

White Sands

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

Planning Your Visit

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.

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.

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. Travelers from Carlsbad Caverns to southern Arizona can follow U.S. 82 through the scenic Sacramento Mountains to White Sands National Monument.

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 - 10 PM.

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

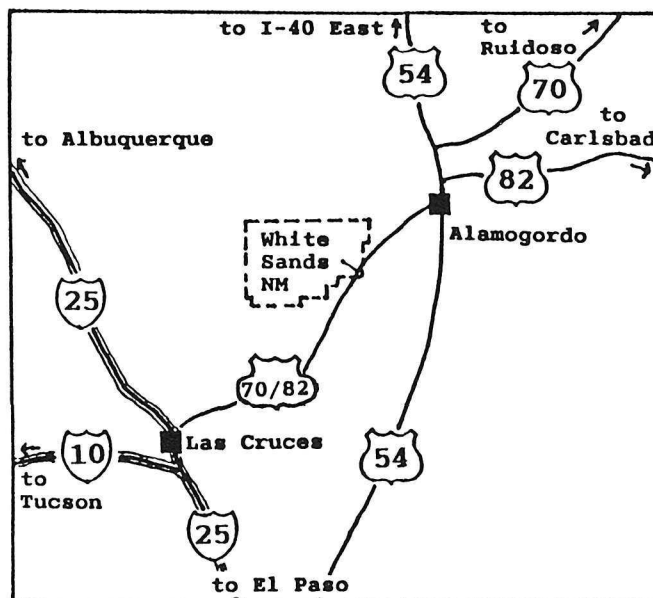
Entrance Fees

The Monument entrance fee is \$3.00 per vehicle.

A \$25 Golden Eagle passport is available, which allows free admission into all National Park areas in the U.S. for one calendar year. Travelers who plan on visiting a number of National Park areas will save money by purchasing a Golden Eagle Passport.

Permanent U.S. residents 62 years or older are admitted free, along with all other occupants in their vehicle. Golden Age (seniors) and Golden Access (disabled) passports are available at the Visitor Center.

Entrance fees are collected at the entrance station on the dunes drive.



Seeing the Park

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

An eight-mile scenic drive leaves from the Visitor Center into the heart of the dunes. Numbered pullouts along the drive correspond to information in the park brochure.

Numerous parking areas along the 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.

For those who would like to explore the dunes on foot, the Big Dune Trail is a one-mile self-guided nature trail. A booklet, available at the trailhead, discusses the plants and animals that live within the dunes.

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.

Weather

MONTH	AVG HIGH °F	AVG LOW °F	AVG PRECIP inches	MONTH	AVG HIGH °F	AVG LOW °F	AVG PRECIP inches
JAN	56	22	0.50	JUL	97	64	1.40
FEB	62	25	0.30	AUG	95	62	1.20
MAR	69	30	0.25	SEP	90	55	1.25
APR	79	40	0.25	OCT	80	42	0.75
MAY	88	49	0.25	NOV	66	27	0.25
JUN	96	58	0.60	DEC	56	22	0.50

Disabled Visitors

All facilities in the Visitor Center and Picnic Area are wheelchair accessible. The sand dunes themselves are accessible to wheelchairs to a limited degree.

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. U.S. Highway 70/82 between Alamogordo and Las Cruces is also closed during times of missile testing. Visitors on a tight schedule are encouraged to call the day prior to arrival for information on closures.

Other Area Attractions

International Space Museum and Planetarium - Alamogordo

Alameda Park Zoo - Alamogordo

Missile Park - White Sands Missile Range (35 mi southwest)

Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation (40 mi NE)

Oliver Lee State Park - 15 miles south of Alamogordo - camping

Cloudcroft and Ruidoso - popular vacation communities in the scenic Sacramento Mountains (30 mi east)

Aguirre Springs Recreation Area - hiking and camping in the Organ Mountains (40 miles southwest)

For More Information:
call (505) 479-6124

Picnicking and Camping

Three picnic areas with sheltered tables and pit toilets are located at the end of the scenic drive. **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. A backcountry campsite is available in the park. Please register at the Visitor Center upon arrival to use this site.

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 AM to 4:30 PM.

Park Regulations

White Sands National Monument is a 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 constraint at all times.

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

Possession of alcohol by persons under 21 is prohibited.

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.**

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. Do not hike alone.