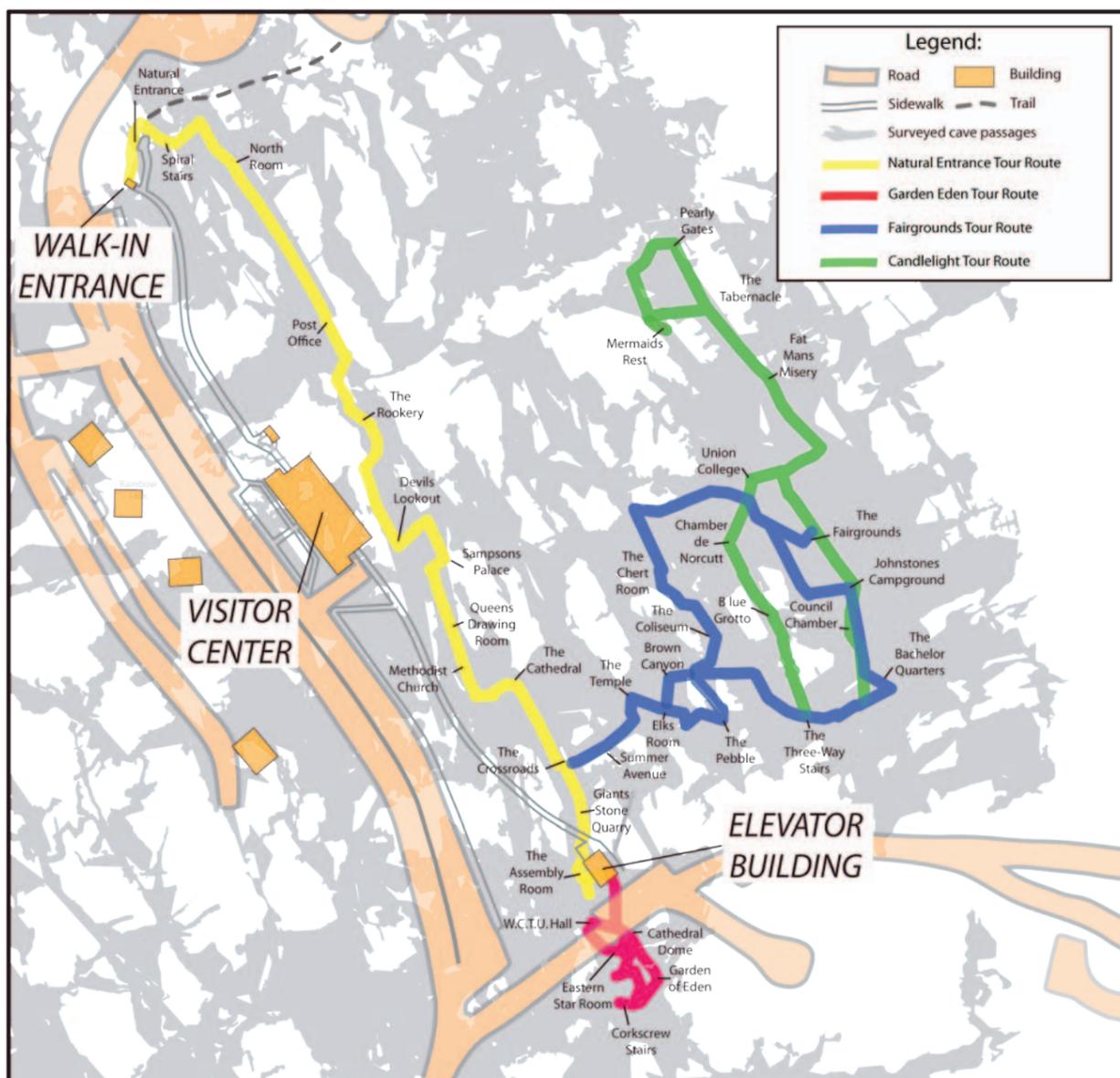


Like its buttery namesake, cave popcorn frequently forms in grape-like clusters. However, aside from being a bit crunchier than real popcorn, this type of dripstone would be more accurately described as petrified cave sweat! Popcorn forms as water rich in calcite beads up on the surface of cave walls. The calcite crystallizes and, given time, the crystals come to resemble a kernel of popped corn. Popcorn can be found throughout Wind Cave and along all tour routes.

Speleogens



A strange word for a strange type of cave feature; speleogens formed as the cave itself formed. This differentiates them from other cave formations, or speleothems, which are secondary mineral deposits that developed after the cave had formed. Speleogens are a treat for those with good imaginations, as they can take on innumerable fantastical shapes.



Learning More About Wind Cave

Wind Cave offers a variety of wonderful opportunities to learn about the cultural and natural resources of the park. Exploring the visitor center, participating in the Junior Ranger Program, or hiking in the park are some great ways to discover what is special about this national park.

Become A Junior Ranger



The Junior Ranger program is an exciting opportunity for children and their families to learn about the park. Becoming a Junior Ranger helps youngsters understand the park's ecosystems, the cave, and the wildlife. It also helps them learn how they can protect our environment. Free Junior Ranger booklets are available at the Park Store.

Explore Our Website

Another way to learn about the park is by exploring our website. Learn about the adventures of current and past explorers of the cave, understand

the history of wildlife in the park, or discover more about local plant communities. These and other interesting topics can be found at www.nps.gov/wica.

Bring Your Class to the Park

Teachers who want an educational opportunity for their students can participate in regular cave tours or the



park's Connections or Water in the Environment program. Both programs allow students to explore the park with a ranger. The programs are offered in

May and are free. Contact the park for more information.

Join Us on Facebook

Are you interested in keeping track of what is happening in the park? Wind Cave's Facebook page allows you to explore the park without driving here. See what is happening throughout the year, learn about special activities, and watch the wildlife and landscape as the seasons change.

Friends of Wind Cave National Park

Friends of Wind Cave National Park (FWC) is a 501-(c)-3 non-profit organization whose mission is to support and promote Wind Cave National Park as a natural and cultural

treasure and to expand the awareness of the unique value of the park to the Black Hills community and the nation.

Friends groups provide community based fundraising for various projects to enhance the local park's interpretive programs or to maintain or install new infrastructure. Friends groups can receive and administer your ear-marked donation for specific projects. For more information visit the Friends' website at www.friendsofwindcavenp.org



Ranger Programs



Throughout the year Wind Cave National Park offers a variety of ranger-led programs. Contact the park for scheduling and more information on any of the following programs.

Campfire Program



Evening campfire talks are presented nightly during the summer at the Elk Mountain Campground amphitheater. Topics vary and change daily; check at the visitor center for more information. The programs last about 45 minutes.

Discovery Talk

During the summer, join a ranger for a short talk or demonstration explaining aspects of the park. Topics and times vary.

Sunset Wildlife Tour

On a trial basis, for 19 evenings this summer, the park is partnering with the Friends of Wind Cave National Park to offer bus tours around the park. The tours will begin in Hot Springs at 7 p.m., returning by 9:30 p.m., and will operate 3 times a week from mid-June until the end of July. Rangers will provide

interpretation about the park's animals, plants, and history.

Prairie Hikers

Wind Cave Prairie Walkers is a hiking group for anyone interested in discovering seldom seen areas of the park and is held the last Monday of the month. The hikes are 3-4 hours long and cover a couple of miles, frequently off-trail.



Adventures in Nature

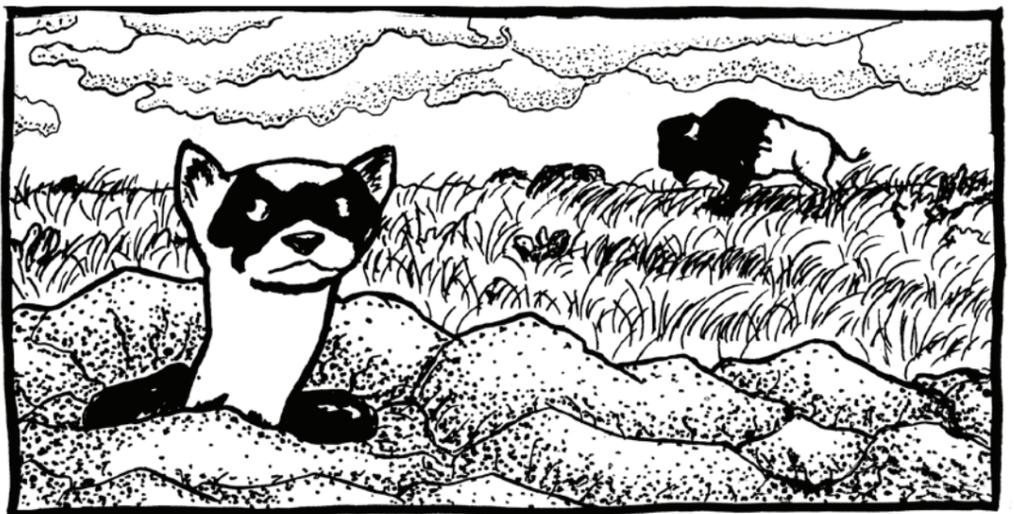
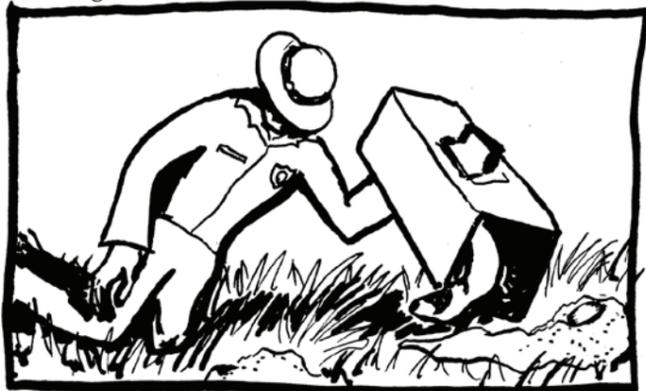
The Adventures in Nature program is a fun and interactive way for you and your children to learn about nature and develop skills to explore the natural world. The program is held during the winter and is designed to encourage children 3 to 13 to actively explore the natural world around them.



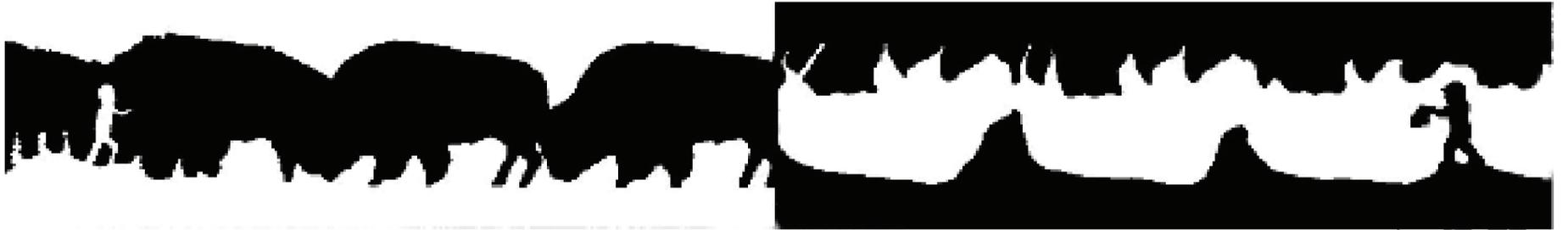
Tales from the Prairie

The black-footed ferret, one of the rarest mammals in North America, lives in the prairie and spends most of its time underground. It hunts prairie dogs, which comprise nearly 90% of its diet. The ferrets almost went extinct, but recent restoration efforts have returned them to a portion of their historic range, including Wind Cave National Park. Since the initial reintroduction in 2007, the ferrets have adapted to their new home and made an astounding comeback!

Comics by Ross Wood Studlar

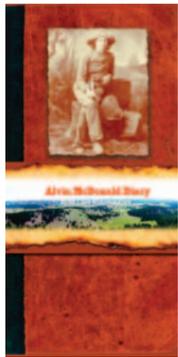


The Black Hills Parks & Forests Association



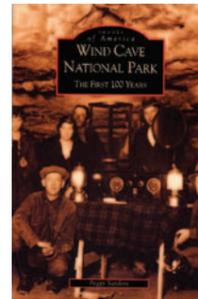
The Black Hills Parks & Forests Association sells books, maps, and other park related publications, as well as postcards, plush animals, patches, pins, and collectable tokens. Park Stores are located in visitor centers at Wind Cave National Park, Jewel Cave National Monument, Custer State Park, Buffalo Gap National Grassland, and Black Hills National Forest. Cooperating associations are non-profit, tax exempt organizations authorized by Congress to promote educational and scientific activities within national parks. All profits from association sales support the educational, interpretive, and research activities of these agencies.

Many different types of publications are available in the Park Stores including books specific to Wind Cave National Park and others about local natural and cultural history. All these items are available at the Park Store, by mail order, or from the association web site, www.blackhillsparks.org, fax: 605-745-7021, or email bhpf@blackhillsparks.org. Membership in the Black Hills Parks and Forests Association supports the organization and entitles members to a 15% discount on all purchases. The membership is \$29.95 per year. For more information call 605-745-7020.



Alvin McDonald Diary \$49.95

Alvin was not quite 16 years old when he began exploring Wind Cave in 1890. He fell in love with the cave and kept a journal in which he described his exploration of the cave and the naming of rooms. In just 3 years of exploration, Alvin systematically explored about 8-10 miles of passageways. Through his diary, we have a window into this amazing young man's life. This book is an exact replica of early Wind Cave explorer Alvin McDonald's Diary.



Wind Cave: The First 100 Years \$21.99

Wind Cave National Park was the eighth national park and the first to specifically protect a cave. Peggy Sanders relates the history of the park from its beginning as a privately operated tour cave to the present, as one of America's premiere cave parks. The book is adorned with dozens of historic and modern photographs.



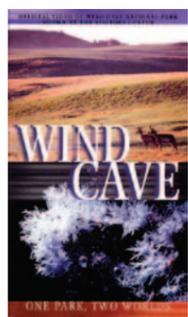
Wind Cave: An Ancient World Beneath the Hills \$8.95

Wind Cave is one of the world's longest and most complex caves. Art Palmer tells the geologic story of Wind Cave in simple, but technically detailed text. Informative graphics and photography along with Palmer's clear text make this a wonderful addition to the library of anyone interested in caves or geology.



360 Degrees of Wind Cave & Jewel Cave \$18.95

This CD presents a virtual tour of Wind Cave National Park and Jewel Cave National Monument. Over 45 fully interior cave views and over 30 interactive overland views.



Wind Cave: One Park, Two Worlds \$19.95

This DVD takes viewers on an unforgettable journey into two vastly different landscapes of uncompromising beauty: the prairie surface and cave below the ground of Wind Cave National Park. This is the video which is shown in the visitor center and is approximately 20 minutes long.



Wind Cave: The Story Behind the Scenery \$11.95

If you are interested in learning more about the ecosystems, wildlife, and history of Wind Cave National Park, this book by Ron Terry is an excellent choice. This book is replete with outstanding photographs and information about the park's surface and the cave underneath it.

National Park Neighbors



Mount Rushmore National Memorial

Mount Rushmore is located approximately 50 miles from Wind Cave. Carved from 1927-1941 by Gutzon Borglum, the memorial depicts the portraits of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. Today, Mount Rushmore is host to almost three million visitors from around the world. Over the decades, Mount Rushmore has grown in fame as a symbol of America - an image of freedom and hope.

(605) 574-2523 www.nps.gov/moru



Jewel Cave National Monument

Jewel Cave National Monument is located approximately 35 miles from Wind Cave. Immerse yourself within one of the longest caves in the world. With over 169 miles of mapped and surveyed passages, this underground wilderness appeals to human curiosity. Its splendor is revealed through fragile formations and glimpses of brilliant color. Its maze of passages lure explorers, and its scientific wealth remains a mystery.

(605) 673-8300 www.nps.gov/jeca



Badlands National Park

Badlands National Park is located approximately 145 miles from Wind Cave. The park consists of 244,000 acres of sharply eroded buttes, pinnacles, and spires. It protects the largest mixed-grass prairie in the United States. Its wilderness area covers 64,000 acres and is the site of the reintroduction of the black-footed ferret, the most endangered land mammal in North America.

(605) 433-5361 www.nps.gov/badl

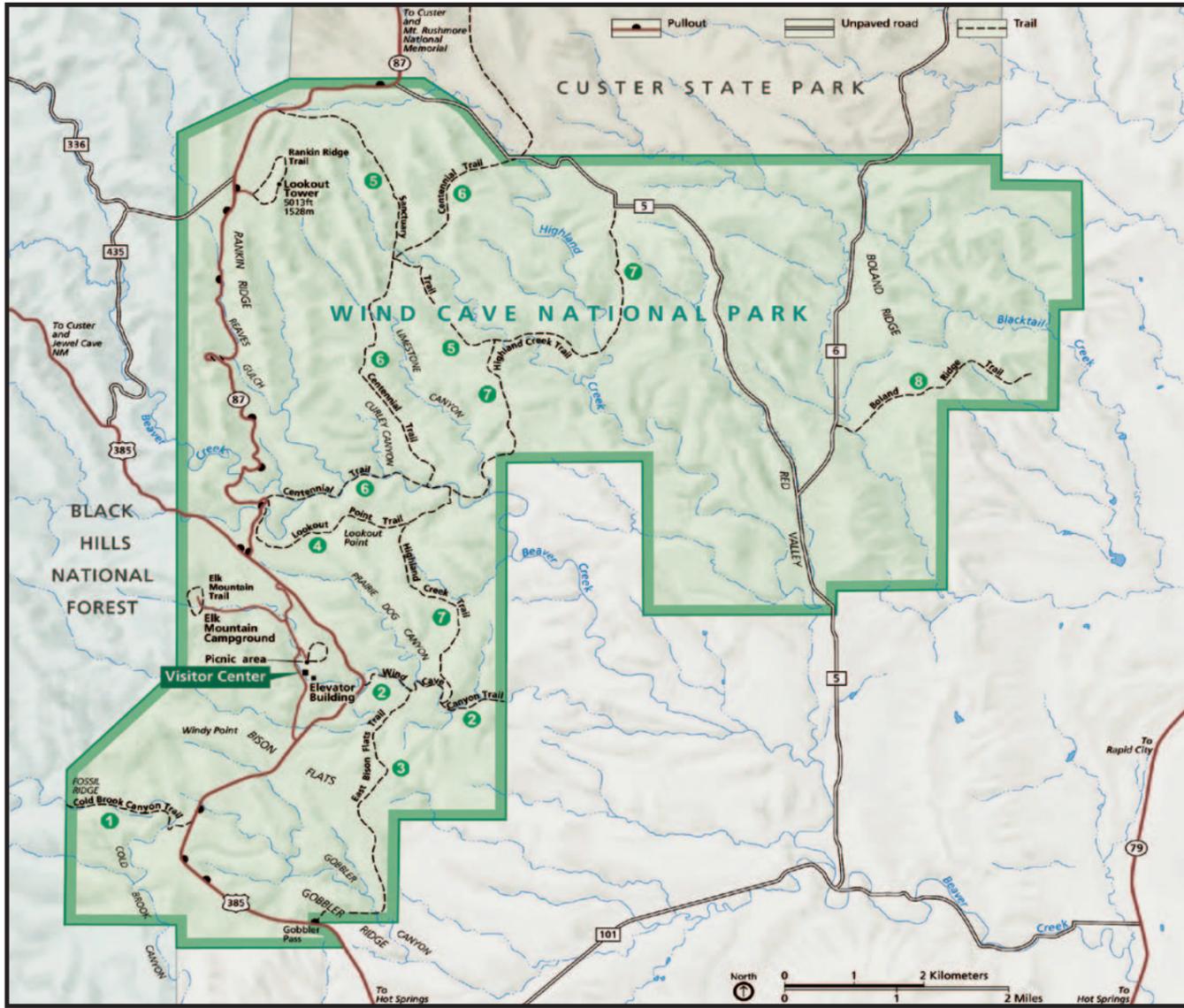


Devils Tower National Monument

Devils Tower is located approximately 135 miles from Wind Cave. It is a geologic feature protruding out of the rolling prairie that surrounds the Black Hills. The site is considered sacred to the Lakota and other tribes that have a connection to the area. Hundreds of parallel cracks make it one of the finest traditional crack climbing areas in North America. Devils Tower entices us to explore and define our place in the natural and cultural world.

(307) 467-5283 www.nps.gov/deto

Hiking



HIKING IN THE PARK

Wind Cave National Park includes 33,851 acres of prairie grassland and ponderosa pine forest. The park is a fascinating combination of ecosystems where eastern habitats meet western ones. This supports a diverse assortment of life. Hiking any of the 30 miles of trails can help you better understand the park. Hiking off trail, through canyons, along ridges or across the rolling prairies is both permitted and encouraged. A topographic map is recommended and can be purchased at the visitor center.

NATURE TRAILS

There are three nature trails in the park. The **Rankin Ridge Nature Trail** leads to the highest point in the park where the views are spectacular. The **Elk Mountain Nature Trail** explores an ecotone, or meeting zone, where the grassland and forest converge. The **Prairie Vista Nature Trail** starts at the visitor center and explores the prairie grasslands. Informational signs or booklets are available for each trail. Each trail is about one mile in length.

CENTENNIAL TRAIL

An excellent example of Wind Cave's diversity can be seen by hiking the park's six-mile section of the Centennial Trail. This trail crosses the prairie, climbs forested ridges, and explores the wetter, riparian habitat of Beaver Creek. The 111-mile Centennial Trail meanders from Wind Cave National Park north through the Black Hills, ending at Bear Butte.

Hiking Trails

Trail	Trail Number	One-way Distance	Difficulty	Description
Cold Brook Canyon	1	1.4 mi 2.3 km	Moderate	The trail begins south of the visitor center on the west side of U.S. Highway 385. This trail travels through a forested area, traverses a small prairie dog town, and winds through Cold Brook Canyon to the park boundary. The open prairie is a good place to see raptors such as prairie falcons.
Wind Cave Canyon	2	1.8 mi 2.9 km	Easy	This former road follows Wind Cave Canyon to the park boundary. Wind Cave Canyon is a great place for bird watching. Limestone cliffs along the trail provide good nesting areas for cliff swallows, canyon wrens, and great horned owls, while standing dead trees serve as homes for red-headed and Lewis's woodpeckers.
Lookout Point	4	2.2 mi 3.5 km	Moderate	This trail follows the rolling hills of the prairie, traverses Lookout Point, and ends at Beaver Creek. Take a side trip up Lookout Point to see the results of the 2010 American Elk Prescribed Fire. This trail can also be combined with part of the Highland Creek Trail and the Centennial Trail to create a 4.5-mile loop that begins and ends at the Centennial Trailhead.
Boland Ridge	8	2.6 mi 4.2 km	Strenuous	The trail begins on NPS 6, one mile north of the junction of NPS 5 and NPS 6. This trail climbs to panoramic views of Wind Cave National Park, the Black Hills, Red Valley, and Battle Mountain. Elk are often seen from this trail.
Sanctuary	5	3.6 mi 5.8 km	Moderately Strenuous	The trail begins about one mile north of the Rankin Ridge fire tower road. This trail follows the rolling hills of the prairie, crosses a large prairie dog town, and ends at the Highland Creek Trail.
East Bison Flats	3	3.7 mi 6 km	Moderately Strenuous	Hike one-half mile down the Wind Cave Canyon Trail to reach the East Bison Flats Trail. This trail leads hikers across the rolling hills of the prairie. From this trail you may see panoramic views of Wind Cave National Park, Buffalo Gap, and the Black Hills.
Centennial	6 (89)	6 mi 9.7 km	Moderately Strenuous	The southern access to the trail is on the east side of S.D. Highway 87. The northern access is on NPS 5, 1.4 miles east of its junction with S.D. Highway 87. This section of trail is part of a 111-mile trail through the Black Hills. It leads hikers across prairies, through forested areas, along Beaver Creek, as well as through the 2010 American Elk Prescribed Fire area.
Highland Creek	7	8.6 mi 13.8 km	Moderately Strenuous	The southern trailhead is along the Wind Cave Canyon Trail one mile east of U.S. Highway 385. The northern trailhead is on NPS 5, 2.8 miles east of S.D. Highway 87. This trail is the longest and the most diverse in the park. The trail traverses mixed-grass prairies, ponderosa pine forests, and riparian habitats of Highland Creek, Beaver Creek, and Wind Cave Canyon.