



## Photography Before or After Hours FAQ



**M**any National Park Service areas may be entered any time, day or night, at sunrise or sunset to view wildlife. At White Sands National Monument we share our boundaries with the U.S. military at Holloman Air Force Base and White Sands Missile Range. Due to security issues, the monument has specific posted hours of operation. These FAQs will assist you in planning your early morning or after hours photography trip.

### How do I Arrange for an Early Entry or Stay Late?

There are two ways to enter the monument before or after public hours.

Option one: You may camp overnight at one of ten backcountry sites. All ten sites are primitive and require a tent. Campers must follow “Leave No Trace” principles. The sites are located in the heart of the dunes with a one-mile walk to the sites. There are no facilities or water at these sites. Camping fees and monument entrance fees apply.

Please stop by the visitor center to obtain a permit. Sites are on a first-come, first-served basis. For inquiries about the cut-off time, restrictions due to missile testing, and site availability, call (575)479-6124, ext. 236.

Option two: Complete a request for early entry/stay late located on our website ([www.nps.gov/whsa](http://www.nps.gov/whsa)) and submit it to the coordinator via email at [whsa\\_film\\_photography@nps.gov](mailto:whsa_film_photography@nps.gov) at least 14 days in advance.

### Required Paperwork for Early Entry or Stay Late

1) Complete and submit the request form for early entry/stay late located on our website at [www.nps.gov/whsa](http://www.nps.gov/whsa) at least 14 days in advance of the date requested.

2) Read and sign the General Conditions for White Sands National Monument.

3) Email the request form and conditions to [WHSA\\_film\\_photography@nps.gov](mailto:WHSA_film_photography@nps.gov) at least 14 days in advance of your requested date.

4) Enter the requested date and “early entry” or “stay late” in the subject line.

5) A ranger will email the approval or denial of the request within 14 business days of receipt.

6) Final paperwork may be done by appointment or via regular mail.

7) Fees must be paid prior to the date, either by appointment or via mail. To make an appointment, send an email to [whsa\\_film\\_photography@nps.gov](mailto:whsa_film_photography@nps.gov) with “Appointment” in the subject line.

8) Questions will be answered by the filming coordinator via email.

### What are the Fees Associated with Early Entry or Stay Late?

If your request for early entry/stay late is approved, there is a fee of \$50 per hour or any part of an hour. For example, if you want to enter 30 minutes prior to opening, the fee is \$50 even though you are only entering the monument 30 minutes early. This fee is per hour not per person.

Payment must be done in cash, traveler’s cheques, a cashier’s check, or money order for the exact amount. No personal or company checks will be accepted. Make traveler’s cheques, cashier’s check, or money orders payable to the National Park Service.

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**What Happens on the Morning of an Early Entry?**

A ranger will open the main highway gate at the requested time; however, the ranger will only wait 10 minutes. If you arrive later than this, the ranger will close the gate and go about his/her

duties. You will not be able to enter the monument and no money will be refunded. There will be only one opening per group. Please arrive on time.

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**What Happens on the Evening of a Stay Late?**

You will provide a description of the vehicle(s) in your group (make, model, color, and license plate) on the request form. The ranger closing the monument on the date of your late stay will clear the monument per normal procedures.

At the designated time, you will meet the ranger at the locked gates at the entrance to the monument. The ranger will open the gates for you to exit. The ranger will wait only 10 minutes. Citations could be issued if you fail to exit at the designated time. Please do not be late.

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**Local Contacts and Area Services**

The Otero County Film Liaison offers production assistance and advising free of charge. If you would like more information on area services, please contact the Otero County Film Office.

Otero County Film Office  
1301 N White Sands Blvd  
Alamogordo, NM 88310-6659  
Office: (575) 439 - 4353  
Cell: (575) 495 - 6093

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**Distances and Travel Times**

Alamogordo is the nearest town to the monument. The drive from Alamogordo on Highway 70 West to the entrance of the monument is 13 miles and takes approximately 20 minutes.

The packed gypsum sand is firm and does not require any special vehicle to continue into the dunes. Travel time from the entrance of the monument to the end of the eight-mile Dunes Drive is approximately 20 minutes.

When you enter the monument from Highway 70 West, you will be traveling on Dunes Drive. Dunes Drive is eight miles one way and will take you into the heart of the dunes where the tall, bright, white sand dunes are located.

The speed limits in the monument start at 45 mph and drop to 35 mph and 25 mph along Dunes Drive. Please obey all posted speed limits.

The road consists of two-lanes with soft shoulders and pull-out areas along the drive. After approximately four miles, the pavement ends and becomes a packed gypsum sand road.

A map of the monument with suggested areas for optimal photography can be obtained at the visitor center during normal operation hours or on our website: [www.nps.gov/whsa](http://www.nps.gov/whsa).

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**General Information**

White Sands National Monument is open to the public every day of the year except Christmas day (December 25). Our hours of operation vary according to the season. All vehicles must enter the park one hour before closing time and exit when the park closes. It is recommended that visitors call ahead to confirm opening and closing times or visit our website at [www.nps.gov/whsa](http://www.nps.gov/whsa).

Occasionally, the monument is closed for a short period of time while the White Sands Missile Range conducts scientific and/or armament testing over the public lands of the monument. These closures can last from one to four hours and happen twice a week on average. Please consult the missile test portion of our website for more information on this type of closure.

