



New Exhibits For 2024!



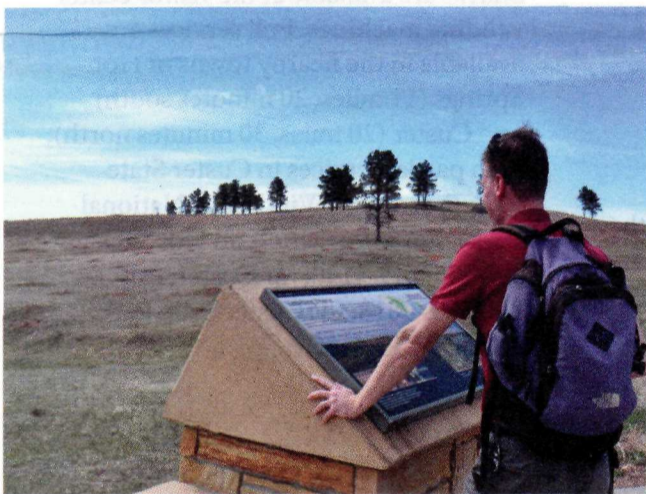
Wind Cave National Park has completed one exciting project and will begin another during 2024.

The park installed new exhibits in February that offer a wonderful way to experience the two worlds of Wind

Cave National Park and its cultural history inside the visitor center.

An entirely new elevator system will be installed from May through September. The modernized system will provide reliable access to the cave.

While no cave tours will be available during the project, a variety of ranger-guided programs will be offered daily. See page 5 for more information.



Planning Your Visit - pages 2-3



Ranger-Guided Programs - page 5



Wind Cave Wildlife - page 6



Hiking Information - page 8

Park Hours
24 hours/day,
every day

Visitor Center Hours
8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Hours extended seasonally

Emergencies
Dial 911

Park Info
605-745-4600
www.nps.gov/wica

Planning Your Visit



Welcome to Wind Cave National Park!

Wind Cave has always been a special place for me. As a native of northwest Nebraska, I grew up visiting Wind Cave and the Black Hills with my family. Whether it was watching the majestic bison and the busy antics of the prairie dogs on the surface or exploring the wonders of the cave below, I've carried the experiences and memories I formed here as a personal connection to the place I call home. Wind Cave National Park is a living, breathing system that connects a unique mixed-grass prairie ecosystem to a deep underground network of passages that are still being explored to understand their formation and to find their full extent. The park is proud to be affiliated with 20 Tribal Nations for whom the natural environments of the cave and the land have rich cultural and spiritual meaning.

I hope your experiences here, and the memories you take away, enrich your sense of the land and the people of the Black Hills and its communities. Whether this is your first visit or your 100th, there is always something new to see and do. Enjoy your visit!

Travel safe,

Leigh Welling
Superintendent

Visitor Center

The visitor center is open from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm daily, with extended hours during the summer. The visitor center is closed on Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1.

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.

Park Alerts

Please check the park website for current conditions: www.nps.gov/wica



Campground

Located one mile north of the visitor center, the Elk Mountain Campground is open year-round and offers 62 campsites. Two accessible sites are available. Visit Recreation.gov to reserve a campsite.

Campsites are \$24 per night regularly, \$12 per night in the off-season when facilities are limited. Senior or Access pass holders pay half price. **Payment is by credit/debit card or digital payment only through Recreation.gov.** Drinking water and flush toilets are available in summer, but no showers, electrical hookups, or dump station. Firewood is occasionally available in the campground for a small donation. Collection of firewood is prohibited.

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. Poison ivy, flies, mosquitoes, and wood ticks can be found in the wetter areas of the park. Be watchful for rattlesnakes throughout the prairie. Learn more about trails on page 8.

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.

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.

Picnicking

A 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.



Backcountry Camping

Backcountry camping is permitted in the northwestern part of the park. Permits are required and available for free at the visitor center. Ask a ranger for suggestions on routes and destinations.

For your safety, and for the protection of park resources, follow all regulations during your stay. Leave no trace of your visit.

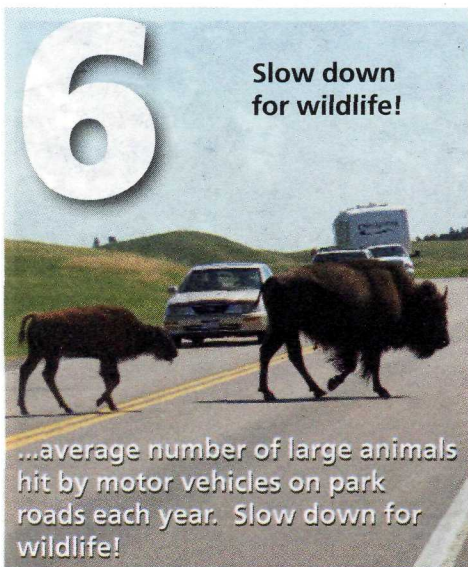
Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is a wonderful way to experience the park's backcountry. All horse and pack animal use requires a permit and weed free feed. Free permits are available at the visitor center. Almost all of the park is open to riding, except: on roadways and trails, and in the campground, picnic areas, and around the visitor center.

Area Services

There are no lodging, gasoline, grocery, or restaurant services in the park. Snacks are available at the visitor center vending machines. Full services are available in the nearby towns of Hot Springs (11 miles, 20 minutes south) and Custer (20 miles, 30 minutes north), with partial services in Custer State Park (bordering Wind Cave National Park). For information on Hot Springs, call 605-745-4140; for Custer, call 800-992-9818; for Custer State Park, call 605-255-4515.

Safety and Protecting Park Resources



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 – regulations require at least 25 yards from bison and elk.

Unmanned Aircraft

Federal law prohibits the use of unmanned aircraft in all national parks.



Traveling in the Park

All vehicles and bicycles must remain on roadways. Off-road driving or bicycle riding is prohibited. Obey all speed limits as they are in place to protect you and the wildlife. For your own safety, federal and state seatbelt laws are enforced.

Service Animals

Service animals are allowed on paved cave trails if medically necessary. All public use buildings are closed to pets except for service animals.

Pets

Pets are prohibited in the backcountry and on most hiking trails to prevent the transfer of canine distemper to wildlife, including the endangered Black-footed ferret. Pets are permitted on the Elk Mountain Nature Trail and on the Prairie Vista Nature Trail (see page 8). Please clean up after your pet. Pets may not be left unattended and must be on a leash at all times. Do not leave pets in your vehicle for any length of time. Kennel services are available in Hot Springs or Custer.

Weather

Hazardous weather can strike any time of year. Severe thunderstorms, common in the summer, bring lightning and the potential for damaging hail and possibly tornados. Heavy, blowing snow is common in winter. Check the forecast before heading out, and avoid the open prairie when severe weather is expected.

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 all objects undisturbed so the next visitor can enjoy them.

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 all public buildings within this park.*** These locations are posted with signs.

Home on the Range

Few images evoke the mobile nature of the Plains Indians life like the tipi. Crafted from what the land would yield - a few young trees, bison hides, and wooden stakes for anchoring - the tipi provided a sturdy yet portable home for families that moved with the seasons.

In the summer, this replica tipi offers a glimpse into a way of life defined by challenge, but filled with freedom. Imagine passing a mid-winter morning inside. Hides line the walls, a small fire and friendly company keeping the cold at bay. Or emerging through the doorway on a clear summer night for a last glance at countless stars, stretching silently to all horizons.

Step Inside

You are encouraged to step into the tipi to explore on your own and wonder at what it took to live on the plains. Park rangers will be available at the tipi to share the significance of the Black Hills to many Plains Tribes and the Lakota Emergence story. Check at the visitor center for times.



Tipi Village



This display was made possible by Wind Cave's non-profit partner, Black Hills Parks & Forests Association.

Weather

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Average High Temp.	37°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)	0.4" (6.6")	0.6" (5.9")	0.9" (7.4")	1.8" (7")	2.9" (2")	3.1" (0)	2.3" (0)	1.8" (0)	1.2" (0.5")	1" (1.5")	0.5" (5.1")	0.5" (6")

Connect with Wind Cave



Friends of Wind Cave National Park (FOWC)
FOWC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support and promote Wind Cave National Park as a natural and cultural treasure. FOWC works to expand the awareness of the unique value of the park to the Black Hills community and the nation. For more information visit: www.friendsofwindcavenp.org

Bring Your Class to the Park
Students can participate in regular cave tours or the park Environmental Education program. These free programs are offered from mid-April through mid-May. Reservations are required. Contact the park at 605-745-4600 or wica_education@nps.gov for details.

Connect with Wind Cave:
@WindCaveNPS

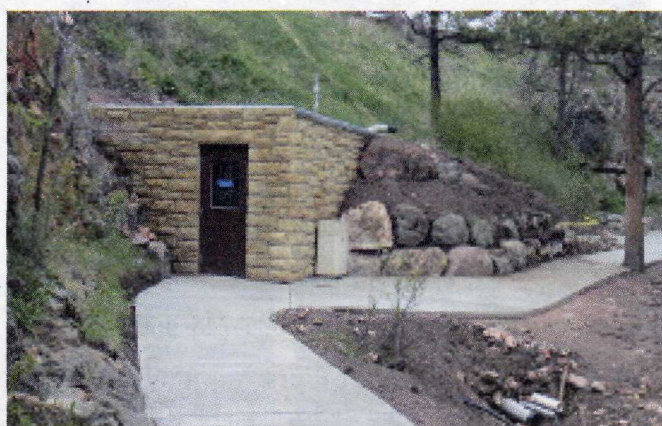


Your Fee Dollars at Work

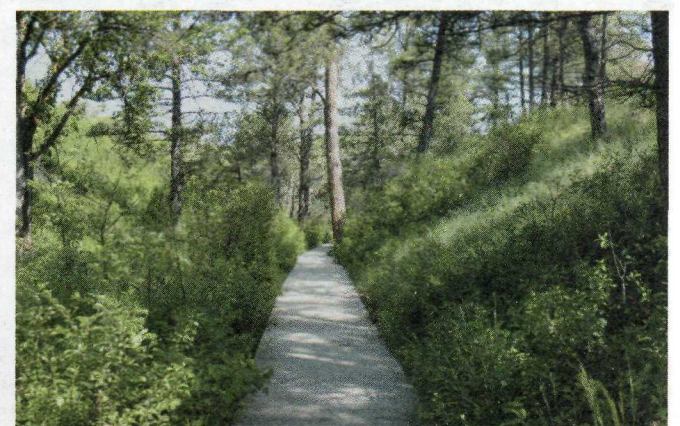
Cave tour and campground fees support these projects that have been completed around the park.



Bison proof trail posts for better wayfinding



Airlock for the Natural Entrance Tour



Accessible walkway to the Natural Entrance

No Cave Tours May through Fall 2024

Visit www.nps.gov/wica for current availability.

When cave tours resume this fall, tickets may be purchased ahead of time through Recreation.gov or at the visitor center on the day of the tour. **All ticket sales are card or digital payment only.**

Reserve Online

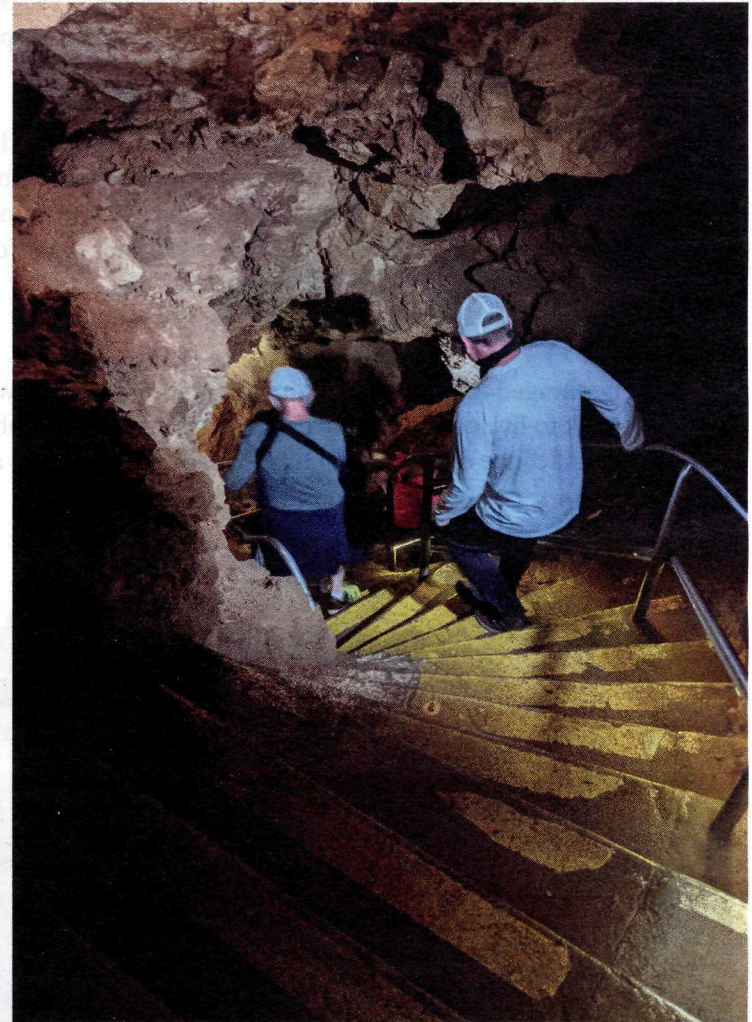
- Purchase tickets 3 to 120 days in advance on Recreation.gov.
- Reservations are highly recommended in spring, summer, and fall.
- Reservations cannot be modified less than 3 days before the tour.

Buy in Person

- Purchase tickets the day of your visit at the visitor center.
- **Half of all tickets are held for same-day sales.**
- Day of tickets typically sell out 1-2 hours ahead of tours during summer months.

RECREATION.gov

Scan the QR Code to go to www.recreation.gov and make your reservation.



Steep, winding stairs and passageways on the Natural Entrance Tour.

Know Before You Go

- All cave tours are ranger-guided and leave from the visitor center.
- Tickets must be purchased at least five minutes before the tour time.
- Reserved tickets must be picked up at the visitor center at least five minutes before the tour time.
- The cave temperature is 54°F (12°C) year-round. A light jacket or sweater is recommended.
- Be prepared for uneven stairs and steep, slippery pathways. Shoes are required with closed-toe shoes recommended.

Additional safety protocols may be in place during your visit. Visit www.nps.gov/wica or call the visitor center at 605-745-4600 for current information.

Cave Tour Information



Flowstone on the Garden of Eden Tour

Least Strenuous

Garden of Eden Tour
1 hour; 1/4 mile; 150 stairs

While visiting the upper level of the cave, boxwork, popcorn, and flowstone formations are seen along the trail. This shorter route has several staircases up and down. This tour enters and exits the cave by elevator.



Boxwork on the Natural Entrance Tour

Moderate

Natural Entrance Tour
1 1/4 hours; 2/3 mile; 300 stairs

Visit the cave's largest natural opening, a sacred site for many Native Americans. Participants enter the cave through a nearby man-made entrance and journey through the middle level of the cave to see Wind Cave's famous boxwork. An ideal tour for families; tour enters by staircase and exits by elevator.

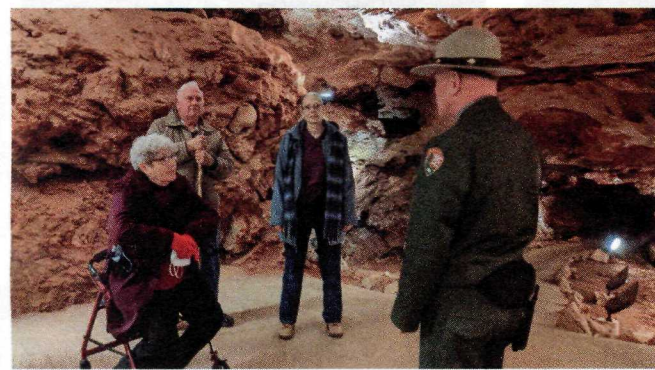


Frostwork on the Fairgrounds Tour

Strenuous

Fairgrounds Tour
1 1/2 hours; 2/3 mile; 450 stairs

Explore both the upper and middle levels of Wind Cave. Boxwork, popcorn and frostwork can be seen on this tour. This is the most strenuous walking tour with several uphill stretches. The tour enters and exits the cave by elevator.

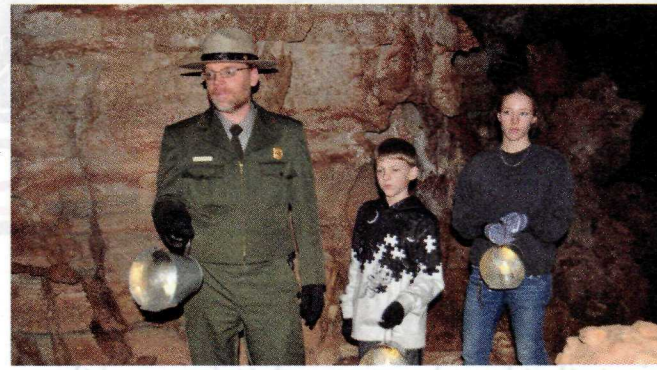


Accessible

Accessibility Tour
1/2 hour; 100 feet; no stairs

Experience one room of the cave! This tour takes visitors on a paved path with no stairs. Designed for people with knee, back, hip, balance problems, or extreme sensitivity to light fluctuations.

Reservations recommended. Call 605-745-4600.

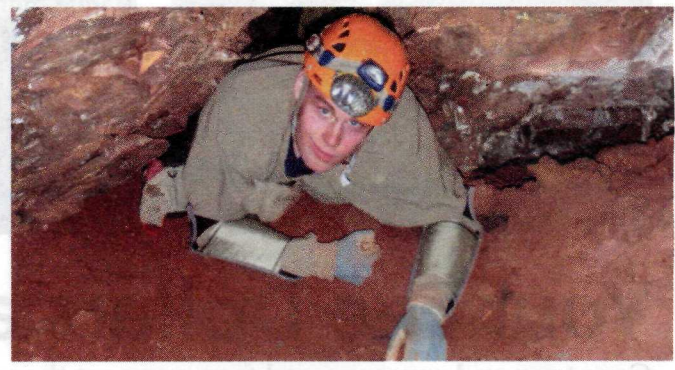


Ages 8 & Up Only

Candlelight Tour- 2 hours

Experience the cave by candlelight. This strenuous tour traverses rugged terrain away from paved trails into an unlit part of the cave. Each participant will carry a candle bucket. Lace-up shoes with non-slip soles are required. Clothing worn in another cave is not permitted.

Reservations required. Call 605-745-4600.



Ages 16 & Up Only

Wild Cave Tour- up to 4 hours

Explore the cave away from developed trails on this challenging crawling tour. Learn the basics of safe caving and see many of Wind Cave's formations. Long pants, long sleeved shirts, and sturdy, ankle high lace-up boots with non-slip soles are required. Helmets, lights, gloves, elbowpads and kneepads are provided. Clothing worn in another cave is not permitted.

Reservations required. Call 605-745-4600.

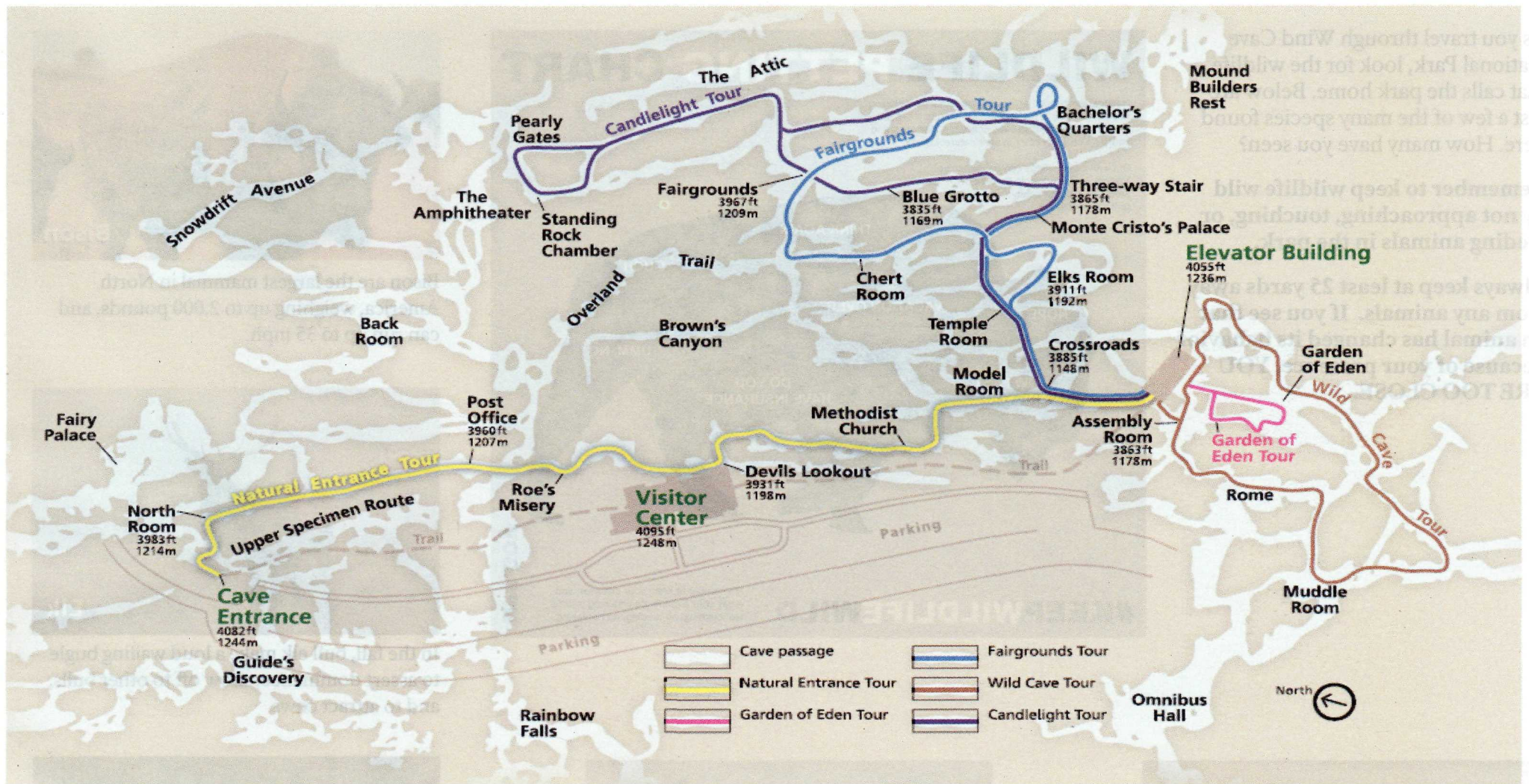
Sign language tours may be available with advanced notice. Call (605) 745-4600 for details.

Jackets or sweaters, cameras*, and appropriate footwear are recommended for all cave tours. Any food/drink, like gum or water, or items that don't fit in your pockets, such as bags, stollers, selfie sticks, etc., must be left in your vehicle. **Items cannot be stored at the Information Desk or in the visitor center.**

*Cameras are not permitted on the Candlelight or Wild Cave Tours.

Cave Routes

Wind Cave Wildlife



Cave Tour Fees					
	Garden of Eden Tour	Natural Entrance Tour	Fairgrounds Tour	Candlelight Tour	Wild Cave Tour
Adults (16+)	\$14.00	\$16.00	\$16.00	\$16.00	\$45.00
Youth (6-15)	\$7.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$16.00 **	Not Permitted
5 and Under	Free	Free	Free	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
62 and Up	\$7.00	\$8.00	\$8.00		

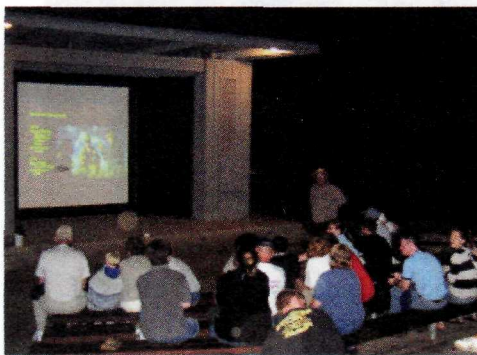
** Minimum age for Candlelight Tour is 8 years old.

Tour Schedule

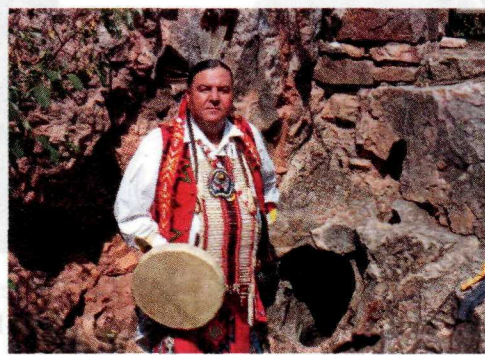
For information on specific times please go to:
go.nps.gov/windcavetours

Ranger-Guided Programs

Programs listed below are offered mid-June to mid-August. Unless otherwise noted all programs begin at the Wind Cave Visitor Center and are free to attend.



Campfire Program
 Presented during the summer at the Elk Mountain Campground Amphitheater. Topics vary and programs last about 45 minutes. Check visitor center or online for times.



Natural Entrance Talk
 Join us for a short, interactive talk about the importance of this site in Lakota culture. Offered daily during the summer at the cave's natural entrance. Check visitor center or online for times.



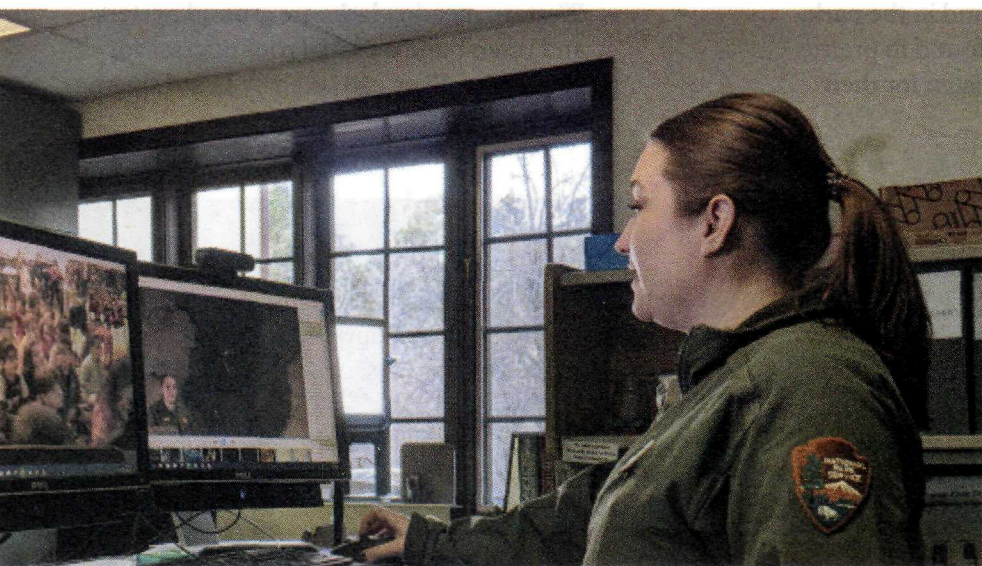
Special Hikes and Programs
 Join a ranger on select days in summer for guided hikes, dark sky programs or other special activities. Check visitor center or online for times and locations.

This program is only offered in the fall.



Elk Bugling Program
 On select evenings in September and October, ranger-led elk bugling programs may be offered. Learn about the elk and how to listen for their calls. Check visitor center or online for times and locations.

Interactive Virtual Field-Trips



Explore Wind Cave National Park virtually from the comfort of your own classroom! Rangers offer a variety of programs about both the surface and subsurface. Explore one of the world's most complex maze caves or one of the last intact mixed-grass prairie ecosystems. These programs can be applied to all ages or used as a unique virtual experience.

Programs are offered from mid-September to mid-April.

Wind Cave connects with educators from all over world! Reach out if you'd like more information on Wind Cave hosting your group virtually.

To discover the programs we offer, visit www.cilc.org.

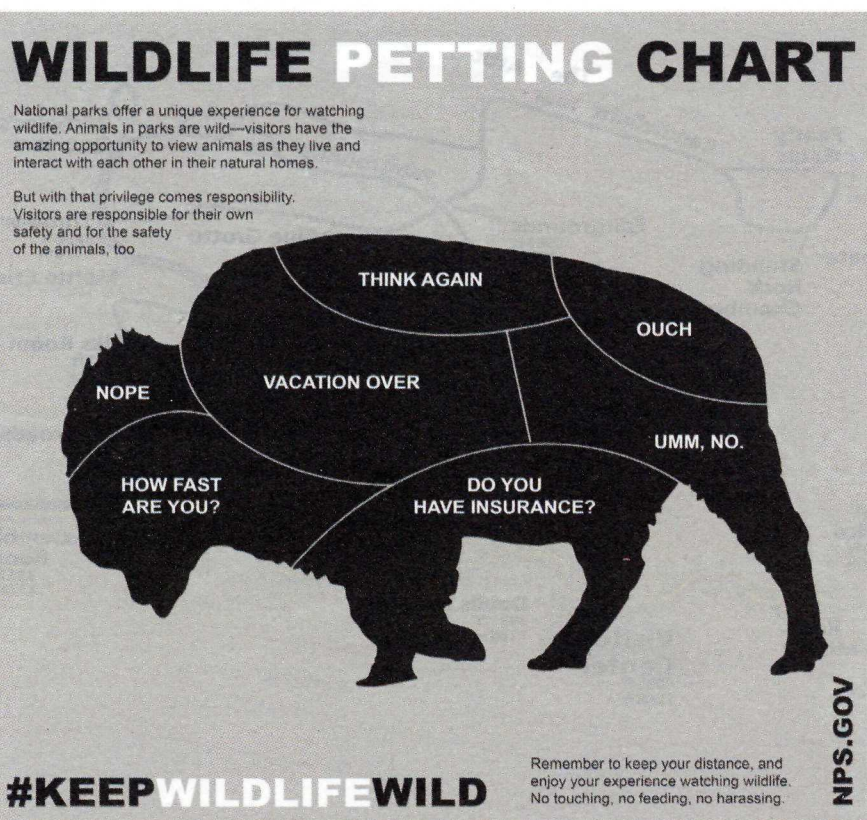
For more information please call 605-745-4600 or email wica_education@nps.gov.

Wind Cave Wildlife

As you travel through Wind Cave National Park, look for the wildlife that calls the park home. Below are just a few of the many species found here. How many have you seen?

Remember to keep wildlife wild by not approaching, touching, or feeding animals in the park.

Always keep at least 25 yards away from any animals. If you see that an animal has changed its behavior because of your presence, YOU ARE TOO CLOSE.



Bison
Bison are the largest mammal in North America, weighing up to 2,000 pounds, and can run up to 35 mph.



Elk
In the fall, bull elk make a loud wailing bugle to assert dominance, show off to other bulls, and to attract cows.



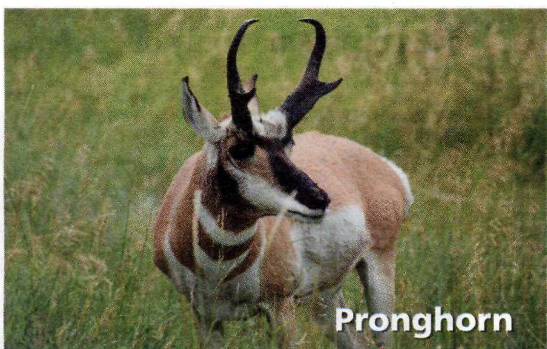
Coyote
Coyotes are omnivores that typically prey on small mammals and birds, but will also feed on dead animals when available.



Prairie Dog
Prairie dogs are named for their bark-like calls. They have at least ten distinct calls and a warning cry sends all within earshot hustling for their burrows.



Black-Footed Ferret
The endangered black-footed ferret is a nocturnal creature that only lives on prairie dog colonies. A mother and her young eat over 100 prairie dogs a year.



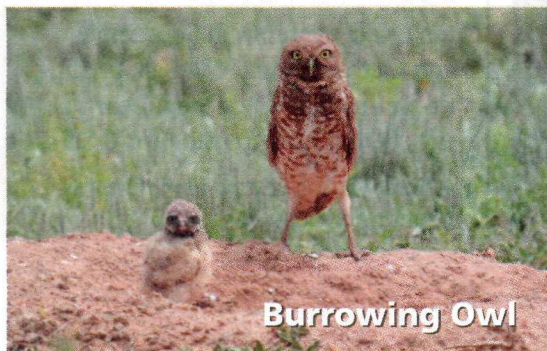
Pronghorn
As the fastest land animal in North America, pronghorn can reach speeds up to 60 mph. Their white rump can be seen as they run.



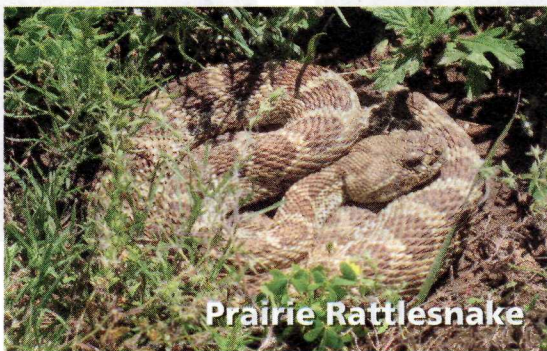
American Badger
These aggressive animals will sometimes team up with coyotes to hunt prairie dogs, often excavating the burrows in pursuit of their prey.



Mule Deer
When startled, mule deer will use a series of stiff-legged jumps with all four feet hitting the ground at the same time to escape.



Burrowing Owl
These unique owls will nest in abandoned prairie dog holes and are often mistaken for prairie dogs from a distance.



Prairie Rattlesnake
The only venomous snake found in the park, prairie rattlesnakes are often found in prairie dog towns and rocky areas. Listen for their warning rattle.



Western Meadowlark
Western meadowlarks are ground nesters and often build a partial roof of grass for protection. They can often be heard singing across the prairie.



White-Nose Syndrome

White-nose Syndrome (WNS) is linked to a fungus that forms a white growth on bats' faces and body when they are most vulnerable—during hibernation. Affected bats wake and use up energy reserves before spring comes, resulting in death by starvation or freezing. WNS has been found in Wind Cave and throughout the Black Hills.

To better protect our bat population, the Natural Entrance Tour route is closed during the winter months while there are hibernating bats.

You can help protect bats by walking across a decontamination mat after your tour.

Black Hills Parks & Forests Association (BHPFA) is a proud non-profit partner of the National Park Service and USDA Forest Service, selling a curated selection of books, gifts and games in the park store that help people of all ages engage with and interpret the natural world.

Thanks to the support of our members and customers, a portion of those sales is provided to our partners allowing them to further their critical missions of sustaining and preserving our natural legacies.

Since 1946, BHPFA has provided over \$1.8 Million to our partners.

For over 75 years, Black Hills Parks and Forests Association has been igniting a spark of passion for conserving and sustaining public lands for all generations.

2023 BHPFA EDUCATION IMPACTS

Two Summer Interns

5,527 visitors led on 171 guided tours

BHPFA funded two interpretive summer interns who provided visitor assistance, led cave tours, and conducted programs that interpret the natural and cultural resources of the park.

Adventures in Nature Program

BHPFA sponsors and helps facilitate Wind Cave's free winter educational program, Adventures in Nature. Geared towards kids age 4-10, this program is specifically designed to get children out into nature and exploring the natural world around them.



Every year the program includes activities, songs, crafts, and a hike that explores Wind Cave.

Junior Ranger Program

BHPFA store sales are used to help fund the Junior Ranger program by purchasing the Junior Ranger booklet.

Sales from the purchase of a Junior Ranger patch from the Park Store also help support the continuation of this ever popular program.



IN THE LAST 5 YEARS BHPFA HAS GIVEN OVER \$374,145 TO WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK



**BLACK HILLS
PARKS &
FORESTS
ASSOCIATION**

605|745|7020
BlackHillsParks.org



These products and more available through Black Hills Parks & Forests Association

JOIN US & BECOME A MEMBER

Becoming a member of BHPFA means you are an essential part of a community that values our natural environment and cares deeply about preserving access to the unique and amazing parks, forests, and grasslands in our region.

GRASS ROOTS \$5/month
(\$5 minimum - auto withdrawal required)

ANNUAL \$30

ORGANIZATION \$100

(auto-renewal now available for memberships!)

MEMBERS SUPPORT THESE IMPORTANT PROJECTS AT OUR PARTNER LOCATIONS:

- » Jr. Ranger Programs
- » Interpretive Staff and Volunteers
- » Outdoor Education programs
- » Exhibit preparation and installation
- » Wildlife research projects



Join online or call!

ADOPT-A-BISON PROGRAM

Support Wind Cave's special bison herd!

Since this programs formation in 2017, we have raised over \$130,000 in support of the unique bison herd at Wind Cave National Park. \$20 of the \$35 purchase fee goes toward herd management, research, and educational activities. Your purchase includes either a plush bison calf or a baseball cap that says:

"I adopted a Wind Cave bison".

Makes a special gift!

Ask park store staff for details.

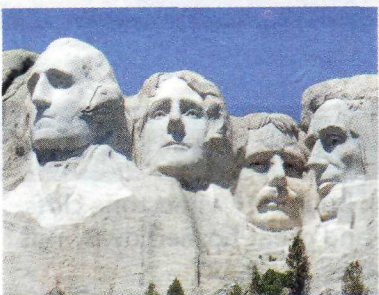


LIMITED EDITION
"American Bison"
Charley Harper print
\$150

	GRASS ROOTS	ANNUAL	ORGANIZATION
Member Sticker & Swag	🌲	🌲	🌲
15% Discount at BHPFA Retail Store Locations	🌲	🌲	🌲
15% Discount on All Online Purchases at BlackHillsParks.org	🌲	🌲	🌲
Quarterly Electronic Newsletter	🌲	🌲	🌲
Discount at Cooperating Association Stores publiclandsalliance.org/what-we-do/rdp	🌲	🌲	🌲
Member Only Specials & Discounts	🌲	🌲	🌲
Access to Member Hub	🌲	🌲	🌲
Easy Auto-Renewal Option	🌲	🌲	🌲
5 Member Cards to Share With Staff			🌲
Company Logo & Link Featured on BHPFA Website			🌲
Auto Withdrawal Required	🌲		
Most Impact an Individual Can Make	🌲		
Most Impact an Organization Can Make			🌲

Supporting wonder and exploration through stewardship of **your** public lands.

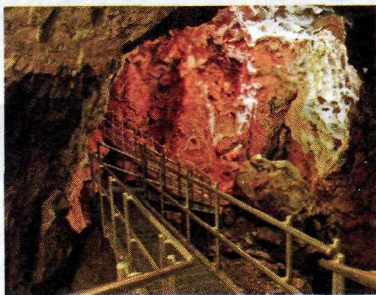
National Park Neighbors



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 over two 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 200 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 entice explorers, and its scientific wealth remains a mystery.

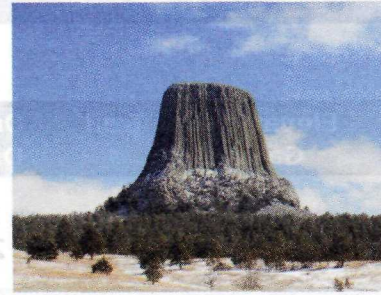
605-673-8300
www.nps.gov/jeca



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 a 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, 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 x 635
www.nps.gov/deto

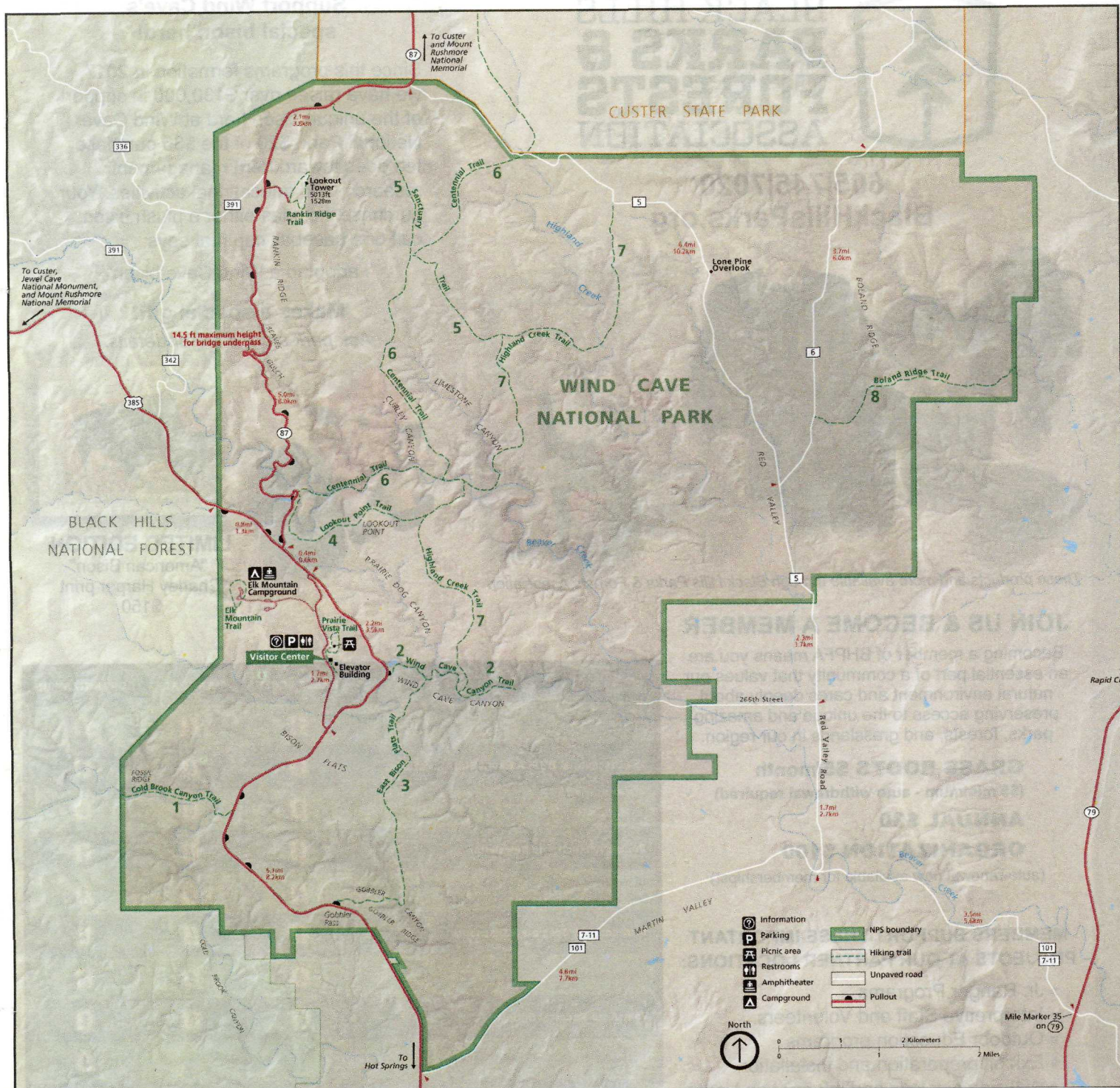


Minuteman Missile National Historic Site

Minuteman Missile is located approximately 121 miles from Wind Cave. The Minuteman Missile was an iconic weapon in the American nuclear arsenal during the Cold War, the defining historical event of the last half of the 20th century. A visit to the park is an opportunity to explore sites rarely seen by civilians and explore the Minuteman II system's role as a nuclear deterrent that maintained peace and prevented war.

605-433-5552
www.nps.gov/mimi

Hiking Information



Hiking in the Park

Wind Cave National Park offers more than 30 miles of trails to explore prairie grasslands and ponderosa forests. Go prepared:

- Carry and drink plenty of water.
- Check the weather forecast before starting and bring extra layers.
- Off-trail hiking is allowed. Watch out for wildlife.
- A topographic map is recommended and can be purchased at the park store.

Hiking With Pets

Pets are only allowed on the Elk Mountain and Prairie Vista Nature Trails.



- Pets must be leashed.
- Please clean up after your pet.
- **Do not leave your pets in your vehicle for any length of time.** Kennel space is available in Hot Springs or Custer.
- Please do not allow pets to roam on the prairie. Dogs carry canine distemper that can be transmitted to the endangered Black-footed ferret population.
- Bison are unpredictable around pets, for your safety keep pets away from all wildlife.

Short Walks

Not up for a day hike? Three short nature trails are a great way to explore for those with young children or little time. Each trail is about 1 mile in length.

Download the NPS App for additional trail information!



Rankin Ridge Nature Trail - Gain spectacular views from the highest point in the park. Elevation change is 240 feet.



Elk Mountain Nature Trail - The grassland and forest meet on this trail around the campground. Leashed pets allowed. Elevation change is 90 feet.



Prairie Vista Nature Trail - Stroll the prairie grasslands from the visitor center. Leashed pets allowed. Elevation change is 104 feet.

Hiking Trails

Trail	Difficulty	Elevation Gain	Trail #	One-way Distance	Description
Wind Cave Canyon	Easy	215 ft.	2	1.8 mi 2.9 km	This former road follows Wind Cave Canyon to the park boundary. Limestone cliffs provide nesting areas for cliff swallows, canyon wrens, and great horned owls. This road is sometimes used by park personnel for maintenance.
Cold Brook Canyon	Moderate	150 ft.	1	1.4 mi 2.3 km	The trail winds through Cold Brook Canyon to the park boundary. Along the way a ponderosa forest gives way to the open prairie and crosses a prairie dog town, a good place to see prairie falcons and other raptors.
Lookout Point	Moderate	200 ft.	4	2.2 mi 3.5 km	Follow the rolling hills of the prairie across Lookout Point to Beaver Creek. A side trip up Lookout Point offers views of the prairie. This trail can be combined with part of the Highland Creek and the Centennial trails to create a 4.5-mile loop.
Sanctuary	Moderately Strenuous	300 ft.	5	3.6 mi 5.8 km	The trailhead is about one mile north of the Rankin Ridge fire tower turnoff. This trail follows the rolling hills of the prairie, crosses a large prairie dog town, and ends where it meets the Highland Creek Trail.
East Bison Flats	Moderately Strenuous	240 ft.	3	3.7 mi 6 km	Hike one-half mile down the Wind Cave Canyon Trail to reach the East Bison Flats Trail where a brief, steep climb leads to the rolling hills of the prairie. Panoramic views of the prairie, Buffalo Gap, and the Black Hills await.
Centennial	Moderately Strenuous	480 ft.	6 (89)	6 mi 9.7 km	This trail can be reached from SD Hwy 87 or NPS 5. This section is part of a 111-mile trail through the Black Hills. Here it crosses prairies, ponderosa forests, and winds along Beaver Creek.
Highland Creek	Moderately Strenuous	250 ft.	7	8.6 mi 13.8 km	The trail can be reached by a 1-mile hike down the Wind Cave Canyon trail or from the northern trailhead on NPS 5. This trail is the longest and the most diverse in the park, crossing mixed-grass prairies, ponderosa pine forests, and riparian habitats.
Boland Ridge	Strenuous	415 ft.	8	2.6 mi 4.2 km	The trail begins at a small parking area on NPS 6, one mile north of the junction with NPS 5. A series of climbs offer panoramic views of the Black Hills, Red Valley, and the plains beyond. Elk are often seen from this trail.