

White Sands

National Monument
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The White Sands Experience

At the northern end of the Chihuahuan Desert lies a mountain-ringed valley known as the Tularosa Basin. Rising from the heart of this basin is one of the world's great natural wonders--the glistening white sands of New Mexico.

Here, great wave-like dunes of gypsum cover nearly 300 square miles of desert. The dunes are everchanging; growing, cresting, then slumping, but always advancing. Slowly, relentlessly, the sand covers all.

White Sands National Monument preserves a major portion of the world's largest gypsum dune field, along with the plants and animals that have successfully adapted to this harsh environment.

Travelers to southern New Mexico are invited to explore this vast undulating landscape of brilliant white sand. This brochure is designed to help you make the most of your White Sands experience.

Getting There

White Sands National Monument is located along U.S. Highway 70/82, 15 miles west of Alamogordo and 52 miles east of Las Cruces. The Monument is 100 miles from El Paso, via either Alamogordo or Las Cruces.

Hours of Operation

The Monument is open daily, except Christmas.

Summer hours (Memorial Day through Labor Day): Visitor Center 8 AM - 7 PM, Dunes Drive 7 AM - 9 PM.

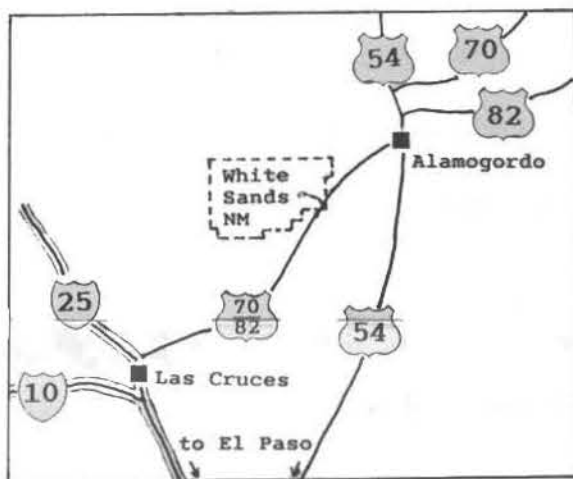
Winter hours:
Visitor Center 8 AM - 4:30 PM,
Dunes Drive 7 AM - sunset.

Park Closures

Due to missile testing on the adjacent White Sands Missile Range, it is occasionally necessary, for visitor safety, to close the Dunes Drive for periods of up to two hours. Visitors on a tight schedule are encouraged to call ahead for information on closures.

Food and Lodging

There is no dining or lodging within the Monument. The nearest restaurants and motels are in Alamogordo, 15 miles east. Refreshments and snacks can be purchased at the Visitor Center Gift Shop from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. (Summer 8:00 AM - 6 PM.)



Entrance Fees

The Monument entrance fee is \$4.00 per vehicle (good for 7 days). An annual passport to White Sands National Monument is available for \$10. Entrance fees are collected at the entrance station on the Dunes Drive.

A \$25 Golden Eagle passport is available, which allows free admission into most U.S. National Park areas for one year.

Permanent U.S. residents 62 years or older may purchase a \$10 Golden Age passport, which allows lifetime free admission into most National Parks.

Disabled Visitors

All facilities in the Visitor Center and Picnic Areas are wheelchair accessible, as is the Interdune Boardwalk. The sand dunes are accessible to wheelchairs to a limited degree. Free Golden Access passports are available.

Seeing the Park

Your first stop should be the White Sands Visitor Center, which includes a museum, information desk, book store, gift shop and rest rooms. Allow approximately 30 minutes for Visitor Center activities.

An eight-mile scenic drive leads from the Visitor Center into the heart of the dunes. Wayside exhibits along the drive provide information about the natural history of the park. The Heart of the Sands Nature Center, near the end of the Dunes Drive, depicts many of the plants and animals that survive in the shifting sands.

Numerous parking areas along the Dunes Drive allow visitors to stop and walk in the white sands. Allow 30 minutes driving time for the 16-mile round trip, plus additional time for walking, photography or stopping at pullouts.



Foot Trails

The Big Dune Trail is a one-mile self-guided nature trail. The Interdune Boardwalk is a wheelchair-accessible 1/4-mile nature trail. The Alkali Flat Trail is a 4 1/2-mile round trip backcountry trail through the heart of the dunes and is recommended for experienced hikers only.

Ranger-Led Activities

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, ranger-led activities are scheduled throughout the day, including orientation talks, nature walks, and evening slide programs. Check at the Visitor Center for the day's activities. Organized groups can arrange for ranger-led bus tours or walking tours any time of year by contacting the Monument in advance.

Picnicking and Camping

Picnic areas with sheltered tables are located at the end of the scenic drive, and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. **No water is available anywhere along the dunes drive.**

There are no campgrounds in the park. Both public and private campgrounds are available in the area. For backpackers, a backcountry campsite is available in the park. Please register at the Visitor Center upon arrival to use the backcountry site

Park Regulations

White Sands National Monument is a protected natural area. Removal or disturbance of archeological or natural objects, including sand, selenite crystals, plants and animals, is prohibited.

Speed limits are posted and enforced. Driving or parking on the dunes or outside established parking areas is not permitted. Keep vehicles locked at all times.

Pets must be leashed or under physical restraint at all times.

Help keep White Sands clean by using trash containers and fireplaces. Ground fires are prohibited.

Alcohol is prohibited within the park at certain times of the year. Check at the Visitor Center for specific restrictions. Metal detectors and fireworks are prohibited in the park.

Safety Tips

Do not stop on the roadway; pull off the road into an established parking area before stopping. The gypsum-surfaced portion of the dunes drive can be slick when wet--drive carefully. Pedestrians in picnic areas should be careful of heavy traffic. **WATCH YOUR CHILDREN.**

White sand reflects sunlight. Use sunscreen to prevent sunburn.

Do not tunnel into sand dunes. Tunnels collapse easily and can cause suffocation. Sand surfing can cause injuries--be careful. Never sand surf near the road.

It is easy to become disoriented when hiking in the dunes. Do not hike alone.

For More Information:

call (505) 479-6124