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## Jewel cave national park tours

Po Box 7 Mammoth Cave, KY 42259 270-758-2180 www.nps.gov/macaca Mammoth Cave National Park - located in southwest Kentucky, about 90 miles from Louisville or Nashville - gives visitors a glimpse of how Earth's natural processes can form amazing and incredible rock formations that are hidden from sunlight. Hundreds of miles of underground passages make up the Mammoth Cave, the world's largest cave system. Admission: Entrance to the park is free of charge. Cave tours are available for adults from \$4 to \$46 (children\$2.50 to \$18). Reservations are recommended (800-967-2283). Visitor center: The visitor center is open daily except December 25. Other services: Three campsites and a park hotel Accommodations: Houchins Ferry Campground is open all year round. The Maple Springs Group's Camp and Camp are open from March to November. Reservations are available (800-365-CAMP). Visiting Mammoth Caves National Park under the forest-covered hills of southern Kentucky, you'll discover the world's largest cave system. There are about 360 miles of underground passages , on five different levels - that have been explored or mapped so far. This cave is so vast and amazing, its dozens of passages, rooms and wells so rich in history, that it was designated a World Heritage Site of the United Nations. The full extent of the Mammoth Cave is still unknown. New caves and passages are almost constantly being discovered as the underground boundaries of this spectacular maze extend deeper and deeper into an inferior world that almost defies belief. The names are charming: flowing stones, travertine, scallops, flutes and domepits, Plaster flowers and dissolved carbonates. Holes and springs disappearing. Vertical shafts, tubular passages and open caves. Even the basic rocks of southern Kentucky caves have a certain natural poetry to them: limestone, dolomite, sandstone, and shale. In fact, the Mammoth Cave is a place of beauty and wonder, mystery and paradox. In the room after underground room there is an incredibly rich variety of exotic shapes: tapered stalactites and stalatopmites, thick hanging curtains, lacy crystals, slender columns and fluted shells. Hikers find themselves wandering through an extensive kingdom of underground lakes and canyons, waterfalls and streams, and narrow side corridors and vaulted ballrooms. It's a strange landscape, a sometimes grandiose and occasionally grotesque place, a lost geological world buried that seems to have alternately come from a Walt Disney fairy tale or the off-kilter imagination of Edgar Allen Poe. All these extraordinary features can be found in the Cave National Park of Located about 50 miles northeast of Bowling Green, Kentucky, the Mammoth Cave contains one of the world's largest and most diverse underground cave systems. The haunting beauty of Place - the mysterious holes, the underground waterfalls, and the delicate formations of plaster caves - will stay with you forever. Tour opportunities abound for visitors to mammoth cave national park. Go to the next section for some sightseeing tips. Visitors to mammoth cave national park rarely see more than the 12 kilometers of passages that have been opened for tours. But professionals are still exploring the cave system, drawing new maps and charts, and opening additional passages, many of them little more than tracking spaces. In 1972, a long-sought passage way was found connecting the Mammoth Cave with the Flint Ridge cave system across hanson's Lost River, an underground stream. The Mammoth Cave has other underground waterways: Lake Lethe, the Estilx River and the Echo River. In a section of the cave reached by a spectacular underpass called Broadway, there is a site called methodist church, where religious services are believed to have been held in the early 1800s. Visitors to this area today are treated to an experience very similar to that of previous tourists. Cave guides turn off the lights and throw torches through the huge underground chamber, allowing visitors to see with their own eyes what the cave looked like before the electric lights were installed. Booth's Amphitheatre is an underground room visited by Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth, brother of Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Edwin Booth recited Hamlet's soliloquium here. Nearby there is a hole in the ground known as Bottomless Pit. It was named by ancient guides, who apparently were unable to see all the way to the bottom of the well with dim light from their shimmering lard oil lamps. The bottomless hole is 30 meters deep. Mammoth Cave National Park Photo Opportunities The geological wonder that is the Mammoth Cave is filled with breathtaking photo opportunities. Here are some subjects for your consideration: Natural Entrance: One of the best known (and most photographed) places in the park, the Natural Entrance is especially beautiful when viewed from inside the cave looking at the surrounding trees. Broadway: Also known as The Main Cave, Broadway is a huge underground canyon offering spectacular views. Frozen Niagara: The mineral-rich water that flows through the stone slowly formed frozen Niagara, which features stone waves that mimic falling water. Focus on mammoth photo tour: This is for people who want a little guidance from taking pictures. The tour, offered by park service, visits some of the most photogenic spots in the Mammoth Cave, including Rainbow Dome, Crystal Lake and Frozen Exploring the Mammoth Cave Several ranger-led tours take visitors through different sections of the mammoth cave's underground wonderland. They are an ideal way to see the cave. The half-day tour is extremely extremely Tour members enter the cave through the Carmichael entrance leading to Cleaveland Avenue. This is a long tubular chamber carved by groundwater. Its walls glow with white plaster that crystallized beneath the limestone surface. The tour passes through the snowball dining room, where the group can stop for lunch. Then the tour runs along Boone Avenue, an underground river chasm so narrow that you can reach and touch both walls. The tour ends at Frozen Niagara, a flowing stone cataract created as mineral-rich water seeps into the walls. A less arduous walk follows the 1,300-foot Travertine Tour. The Wild Cave Tour covers five and a half miles, often by belly crawling, in about six hours. The Mammoth Cave has captivated more than just modern visitors. On the next page, read about the history of the Mammoth Cave. RR 1 Box 190 Hot Springs, SD 57747-9430 605-745-4600 www.nps.gov/wica Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota features one of the longest and most complex cave systems in the world. Located about 50 miles (80 km) from Rapid City, South Dakota, the park also has more than 28,000 acres of mixed grass prairie and ponderous pine forest. Cave tours are given daily throughout the year; visitors can see up close an amazing display of boxwork, a cave formation of thin calcite fins that resembles honeycombs. In addition to exploring the caves, visitors can camp amid the prairie and forest or search for wildlife such as moose and prairie dogs. Admission: Entrance to the park is free of charge. Cave tours are available for \$7 to \$23. Some reservations are available (605-745-4600). Visitor Center: The visitor center is open daily except January 1, Thanksgiving day and December 25. Other services: Exhibitions and a Camping Accommodations: Elk Mountain Campground is open all year round and operates from 1 to 0. Visiting wind cave national park buffalo, pronghorn antelope, and mule deer still roam the grassy hills of the Great Plains in South Dakota. Overload, prairie hawks circle, looking for prey. To the northwest, the eastern flank of the pine-covered Black Hills hovers in the distance. But this quiet world of prairie grass and sun is a bit misleading. Below the vast prairie, there is a great underground wonderland, where nature is putting on a spectacular display of geological crafts. The Cave of the Wind is one of the largest caves in the world, a labyrinth of passages carved into limestone beds that have existed for 60 million years. Unlike many limestone caves, including the Mammoth Cave, which formed at relatively shallow depths - sometimes less than 100 feet - the of the Wind rotates and spins its way through the rock hundreds of feet below the surface. In one place, the cave is more than 600 feet below the surface. The cave gets its name from the drafts that blow alternately in and out of caves. The wind direction depends on whether the air pressure in the cave is higher or lower than the atmospheric pressure outside. In a very real sense, the cave is breathing, and this constant wave of air, first in and then outside, keeps the interior of the large cave drier than most other caves. In Wind Cave, you won't hear the mysterious sound of dripping and water seeping non-stop. As the Cave of the Wind is not as humid as many other caves, there are almost no stalactites and stalamites. Nature has worked a different kind of underground magic here. Instead of flowing through wide openings and depositing minerals into thick columns, surface water seeps through small cracks and pores into the limestone. This infiltration deposited a thin film, along with small droplets, on the walls and ceilings, creating a unique geological spectacle. Impressive multicolored crucities decorate the walls and ceilings throughout the cave. Descriptive names explain the character of these amazing works of nature. One type of formation is called popcorn, a dull growth that looks like coral stains of all sizes and shapes. Another is called frost; ranges from small wires to large round formations that resemble snowballs. The Cave of the Wind is probably most famous for what is undoubtedly the best boxwork display in the world, a calcite formation similar to honeycomb. Boxwork is found everywhere in the cave, but the best examples are in the underground chambers called Post Office, Temple and Perolate Gates. Take a look at the next section to find out more about what park visitors can enjoy. Enjoy.

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