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YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE PARKS

# MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK

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# WELCOME

Welcome to Mammoth Cave—the longest cave in the world and one of the first tourist attractions in America. The cave boasts an incredible 400 miles of explored and mapped passageways, and geologists estimate there could be many more. Mammoth Cave National Park achieved official park status from Congress on July 1, 1941. Since then, millions of visitors have journeyed to south-central Kentucky to experience the grandeur of this awe-inspiring sight.

The National Park Service and Ortega Parks work jointly to provide an unforgettable experience for visitors. This *American Park Network* guide to Mammoth Cave National Park is provided in partnership with Ortega Parks LLC and aims to foster appreciation and respect for the park, while also providing the information to make your visit as smooth as possible. It has been made possible by the support of the sponsors whose messages appear inside.

Throughout your visit, please respect the delicate nature of the park's diverse ecosystem and its astounding geology. Carry out what you carry in, treat wildlife with respect, and follow all park regulations so that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy this geologic wonder of the world as much as you.

*Enjoy your visit!*

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## FUN FACTS

**Established:** Mammoth Cave National Park was officially designated on July 1, 1941. It later gained World Heritage Site designation in 1981 and became the core area of an International Biosphere Reserve in 1990.

**Land Area:** The park encompasses 52,830 acres in south central Kentucky.

**Plants and Animals:** 130 animal species use the cave on a regular basis, some as visitors and some for their entire life cycle. More than 70 species are threatened or endangered.

**Popular Sights:** The park is home to the world's longest known cave system, with more than 400 miles explored.

**Popular Activities:** Visitors can enjoy cave tours, hiking, biking, camping, scenic drives, ranger-led activities, horseback riding, birdwatching, wildlife watching, canoeing, fishing and more!

**Hiking:** There are nearly 84 miles of hiking trails in the park and 12 miles of developed cave trails. Be sure to select a trail with the appropriate level of difficulty for everyone in your group.

**Camping:** There are three campgrounds located in Mammoth Cave National Park. The three campgrounds are Mammoth Cave Campground, and the Houchin Ferry Campground and Maple Springs Campground.

**Lodging:** The Mammoth Cave Hotel is the only hotel located in Mammoth Cave National Park. It is operated by Ortega Parks and offers Hotel Cottages, Woodland Cottages, Heritage Trail Rooms and Sunset Terrace Rooms.

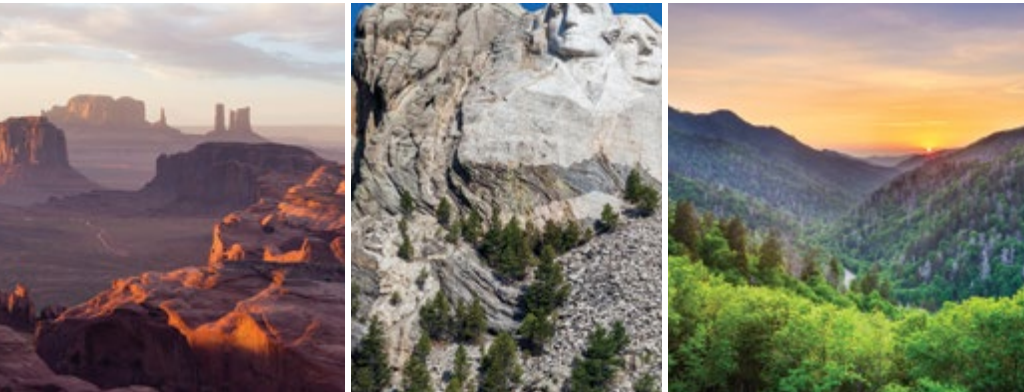
**For More Information:** Please visit the official park website at [nps.gov/maca](http://nps.gov/maca) or call the park directly at (270) 758-2180. To make a reservation for lodging visit [mammoth-cavelodge.com](http://mammoth-cavelodge.com) or call (844) 760-2283.

**Zion National Park is the result of erosion, sedimentary uplift, and Stephanie Shinmachi.**

Members of the National Park Foundation community, like Stephanie, volunteer in parks across America, supporting everything the National Park Service does, from conservation to education. Find your park and join today.



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**Publisher & Editor-in-Chief**  
MARK J. SAFERSTEIN

**Associate Publisher & Executive Editor**  
Joel S. Saferstein

**Group Sales & Partnerships Director**  
Alex Frenkel

**EDITORIAL / PRODUCTION**

Managing Editor: Kate Morgan  
Editors: Nell Alk, Monette A. Bailey,  
Scott Deckman, Cinnamon Janzer, Julie McCool,  
Renee Sklarew, Andy M. Smith  
Proofreader: Shannon Kronstadt  
Graphic Designers: Mario Arce, Dennisse Cruz,  
Mike Dion, Yamileth Racinos, Tatiana Hurtado

**DIGITAL**

Technology Managers: Scott Falconer, Josh Eckstein

**ADVERTISING SALES & MARKETING**  
(212) 581-3380

**adsales@americanparknetwork.com**  
Business Development: Sharon Burson,  
Randy Burton, Mary Pat Kaleth, Pat Keane,  
Craig King, Kristi Rummel  
Operations Manager: Matthew Price

American Park Network  
41 East 11th Street, 11th Floor, NY, NY 10003

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**Distribution requests**  
distribution@americanparknetwork.com

**Oh, Ranger! Wi-Fi™ installation/sponsorship**  
wifi@americanparknetwork.com

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Cover: The stairs inside Mammoth Cave by ColorPlayer/iStock.

For answers to all your questions, go to **OhRanger.com**





# WHAT'S NEW! WHY PARKS MATTER

“There is nothing so American as  
our national parks.”

— Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Access to parks is one of the things that's truly great about life in America. Not just national parks, like FDR stated, but *all* parks. Parks afford everyone, regardless of race, income, social status or age, the opportunity to escape the concrete jungle and step into the wild. It doesn't matter whether it's a small step into a local park or a giant leap into the backcountry. The effect is the same. Time in nature feels good. Other values that parks bring may be less obvious. Since we take care of the things we value, I'd like to highlight a few other benefits we all receive from public lands:

**Economic Impact** America's federal, state and local parks and public lands generate \$200 billion in annual economic activity and support more than one million jobs! You might help a dozen businesses during a weekend hiking trip. Imagine the impact of a week-long national park adventure. Parks raise property values, too!

**Conservation** Trees produce the oxygen we need to survive, but did you know that they also help save money? It's estimated that trees in cities save \$400 billion in costs to retain stormwater. A single tree can store 100 gallons or more, which helps keep streets from flooding and reduces the need for artificial storage facilities. A tree can also absorb as much as three tons of carbon gas during its lifetime.



Mark, Joel & Alex – Support parks, stay healthy!

Take a deep breath in a park and you'll immediately know the value of greenspace.

**Health & Wellness** Studies show a high correlation between time spent in parks and improved health (and, in my view, happiness). You move more when you're outside, which decreases stress, makes you more fit and reduces the risk of many health issues, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Exercise (which parks inspire) also positively impacts your cholesterol levels. A few years ago, I started bicycling to work every day. A year later, my overall cholesterol went down while my HDL—the “good” cholesterol—went up. The results of a small change in your exercise routine can be amazing! Parks invite this change.

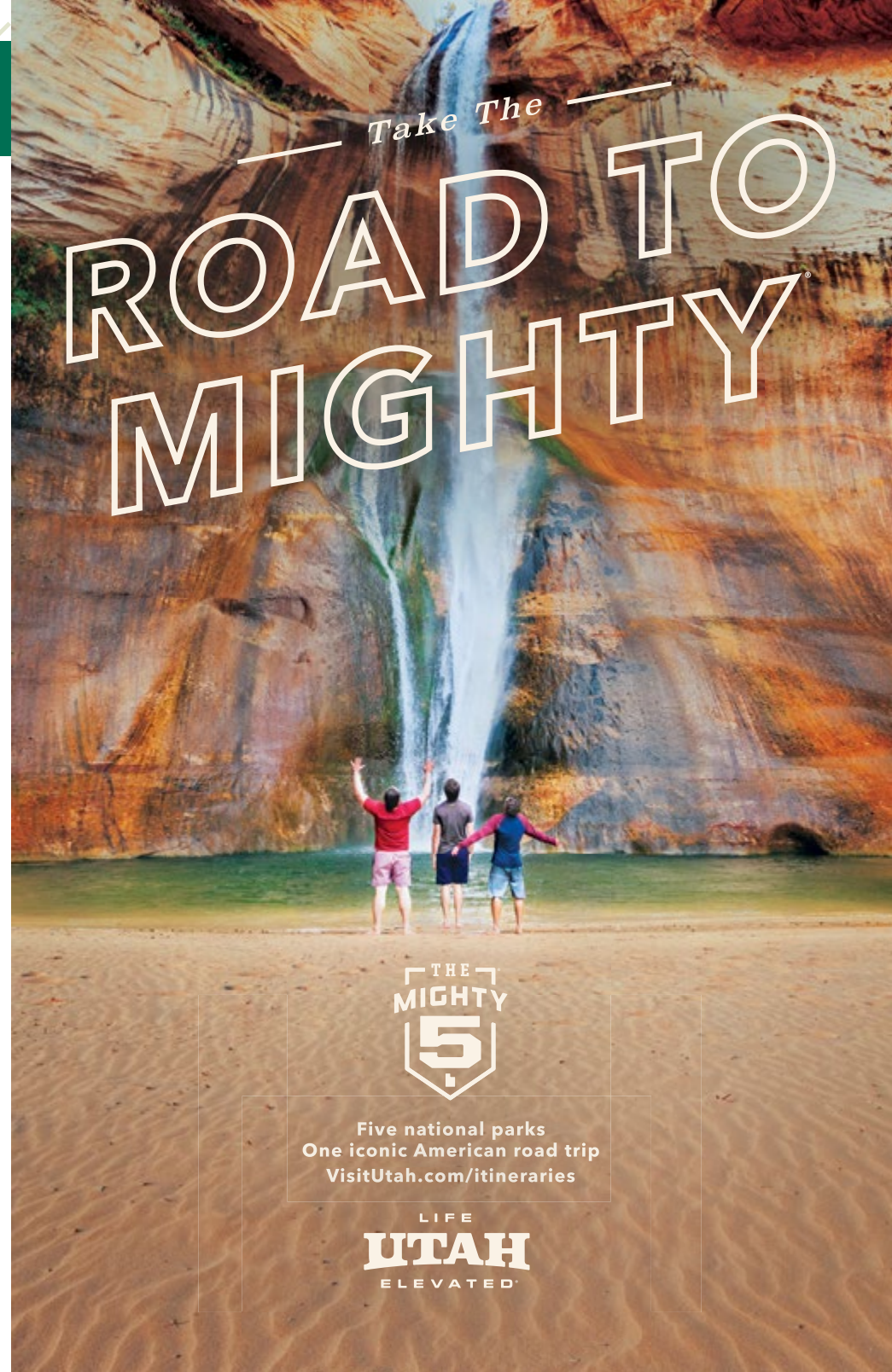
The value of parks is undeniable, so follow FDR's lead and support our public lands. It's the all-American thing to do. (Congress, take note!) You'll save the country money while improving our nation's health—and your own, too. Not a bad combination!

mark@americanparknetwork.com



## GET CONNECTED AT YOUR FAVORITE PARKS!

Parks are about enjoying nature, but what if you want to share a great picture or are awaiting an important email? If you're looking to add connectivity to your park, or if you already have Wi-Fi and would like help adding content or generating sponsor revenues, please let us know at [wifi@americanparknetwork.com](mailto:wifi@americanparknetwork.com).



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# AT A GLANCE

From the beginning, underground explorers doubted that they would ever find the end of Kentucky’s Mammoth Cave. Currently measuring 400 miles long, Mammoth Cave is known as the longest cave in the world and exploration to discover more continues today. Geologists estimate that there are hundreds more miles of undiscovered passageways yet to be mapped and explored.

In Mammoth’s vast subterranean world there are giant vertical shafts, from the towering 192-foot-high Mammoth Dome to the 105-foot-deep Bottomless Pit. Some passages and rooms are decorated with sparkling white gypsum crystals, while others are filled with stalactites, stalagmites and other cave formations. Underground rivers, including Echo River and the River Styx, flow through Mammoth’s deepest chambers. And in the cave’s absolute blackness dwell many rare and unusual animals, including eyeless fish, ghostly white spiders and blind beetles.

While most visitors to Mammoth Cave National Park come to view its subterranean wonders, its surface beauty should not be overlooked. Above ground, Mammoth offers 52,830 acres of scenic parkland perfect for hiking, fishing, biking, horseback riding, paddling and wildlife viewing. Buried within a thriving second-growth woodland forest, you’ll find extraordinary and unusual ecosystems in the bowl-shaped sinkholes, limestone bluffs, and wetlands scattered throughout this lush park.

Keep a look out for common woodland creatures like deer, raccoon, opossum, gray squirrel, rabbit, woodchuck, muskrat, beaver, red fox, coyote, owls and wild turkey, but be careful not to disturb some of Mammoth Cave’s most precious endangered animals, that include the Kentucky Cave Shrimp, the Indiana Bat, Gray Bat and seven species of freshwater mussels.



## FEDERAL RECREATIONAL LANDS PASSES

A federal recreation pass is helpful if you plan to visit many national parks, forests or other federal lands. For information, call (888) 275-8747 or visit [store.usgs.gov/pass](https://store.usgs.gov/pass).

Type	Cost	Availability	Details
Annual Pass	\$80	General Public	This one-year pass is available on site, by phone or online (see above).
Senior Pass	\$10	U.S. residents age 62+	This lifetime pass is available on site or via mail order. ID required.
Military Pass	Free	U.S. military members and their dependents	This one-year pass is available on site. ID (CAC Card or DoD Form 1173) required.
Access Pass	Free	U.S. residents with permanent disabilities	This lifetime pass is available on site or via mail order. ID and documentation required.
Volunteer Pass	Free	250 cumulative volunteer service hours	Inquire locally to obtain information about this one-year pass.

Garden State Hiker



*Mammoth Cave tours give visitors the chance to see interesting geological formations.*

Canoe or kayak the Green River or Nolin River for a close-up view of dramatic bluffs, majestic trees, curious wildlife, and the plants that ancient explorers used as torches to explore the cave. The river, dotted with sandbars, islands and subsurface springs, supports one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in North America. Among the creatures that call it home include over 50 species of freshwater mussels.

Along with its stunning natural splendor, the Mammoth Cave area boasts a rich and colorful human tale that began 5,000 years ago. It’s a fascinating story that features ancient miners, saltpeter mines, the first underground tuberculosis hospital in history, trapped cavers, clever guides, the birth of modern tourism and the creation of America’s 26th national park.

The park’s 52,830 acres offer many opportunities for recreation. Cave tours

are available throughout the year for everyone—young and old. They range from 1.5-hour strolls to six-hour adventures. On the surface, park rangers lead walks to remarkable features like Green River Bluffs and the River Styx Spring. More than 80 miles of hiking trails cross the park, ranging from easy jaunts around the visitor center to intense treks in the backcountry. Other recreational activities include: horseback riding, hiking, canoeing, biking, bird watching and fishing.

In 1941, Mammoth Cave National Park was established to preserve the caves, the river valleys and the stunning topography. On October 27, 1981, it became a World Heritage Site; on September 26, 1990, it became an International Biosphere Reserve. Visitors still come by the thousands, drawn by the dark frontier that is Mammoth Cave.





# PLAN YOUR VISIT



## ENTRANCE FEES

Entrance to Mammoth Cave National Park is free, although there is a fee for cave tours. The park is open year-round, except for December 25, but may close for severe weather. Activities and programs vary by season. Call **(270) 758-2180** for current information. See the "Things to Do" chapter for more information and see the "Caves" chapter for specific information and charts on the cave tours.

## PERMITS & RESERVATIONS

Reservations are strongly recommended for cave tours. Those wishing to camp overnight in the backcountry must obtain a backcountry use permit (no charge) at the visitor center information desk. No license is required for fishing in the park.

## GETTING TO MAMMOTH CAVE

Mammoth Cave National Park is located in south central Kentucky, about 35 miles northeast of Bowling Green, Kentucky, approximately 90 miles south of Louisville, Kentucky; and about 90 miles north of Nashville, Tennessee. The park is in the central time zone.

## TRANSPORTATION

**Car:** From the north, take I-65 South from Louisville, Kentucky, (about 90 miles away) to Exit 53, turn right. Another 15 minutes of driving will bring you to the park visitor center.

From the south, take I-65 North from Nashville, Tennessee (about 90 miles) to Exit 48, turn left. Stay straight for 15 minutes, until you reach the park visitor center.

From the east, use Bluegrass Parkway, Cumberland Parkway (Louie B. Nunn Parkway), and U.S. 68.

From the west, use U.S. 68 & 80, Natcher Parkway, and the Wendell H. Ford Western Kentucky Parkway. Exits at Park City and Cave City are for the park along I-65. KY 70 also provides park access through Brownsville, Kentucky (on the southwest border of the park).

**Air:** Louisville International Airport and Nashville International Airport, both about 90 miles from Mammoth Cave, offer daily flights from the United States and Canada on major airlines including Delta, Air Canada, and Northwest. There is also a smaller regional airport in Bowling Green, approximately 35 miles from the park.

**Bus:** Southeastern Greyhound Bus serves Bowling Green. The bus station is closed on weekends and holidays. Call **(270) 842-5131** before you leave to make travel arrangements.

## GETTING AROUND OUTSIDE OF THE PARK

**Cars:** All parts of the park are easily reached by car. There are also many scenic drives along the way.

**Taxi:** A taxi service is available from the bus station at Bowling Green. The distance is approximately 35 miles to the park.

**Rental Cars:** Contact airports for rental car information.

Bowling Green: **(270) 842-1101**,  
Louisville: **(502) 367-4636**,  
Nashville: **(615) 275-4311**,  
Glasgow Enterprise: **(270) 651-6682**.



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IMPORTANT NUMBERS	
Emergency	Dial 911
General Park Information	(270) 758-2180 nps.gov/mac
Cave tour reservations	(877) 444-6777 recreation.gov
Lodging within the park	(270) 758-2225 mammothcavehotel.com
Non-emergency assistance, dial	(270) 758-2180
Camping	(877) 444-6777 recreation.gov
Canoe Rentals: Green River Canoeing	(270) 773-5712
Mammoth Cave Canoe and Kayak	(270) 773-3366
Big Buffalo Crossing Canoe and Kayak	(270) 774-7883
Cave Country Canoe	(270) 773-5552
Lost and Found	(270) 758-2180
Accommodations and attractions outside the park: Cavecity.com	(270) 773-8833

### VISITOR CENTER

Located in the middle of the park, on clearly marked roads, the visitor center provides all the information you need to make your trip memorable. The Mammoth Cave National Park Visitor Center is open every day of the year, except December 25. Hours may vary depending on the season.

For specific hours, be sure to call ahead and confirm with the center. Inside you will find the ticket office, restrooms, a bookstore, water fountains, weather reports, exhibits and an information desk.

Check at the information desk about special programs, ranger-led talks and seasonal evening programs.

For more information, please call **(270) 758-2180**.

### WEATHER

Summers are hot with highs in the 80s and 90s°F. Winters are mild with highs in the 30s and 40s°F, although temperatures can drop to well below freezing. In winter it is very cold just inside the cave entrance. Temperatures in the cave, however, are around 54°F year-round, so bring a light jacket if you plan to take a cave tour. It can seem chilly!

### SIZE AND VISITATION

Mammoth Cave National Park comprises 52,830 acres. The park is open year-round with the highest visitation in June, July and August, and the lowest in January. More than 500,000 people visit the park annually.

### VISITOR SERVICES

At Mammoth Cave, you'll find gift shops, camping supplies and other necessities

that will make your trip more enjoyable. Have a question about park rules and regulations? See the "Park Regulations and Safety" chapter for tips.

### BANKING SERVICES

There is an ATM located in the Mammoth Cave Hotel. Banks in the nearby towns of Cave City, Horse City and Park City have 24-hour automated teller machines (ATM), foreign currency exchange and other services.

### CAMPING SUPPLIES

Camping and picnic supplies are available in the Caver's Camp Store, located near the campground.

### GIFT SHOPS

Souvenir books and historical cave information are available in the Cave Company Gift Shop located near the main lobby of the hotel. For more upscale shopping, visit the Kentucky Home Store off the main lobby, featuring varied and unique creations, many made by Kentucky craftsmen.

### EMERGENCIES

Dial 911. For non-emergency assistance, dial **(270) 758-2180; (270) 758-2115**.

### FIRST AID

First Aid is available at the visitor center. Dial 911 for emergencies.

### KENNEL

Outdoor kennels are available at the Mammoth Cave Hotel. Inquire at the hotel front desk for more information. Note that pets are not permitted on any of the cave tours at any time, with the exception of service animals for those with disabilities.

### LAUNDROMAT

There is a self-service laundry service adjacent to the post office at the Caver's Camp Store near Mammoth Cave Campground. The laundry facility has 2 coin-operated washers and 2 coin-operated dryers. Hours vary by season, so check at the camp store.

### LOST AND FOUND

In the event that you find or lose an item during your stay at the park, please visit the ticket sales area in the visitor center for the lost and found. For more information, please call **(270) 758-2419**.

### POSTAL SERVICES

There is a U.S. post office behind the Caver's Camp Store near Mammoth Cave Campground. For more information, please call **(270) 758-2311**.

### RELIGIOUS SERVICES

There are a variety of religious options in nearby towns. For more information, call **(270) 773-3131**.

### SERVICE STATION

Gas is no longer available in the park. It can be purchased in nearby towns, so fill up before you enter.

### SHOWERS

Coin operated shower facilities are available at the Caver's Camp Store near Mammoth Cave Campground. For more information, please call **(270) 758-2225**.

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## ACCESSIBILITY

### VISITOR CENTER

The visitor center and its restrooms, information desk, ticket counter and exhibits are accessible. Please inquire about ranger-led activities around the visitor center including cave tours that are accessible.

### HOTEL & RESTAURANT

The Mammoth Cave Hotel offers access for visitors in wheelchairs. The Heritage Trail Rooms are ADA accessible and accommodate between two to four people with fully accessible restrooms.

### CAMPING

Mammoth Cave Campground has two designated wheelchair-accessible

campsites. Restroom facilities are also accessible. The nearby camp store, post office and laundry facilities are also accessible. Camping facilities are available March through November.

### PICNIC AREA

Open seasonally, the picnic area is minimally accessible. There are two parking spaces and picnic tables, an accessible picnic shelter and accessible restrooms.

### TRAILS

Ask at the visitor center about the three accessible trails in the park: Sand Cave Trail, Sloan's Crossing Pond Trail and the Heritage Trail. See the "Walking and Hiking" chapter for more information.



When you visit Mammoth Cave National Park, you'll find that the opportunity for adventure abounds. Camping, fishing and hiking are just a few of the many activities available in the park.

NPS



# LODGING & DINING

**The Mammoth Cave Hotel** is located within the park near the historic entrance to the world famous Mammoth Cave, and a short walk too the visitor center. Food is available at Troglobite Snack Shop (open seasonally), at the Crystal Lake Coffee Shop and at the Travertine Restaurant. The Caver's Camp Store near the Mammoth Cave Campground stocks a limited supply of groceries.

The Service Center also features showers, a laundromat and a post office. Mammoth Cave Hotel will be operated by Ortega Parks, an authorized concessioner of the National Park Service, through the year 2032. For more information or reservations, call **(844) 760-2283** or visit [mammothcavelodge.com](http://mammothcavelodge.com).

**Heritage Trail Rooms:** Four air-conditioned, ADA-accessible rooms, each accommodating two to four guests, are adjacent to the historic entrance to Mammoth Cave and close for tour-goers.

**Sunset Terrace Rooms:** Twenty air-conditioned rooms—including two that are ADA accessible—are located in a picturesque setting at the forest's edge, not far from the Heritage Trail that leads to the stunningly beautiful Sunset Point Overlook. The motel-style Sunset Terrace rooms are a perfect location for larger gatherings, such as a family reunion.

**Historic Hotel Cottages:** The 10 air-conditioned single unit cottages are nestled near the forest with close proximity to the outdoor amphitheater and historic Engine No. 4. They are fully furnished, comfortable and just a short walk from the hotel. (Available mid-March through October.)

The Woodland Cottages: The Woodland

Cottages are situated in a grove of trees a short distance from the hotel. These single-, two-, three- and four-bedroom rustic cottages offer basic accommodations and are a great location for retreats! They have mini-fridges, coffee makers, ceiling fans and can accommodate up to 16 people. Pets are welcome for an additional \$9 per night. (Available mid-May through September).

Since 1816, Mammoth Cave Hotel has served regional southern cuisine to visitors. Mammoth Cave Hotel provides delicious home-style cooking in the Travertine Restaurant and the Crystal Lake Coffee Shop. For those on the run, there's Troglobites Snack Shop on-site (open mid-June through Labor Day). Restaurant hours vary by season. For more information, call **(844) 760-2283**.

Forever Resorts



If you're looking to stay close to the action, the Mammoth Cave Hotel is the only lodging within the boundaries of the park.



# PARK REGULATIONS & SAFETY

You can make the most of your visit to Mammoth Cave National Park by planning ahead, and becoming acquainted with some simple precautions. All of these regulations are designed to enhance your safety.

## SAFETY TIPS

- On cave tours, it is vital that you wear proper footwear and select a tour that is appropriate for your physical abilities. Many cave tours and nature walks are considered strenuous.
- Do not approach or feed animals. All animals in the park are wild, and feeding them harms their well-being.
- Do not drink from rivers, ponds, lakes or springs in the park without first treating the water. Potable water is available at the visitor center, the hotel, Caver's Camp Store and Houchin Ferry Campground.
- Swimming in the Green River is not recommended due to strong currents and deep holes. Lifeguards are not on duty.



## PACKING ESSENTIALS

### Don't hit the trail without:

- Topographic map and compass + GPS
- Whistle
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Sunglasses, sunscreen and hat
- High-energy food and plenty of water
- Appropriate clothing and extra layers
- Waterproof Matches
- Insect repellent
- Pocket knife
- First-aid kit
- Sturdy footwear

## REGULATIONS

- Camping along the floodplain is by permit only. Inquire at the visitor center.
- Boats may be taken in and out of the water at Green River Ferry. Canoes may be taken in and out at Green River, Houchin and Dennison Ferries. Before launching pick up a BackCountry Map & Guide at the Visitor Center.
- All boat passengers must have a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device. It should be worn at all times while on the river.
- Never dump or discharge refuse in the water.

## FISHING REGULATIONS

- At First Creek Lake, it is prohibited to use any live bait other than worms. On the rivers, you can use minnows or worms. Using bait seines in the park is strictly regulated, so please check with rangers for specific rules.
- Collecting frogs, turtles, mussels, etc., or digging for bait is strictly prohibited.
- No fishing license is required in the park. Kentucky fishing regulations apply. Inquire at the visitor center. Fish by handline, rod and reel, or trot and throw line. All other methods are prohibited.

## CAMPING REGULATIONS

- Transporting firewood into the park is strictly prohibited. Confine fires to ground grills. You can buy wood at Caver's Camp Store.
- A Backcountry Use Permit is required for all backcountry camping. A free permit may be obtained at the Park Visitor Center.
- Use only fallen dead wood for fires.

NPS



While exploring, it is important to always follow all of the rules and regulations designated by the National Park Service.

- Do not hang lanterns in trees, to prevent forest fires.

## HORSE REGULATIONS

- Horseback riding is permissible on many designated trails north of the Green River.
- Travel by horseback off designated trails is prohibited.
- Walk horses through mud on trails and not around it. Do not shortcut trails or follow "pig-paths" —this damages trails.
- Never tie horses to trees. Always cross-tie horses between trees.
- Hitching horses to trees is prohibited. Use a picket line or hobble horses during breaks.
- Scatter horse manure at least 200 feet from trails, water sources and campsites.
- Horseback riding is prohibited on all roads and trails south of the Green River.

## HOMELAND SECURITY

The following items are not permitted in the visitor center area:

- Firearms (see park brochure)
- Knives
- Luggage (suitcases, duffel bags, etc.)
- Pepper Spray/Mace
- Sharp Instruments (box cutters, scissors, etc.)
- Strollers
- Weapons (clubs, batons, brass knuckles, etc.)

## PETS

- Pets must be on a leash and under physical restraint at all times. Do not leave pets unattended at your campsite.
- The hotel maintains a kennel. Pets are not permitted on cave tours, except service animals.





# WHO'S WHO AT THE PARK

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service (NPS) is the federal custodian of Mammoth Cave National Park. As an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the NPS has the responsibility of preserving and protecting the natural and cultural values of our national parks, protecting the wildlife therein and providing for public use and enjoyment of the parks.

The NPS regulates all prices and operating standards within Mammoth Cave National Park. To contact the NPS at Mammoth Cave, visit [nps.gov/macaca](https://nps.gov/macaca), e-mail [MACA\\_Park\\_Information@nps.gov](mailto:MACA_Park_Information@nps.gov) or call **(270) 758-2180**.

## ORTEGA PARKS LLC

Located in pristine settings of national parks, forests and well-known destinations around the world, Ortega Parks strives to provide a fun-filled vacation while helping to create an awareness of the area's history, culture and environment.

Ortega Parks will operate the Mammoth Cave Hotel, Travertine Dining Room, Crystal Lake Coffee Shop and the cave shuttle bus service through 2032. Ortega Parks is dedicated to its corporate ideology of taking time to play, preserve and protect our national resources and recreational destinations. For more information, call **(505) 310-6753** or visit [ortegaparks.com](https://ortegaparks.com).

## EASTERN NATIONAL

Eastern National has been a valued partner of the National Park Service since 1947 and operates a bookstore in the visitor center. Its mission is to offer qual-

ity educational materials and services to park visitors and supporters and to aid the NPS with income derived from these activities.

## CAVE RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The Cave Research Foundation (CRF) grew out of the efforts of cave explorers working in the Mammoth Cave area of Kentucky in the late 1940s. It is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to: facilitating research, management, and interpretation of caves and karst resources; forming partnerships to study, protect, and preserve cave resources and karst areas; and promoting the long-term conservation of caves and karst ecosystems.

Most work conducted by Cave Research Foundation is on state and federal lands under a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

## FRIENDS OF MAMMOTH CAVE

The Friends of Mammoth Cave National Park, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, serve as ambassadors for the Park and work in cooperation with the National Park Service to fund projects and programs that protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and cultural resources and the visitor experience of Mammoth Cave National Park.

Friends of Mammoth accomplish these goals through the support of individuals and organizations that care about Mammoth Cave and want to help ensure that its magic endures forever. For volunteer opportunities, please call **(270) 758-2152** or visit [friendsofmammothcave.org](https://friendsofmammothcave.org).



# SIGHTS TO SEE

There is a lot to do and see at Mammoth Cave National Park, both above ground and below. While the cave itself is the main attraction, make sure to check out all the park has to offer: rivers teeming with wildlife, strikingly beautiful karst terrain and diverse bird populations. Recreational activities abound at Mammoth Cave—don't limit yourself to a cave tour. Canoe down the beautiful Green River, hike on the rugged North Side, bike on Mammoth Cave Railroad Bike and Hike Trail and camp under the stars.

## FROZEN NIAGARA

A visit to Mammoth Cave is not complete without a glimpse of this massive curtain of flowstone. The incredible formation cascades downward for 75 feet, creating the illusion of a stone waterfall and striking wonder into all that see it.

Frozen Niagara is located in one of the few areas in Mammoth Cave with the speleothems that most people associate with caves. To see Frozen Niagara, take the Domes and Dripstones, Frozen Niagara, Wild Cave, or Grand Avenue Tours.

## BIRDS GALORE

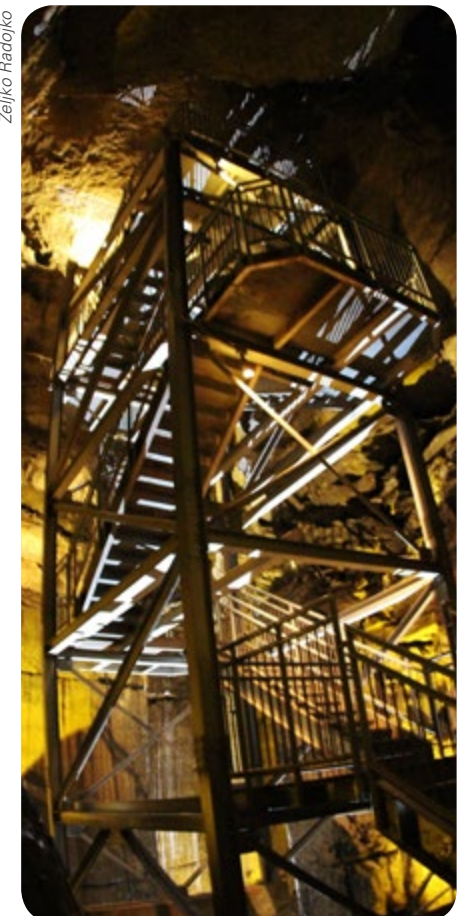
Mammoth Cave National Park is home to a variety of species of birds. Birdwatching is an extremely popular activity in the park. Some species include grebes, herons, ducks, vultures, hawks, bald eagles, quail, wild turkey sandpipers, doves, hummingbirds, kingfishers, whip-poor-wills, owls, flycatchers, crows, blue jays, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, wrens,

thrushes, catbirds, starlings, vireos, wood warblers, tanagers, cardinals, sparrows, blackbirds and finches.

## A MAMMOTH FISH

Anglers will find good fishing in Mammoth throughout the year, with spring and summer being most productive. Black bass, crappie, bluegill, muskellunge and

Željko Radojko



Come tour Mammoth Cave and spot some unique formations!



There are many locations in the park to explore outside of the standard cave tours. Taking to the calm waters of the Green and Nolin Rivers in a canoe is one way to explore the area.

catfish—not to mention almost 100 other species—frequent the Green and Nolin Rivers. These rivers support an unusual diversity of fish, as well as over 50 species of freshwater mussels, including seven endangered species. Nolin Lake’s tail waters (just north of the park) are stocked with nonnative rainbow trout.

### A WILD CAVE

Family-friendly tours, such as the half-mile Discovery Tour, highlight Mammoth Cave’s history of mining and exploration, as well as the history of its amazing geology. The park also offers wild caving tours for the serious spelunker and cave explorer in you. For more information and a comprehensive chart—with detailed descriptions—of all the tours offered in the park, please see the “Caves” chapter.

### A SINKHOLE

Besides the incredible caverns below, Mammoth’s surface acreage includes large tracts of second-growth oak and hickory woodlands, sinkhole-ridden karst topography—the limestone foundation for Mammoth’s underground wonders—and modest wetlands.

About 84 miles of trails wind through the park, all open to hikers, many to horseback riders—north of the Green River—and some to bikers. There are six trailheads, including the popular Lincoln Trailhead, that serve as a jumping-off points for the park’s north side back-country trails, which wind past sinkholes and springs.

The north side’s trails traverse the park’s steep, oak and hickory-covered hills, running alongside streams and waterfalls.



## GEOLOGY

Beneath the surface of south-central Kentucky lies a world that is virtually unparalleled. It is a labyrinth characterized by mile upon mile of dark, seemingly endless passageways. The geological process resulting in Mammoth Cave began hundreds of millions of years ago and continues to this very day.

### HOW THE CAVES FORMED

According to geologists, 350 million years ago Kentucky was covered by a shallow sea teeming with tiny shell life. As these creatures died their shells accumulated by the billions on the sea floor.

Life and death continued for millions of years. Layer upon layer of dead organisms built up and hardened, to eventually form

700 vertical feet of limestone and shale.

The sea changed over time and Kentucky became a shoreline. (Key point: limestone is soluble.)

A large Mississippi-sized river from the north deposited sand on its Kentucky delta. More time passed until the sand hardened into 60 vertical feet of sandstone. (Key point: sandstone is insoluble.)

Tectonic plates moved causing Kentucky to bulge up and the many strata of limestone and sandstone cracked. Rain fell and drained into the cracks. In some places, the rain water dissolved cavities below the surface and formed conduits. In some places the exposed limestone was washed away. Where the sandstone layers remained intact they acted



The cave has been forming for millions of years, while humans have explored it only in the last century.



## EARTHQUAKE

Mammoth Cave lies 150 miles from a major earthquake fault along the Mississippi River. In 1811 and 1812, a series of three earthquakes with estimated magnitudes of approximately 8.0 on the Richter Scale struck the Midwest. In the cave, saltpeter miners reported that... "about five minutes before the shock a heavy rumbling noise was heard coming out of the cave like a mighty gust of wind; when that ceased, the rocks cracked, and all appeared to be going in a moment of final destruction. However, no one was injured although large rocks fell in some parts of the cave." Geologists believe that the effects of earthquake tremors are less in caves than on the surface. The shock waves that



USGS

The cave is located only 150 miles away from a major fault.

would have the most potential to cause damage to caves are displaced on the surface, much like ripples on a pond.

as a roof for the limestone underneath. Time passed.

Rainwater drained from a broad plain into the underground conduits that stretched through the protected limestone layers. Runoff waters flowed through underground streams until they resurfaced and fed into a surface river, the Green River. The plain became pocked with funnel-shaped sinkholes; the underground became a series of caves.

Time passed. Green River cut down into its valley between sandstone-covered ridges. When its valley was 100 feet deep, the underground tributaries, or cave streams, were 100 feet below the surface.

Time passed. When Green River's valley was 200 feet deep, the cave streams were 200 feet below the ridge tops and upper stream beds dried up. Cave passageways that formed under the protec-

tion of the sandstone ridgetops were preserved.

Today, there are 400 caves within the boundary of Mammoth Cave National Park, including the eponymous Mammoth Cave.

The great cave has five levels of passageways and winds through four ridges. Rain still drains off the broad sinkhole plain into cave streams that flow 360 feet below the ridgetops, making more cave.

### WHY IS MAMMOTH CAVE SO LONG?

A unique combination of circumstances have come together to make Mammoth Cave the longest cave in the world. First, the karst setting (a limestone region with

sinkholes, disappearing streams and underground streams) is ideal for the formation of caves.

Second, the Green River Valley has deepened throughout time, causing multiple levels to form.

Third, the sandstone caprock on the plateau above protects the older upper level passages from destruction. If that sandstone didn't exist, portions of the caves would erode and eventually collapse.

### CAVE FEATURES

**Speleothems:** Cave formations caused by the deposition of dissolved minerals in crystalline form. Gypsum flowers, stalactites and stalagmites are examples of speleothems.

**Stalactite:** A speleothem that hangs from cave ceilings. They form when water containing calcium carbonate drips into an air-filled passage. Remember: stalactites hang from the ceiling.

**Stalagmite:** A speleothem that rises from the floor when water containing calcium carbonate drips onto the floor of an air-filled passage. Remember: stalagmites grow from the ground.

**Gypsum:** Hydrous calcium sulfate mineral found in dry sections of a cave that is colorless, white or yellowish and found in powder or crystal form. Gypsum can form spectacular flower-like structures that seem to ooze and curl from the walls and ceilings.

### A SCIENTIFIC TREASURE CHEST

Mammoth Cave is truly a scientific treasure chest. In addition to being the world's longest known cave, it contains a clear and complete record of geomorphic and climatic changes over the past 10 million to 20 million years, one of the most diverse cave ecosystems in the world.



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# THE CAVE

Beneath the dimpled surface of the park, the splendid sights of Mammoth Cave impress hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Ancient artifacts, fascinating cave critters and breathtaking mineral formations are just a few of the extraordinary sights visitors will find on tours led by National Park Service rangers.

Before venturing below, however, carefully consider individual limitations and the fragile nature of the cave system. Make sure to choose a cave tour that matches your physical ability. Once underground, follow all of the ranger's instructions so that the beauty of Mammoth Cave will be preserved for future generations.

The following sections contain more information focusing on cave etiquette, availability, photo tips inside the cave and cave tours. It is recommended that anyone who plans on taking a cave tour read the following sections before entering and exploring.

## BEFORE ENTERING THE CAVE

- Consider your physical limitations realistically when choosing a cave tour. Some tours are not recommended for visitors



NPS

Cave temperatures are usually as cool as a late fall day. A jacket or sweater is recommended.

who fear heights or confined spaces and/or cannot climb steps. Do not let friends or family members talk you into joining a cave tour if you feel uncomfortable about it.

- Walking sticks and canes are permitted on cave tours only when sufficient need is demonstrated.
- Tripods (and monopods) are not allowed on cave tours. No flash photography.
- Strollers are not permitted on cave tours.
- Large or metal-framed backpacks and backpack child carriers may not be worn on cave tours.
- Smoking is not permitted in the cave or at the cave entrance.
- The cave's interior passageways remain constant in the mid-50s fahrenheit year-round. In most areas of the cave, you'll be comfortable if you wear long pants and take a sweater or jacket with you.
- Cave trail surfaces vary, some are dry and dusty while others may be wet and slippery. You'll encounter numerous stairs and some steep inclines on many cave tours. Durable, flat-soled footwear suitable for walking is essential.
- Regulations are in effect to protect bats from white-nose syndrome (see the "Preservation" chapter of this guide). Do not wear shoes or clothing or carry objects that have been in another cave or mine since 2005. All participants are required to walk the length of an artificial turf mat to remove spores and dirt after exiting caves.

## AVAILABILITY

Availability of certain interpretive tours varies from season to season. Historic,

Domes and Dripstones and Frozen Niagara are offered all year. Other special tours are offered seasonally. Consult the seasonal tour schedule or call the park for more information on what parts of the cave will be shown during your visit.

## PHOTO TIPS FOR THE CAVE

Even though the cave is electrically lighted, taking photos in the cave can be a tricky task to navigate—especially in large caverns where the light dissipates. Ensure that your photos are picture perfect by following these tips:

- Set your camera before entering the cave or use the automatic setting
- Make sure that you are using a high ISO (generally 400 or greater).
- Take photos of objects less than 12 feet away.
- No flash photography allowed on the cave tours

## RESERVATIONS

Making advanced reservations is

one of the best ways to ensure you get on the cave tour you want! The online reservation system is easy and convenient because you can use it at any time of the day. If you prefer, you can make reservations by phone. Please call the following numbers to make advance reservations, which are recommended for certain tours during peak periods.

**By Phone: (877) 444-6777**  
**TDD (hearing impaired):**  
**(877) 833-6777**

**Online:** recreation.gov

**Payment:** Visa, Discover, MasterCard and American Express accepted.

**Call Center Hours:**

9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Central Time, daily.

**Cancellation:** All changes of tour reservation will be considered a cancellation and charged \$3 per ticket. Cancellations made fewer than 24 hours in advance of the tour will not receive a refund.

**HELP SUPPORT MAMMOTH CAVE**

The Friends of Mammoth Cave National Park, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, serve as ambassadors for the park and work in cooperation with the National Park Service to fund projects and programs that protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and cultural resources and the visitor experience of Mammoth Cave National Park.

For volunteer and support opportunities, please visit [friendsofmammothcave.org](http://friendsofmammothcave.org) or call (270) 758-2152.



## CAVE TOURS AND SURFACE TOURS

Tour Name	Elevation Change <i>Difficulty</i>	Cost	Duration <i>Distance</i>	Description
<b>Domes and Dripstones Tour</b> <i>(formerly New Entrance)</i>	250 feet <i>moderate</i>	Adults \$15 Youth \$10 Seniors \$7.50	2 hours <i>0.75 miles</i>	A wonderful complement to the Historic Tour, this trip includes a dramatic series of domes and pits, typical large trunk passageways, a short journey through dripstone formations and stairs, stairs, stairs!
<b>Cleveland Avenue Tour</b>	<i>moderate</i>	Adults \$16 Youth \$10 Special access \$8	2.5 hours <i>2 miles</i>	Descend nearly 200 stairs to see gypsum in crystalline shapes and sizes. An elliptical passage terminates in the Snowball Room.
<b>Historic Tour</b>	300 feet <i>moderate</i>	Adults \$14 Youth \$9 Seniors \$7.50	2 hr <i>2 miles</i>	This journey through the natural entrance leads to "classic" Mammoth Cave landmarks visited by writers, scientists, military figures and celebrities of the 1800s and early 1900s.
<b>Wild Cave Tour</b>	300 feet <i>very strenuous</i>	Adults \$55 (must be 16 years +)	6 hr 30 min <i>5 miles</i>	Journey with experienced guides and a small adult group through some of the starkly beautiful yet physically demanding "wild" areas of the cave. Sat/Sun only
<b>Sloan's Crossing Pond Walk</b>	miles <i>easy &amp; wheelchair accessible</i>	Open to all on Fridays & Saturdays 6 pm	45 min <i>.4 miles</i>	Enjoy the rare surfaces of the park including sinkholes, cavernous limestone rock, aquatic ecosystem above ground on accessible boardwalk.
<b>Discovery Tour (Self-Guided)</b>	140 feet <i>easy</i>	Adults \$5 Youth \$3.50 Seniors \$2.50	30 min minimum <i>0.75 miles</i>	Visit the Rotunda, one of the largest rooms, explore vast passageways and learn about 19th-century saltpeter mining operations and the geologic origins of Mammoth Cave on this self-guided tour. Available by demand.
<b>Mammoth Cave Accessible Tour</b>	platform <i>easy</i>	Adults \$20 Youth \$14 Special Access \$10	2 hours <i>.5 miles</i>	Elevator allows visitors with special needs to see unique gypsum formations, cave writing and Snowball Room and portions of Cleveland Ave. and Grand Ave. Tours
<b>Frozen Niagara Tour</b>	40 feet <i>easy</i>	Adults \$13 Youth \$9 Special access \$6.50	1 hr 15 min <i>0.25 miles</i>	Depart by bus and journey over the top of the cave to the Frozen Niagara Entrance. This entrance created in 1924 makes it possible to see this decorative area of the cave.

## CAVE TOURS (CONTINUED)

Tour Name	Elevation Change <i>Difficulty</i>	Cost	Duration <i>Distance</i>	Description
<b>Star Chamber Tour</b>	160 feet <i>moderate</i>	Adults \$14 Youth \$10 Seniors \$7	2.25 hours <i>1.5 miles</i>	Follow the passageway taken by Dr. John Croghan as he tended patients in his "hospital" 160 feet underground. Must be over 6 years old.
<b>Mammoth Passage Tour</b>	160 feet <i>easy</i>	Adults \$7 Youth \$5 Seniors \$3.50	1 hr 15 min <i>0.75 miles</i>	This short visit into the cave's largest and most visited entrance area is a "smorgasbord" of cultural and natural topics. Available by demand.
<b>Great Onyx Lantern Tour</b>	30 feet <i>easy</i>	Adults \$18 Youth \$13 Seniors \$9	2 hr 15 min <i>1 mile</i>	Exploring this geologic beauty by lantern light offers a shadowed backdrop for the multitudes of dripstone gypsum and helictite formations.
<b>Violet City Lantern Tour</b>	160 feet <i>strenuous</i>	Adults \$18 Youth \$13 Seniors \$9	3 hours <i>3 miles</i>	A trip through classic Mammoth Cave by lantern light. This visits numerous historic landmarks with a good physical workout as well as nostalgic insights to the cave's earliest tours. Must be over 6 years old. Only visitors age 16 and over may carry lanterns, no flashlights allowed.
<b>Grand Avenue Tour</b>	280 feet <i>strenuous</i>	Adults \$26 Youth \$19 Seniors \$13	4 hr 30 min <i>4 miles</i>	This long, physically challenging tour includes tough hill climbs and lots of geological variety. Great for those who are looking for a challenge or who have already experienced other shorter tours. Must be over 6 years old.
<b>Gothic Avenue Tour</b>	140 feet <i>moderate</i>	Adults \$12 Youth \$9 Seniors \$6	2 hours <i>1 mile</i>	This tour begins at the Visitor Center and enters the famous Historic entrance, as the ranger interprets areas including the Rotunda, the Church, Giant's Coffin, and the TB Huts. Centered around Gothic Avenue, one of the most historically significant passageways of the cave.
<b>Heritage Walk</b>	<i>easy, mostly flat</i>	No Charge <b>(not underground)</b>	45 mins <i>.75 miles</i>	This surface walk on the Heritage Trail adjacent to the hotel tells the stories of the old Mammoth Estate, cultural landscape of 18-20th centuries and stops at Old Guides Cemetery.

**Note: Schedules and prices are subject to change based on demand, available staff and other factors involving the health and integrity of the caves. Please visit [nps.gov/mac](https://www.nps.gov/mac) for more information and an up-to-date schedule of offered tours and prices by season.**



# THINGS TO DO

Regardless of the season, there is no limit to activities and programs available in Mammoth Cave and the surrounding area. The following is a partial list of the various recreational activities, classes, programs and tours offered in and around the park.

## SURFACE ACTIVITIES

Daily activities at Mammoth Cave National Park include free coffee with a Ranger, birding, porch talks on the cultural history of Mammoth Cave, nature hikes, evening events and much more. For current information, call the park at **(270) 758-2180**, visit [nps.gov/macac](http://nps.gov/macac) or find Mammoth Cave National Park on Facebook.

## BIKING

Bikes are welcome on the Mammoth Cave Railroad Bike and Hike Trail, Maple Springs Trail, White Oak Trail and the Big Hollow Trail. Street bikes are allowed on all paved roads. Mountain bikes are also allowed on certain administrative roads including Licklog Road, Great Onyx Road, Crystal Cave Road, Union City Road, White Oak Road. These are gated administrative roads. Visitors can park by the gate and bike in, but cannot block the roads. Each is 1-2 miles one way and goes straight in and back. Bicycles are available for rental at the Caver's Camp store.

Additionally, Friends of Mammoth Cave will be hosting the annual Pedal for the Parks in May. There will be three routes of varying lengths (75 miles, 40 miles and 27 miles).

## BIRDWATCHING

Mammoth Cave National Park is home to more than 200 species of birds, and has a number of visitors on seasonal migrations.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, join a naturalist on a free Let's Go Birding walk. Spotted thus far in the park: 37 species of warbler (11 of these actually nesting in Mammoth), barred owl, horned owl, pileated woodpecker, scarlet tanager, sparrow and wild turkey. Besides more common inhabitants such as the great blue heron, the red-tailed hawk, the spotted sandpiper and the belted kingfisher, the park also receives a number of rare visitors: the snow goose, the double-crested cormorant, bald eagle, osprey and snowy owl. The birdwatching near Green River is notable for its diversity.

## BOATING/CANOEING

Within the boundaries of Mammoth Cave National Park, 25 miles of the Green River and six miles of the Nolin River carry boaters past dramatic bluffs, scenic woodlands and diverse wildlife. Boating from Dennison Ferry launch area down the Green River is a popular voyage.

The access at Dennison is steep and therefore suitable for kayaks and canoes only. Dennison Ferry is the upstream launching point and is 7 miles (3-4 hours) to Green Ferry. For a longer, overnight trip, launch at Munfordville—located upstream from the park boundary.

No launch fees are necessary in the park, but riverside camping requires a free backcountry permit (Go in person to the backcountry permit office, located in the Visitor Center ticket sales area, to obtain your permit). Dotted with sandbars, islands and subsurface springs, the Green River averages 200 feet wide and 10 feet deep; at normal water levels,

it runs at about five miles per hour. Motorized crafts are permitted in the park. Canoes are available for rental outside Mammoth. No personalized watercrafts are permitted. For rentals, call Big Buffalo Crossing Canoe: **(270) 774-7883**; Green River Canoeing, Inc.: **(866) 584-4156**; Mammoth Cave Canoe and Kayak: **(270) 773-3366**; Cave Country Canoe: **(270) 773-5552**.

## CAMPING

There are three campgrounds in the park. Choose from Mammoth Cave Campground, Houchin Ferry Campground, and Maple Springs Campground. See the "Camping" chapter for more information about pricing, reservations and site size. Reservations can be made in advanced for select campgrounds and sites.

## FISHING

Fishing in the Green and Nolin Rivers is good throughout the year, with spring and summer being most productive. Black bass, crappie, bluegill, muskellunge and catfish, along with almost 100 other species, frequent the river. You do not need a state fishing license as long as you fish within park boundaries. In the park, you can fish with pole and line, rod and reel, or trot and throw line.

Other methods, including limb lines and jug lines, are prohibited. If you use trot lines, you must attach a tag with your name and address, place hooks 30 or more inches apart, tend your lines daily, and remove lines when you are not using them. It is important to follow all of the park regulations at all times.

At First Creek Lake, using any live bait other than worms is prohibited. On the riv-

NPS



*Even if you've already been on a tour, try a different one and explore a completely new section of the cave!*





NPS

Green River are open for horseback riding. Day-use horseback riders can park trailers at Lincoln, Temple Hill and First Creek trailheads.

A trail map is available in the National Park Service’s free brochure, while other maps and guides sold at the visitor center show topographic features and trails in greater detail.

The Green River Ferry is open daily from 6 a.m. to 9:55 p.m. (except when closed for repairs or during hazardous river conditions). Alternate routes via state and county roads are available and may be more practical for trailers.

### RANGER ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Rangers deliver a wide variety of talks throughout the park. Longer surface activities, offered in season, start from specified locations. Near Mammoth Cave Campground, rangers give seasonal evening programs at the amphitheater.

Parking near both locations can accommodate non-campers. A schedule of ranger-led walk and evening programs and a variety of activities for kids are available at the visitor center. For more information on ranger-led tours, call **(270) 758-2180**.

### SCENIC DRIVING

Try Flint Ridge, Green River Ferry, Houchins Ferry, Joppa Ridge and Ugly Creek roads for a spectacular tour of the park. The latter roads are not passable for trailers or mobile homes. Drive slowly and keep your eyes open for wildlife.

Ask for more information about scenic driving at the visitor center to plan the best route. Be aware that GPS and Google Maps are not totally reliable and sometimes takes drivers the long way to certain destinations.

ers you can use minnows or worms. Using bait seines in the park is prohibited. Because all park wildlife is protected, collecting frogs, turtles, mussels or digging for bait is strictly prohibited. Harvesting of any mussels—endangered or otherwise—or taking shells is strictly prohibited.

### HIKING

In addition to the underground cave tours, there are nearly 84 miles of trails on the north side. Hike here and you may not see another living soul. Seek solitude in the rugged hills and deep valleys, camp by river, lake or waterfall, explore bluffs and ridge tops. See the “Walking & Hiking” chapter for more detailed information.

### HORSEBACK RIDING

Sixty miles of trails north of the



# EXPLORING THE AREA

When you are visiting Mammoth Cave National Park, there are plenty of museums and attractions nearby. Learn more about the history and culture of the land. Enjoy the beauty of nature throughout this area of south central Kentucky.

## BARREN COUNTY AND GLASGOW

### Barren River Lake State Resort Park

After exploring the subterranean wonders at Mammoth Cave National Park, spend time above ground at Barren River Lake State Resort Park at Lucas, Kentucky in southern Barren County. The Park’s lodge and cottages offer easy access to a 10,000-acre lake that hosts plenty of bass and crappie and boasts some of the most impressive sunsets in the state. Boating and fishing are popular, as are camping, picnicking, horseback riding, birdwatching, biking and hiking. The park has an 18-hole golf course and sand beach open to the public.

**South Central Kentucky Cultural Center.** Stop by the South Central Kentucky Cultural Center to take a trip back in time to learn about the people, places and events that encompasses the “Barrens” —a geographic area that includes the counties of Barren, Allen, Metcalfe, Hart and Monroe. This museum is housed in the old Kentucky Pants factory in downtown Glasgow.

## CAVE CITY

Located in Barren County, Cave City is one of the gateway communities to Mammoth Cave National Park. Situated near the southeastern entrance of the park,

Cave City offers lodging, dining, attractions and much more. Rich with caves of its own, the town is a great jumping off point for your adventures.

## DINOSAUR WORLD

Located in the heart of Cave City is one of the biggest attractions in with the area: Dinosaur World. Travel back in time and observe life-sized models of dinosaurs in

Dinosaur World



Dinosaur World is a fun attraction for kids of all ages!

a walkthrough park setting. Built to scale, these dinosaurs give you a realistic sense of what it would be like to walk with the extinct giants. While walking through, the dinosaurs are placed in live vegetation and some gathered in groups. With some models reaching up to eighty feet, it's an experience you and your family won't soon forget!

The park is open every day of the year to except Christmas and Thanksgiving Day. Admission costs \$12.75 for adults and \$9.75 for children (plus tax). For more information, call (270) 773-4345 or visit [dinosaurworld.com](http://dinosaurworld.com)

### CAVES IN THE AREA

They don't call it Cave City for nothing! Mammoth Cave isn't the only place in the area to get your geology fix. Visitors can check out and tour a variety of caves in the area and enjoy the amazing history that comes along with it!

Some of the many caves in the area include Cub Run Cave, Diamond Caverns, Hidden River Cave, Lost River Cave, Mammoth Onyx Cave, Onyx Cave and Outlaw Cave. Each cave is different and has its own unique features.

### KENTUCKY ACTION PARK

Kentucky Action Park, at 3057 Mammoth Cave Road, offers a variety of outdoor adventures and amusements. Jesse James Riding Stables, one of the oldest and largest stables in Kentucky, has gentle horses for riders of all ages and over 500 acres of trails. Canoeing, cave tours, an Alpine slide and zip line, bumper cars, a rockwall, a trampoline, even an old-time photo shop—here you can find them all! For more information, go to [kentuckyactionpark.com](http://kentuckyactionpark.com).

## PARK CITY

Park City is also in Barren County and sits right outside the south entrance to Mammoth Cave National Park. Stop by before you head to the Park to stock up on supplies and gasoline.

### BELL'S TAVERN

Park City is rich in history given its proximity to the national park. During the Civil War Era, the town served as a major transportation hub for visitors and developed around the historic Louisville & Nashville Railroad that once covered over 6,000 miles and three states.

Bell's Tavern, more than 150 years old, served as a place for travelers to rest their heads while exploring the area. Travelers arrived on horseback or stagecoach.

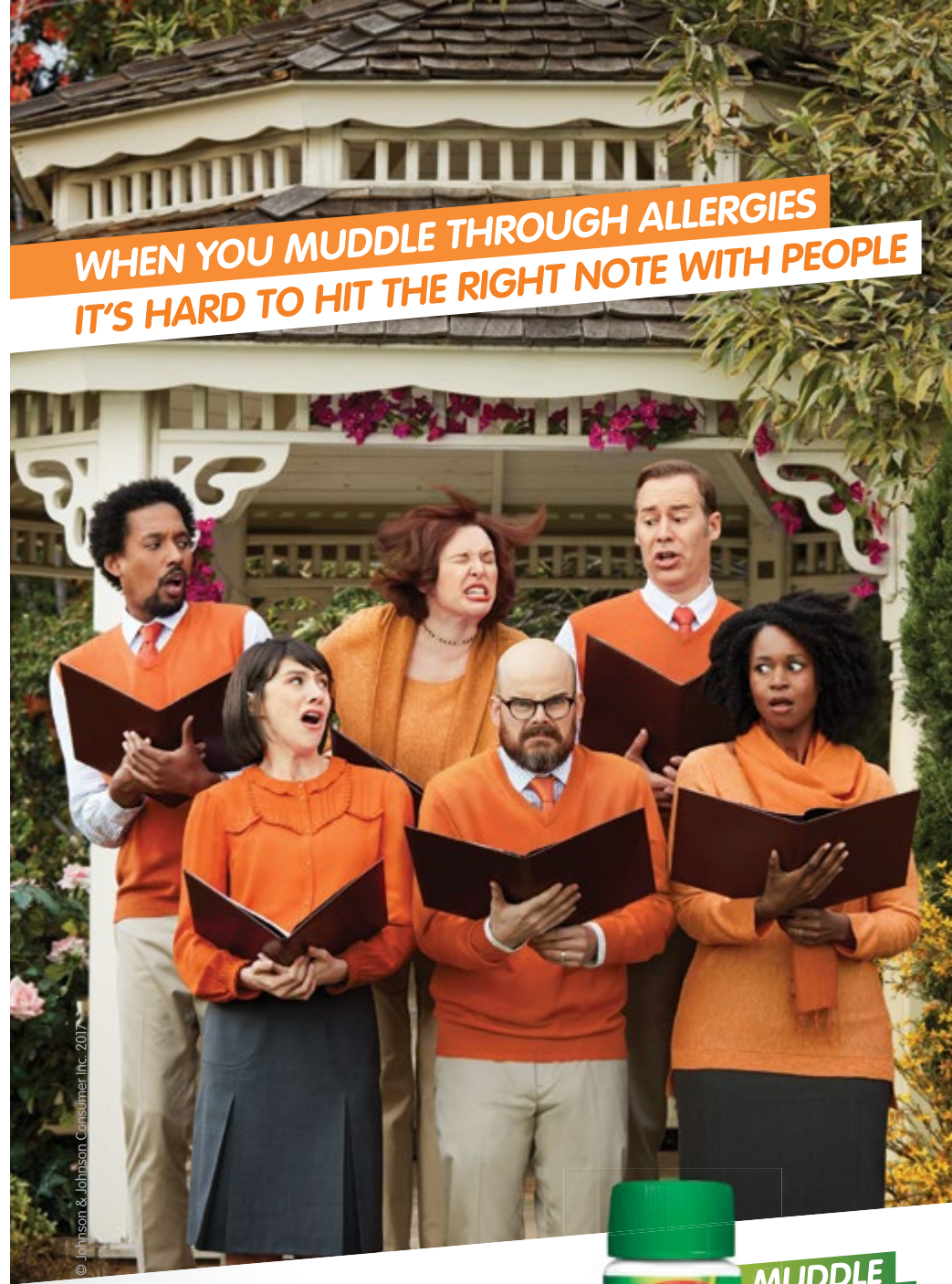
Today, travelers can see what remains of Bell's Tavern. The stone structure is open to the public free of charge and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

## HORSE CAVE

Horse Cave, located in Hart County, is located on the eastern side of the park off I-65. The town is home to a population of just over 2,000 and offers a small town feel with plenty to do.

### AMERICAN CAVE MUSEUM

The American Cave Museum offers the geological history of the caves in the area as well as the people who helped to uncover some of their greatest mysteries. Located in Horse Cave, minutes away from Mammoth Cave National Park, the museum is worth a trip. View exhibits focusing on prehistoric cave explorers, modern cave exploration, mining, living



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Nolin Lake State Park is the perfect location to take the whole family and offers hiking, swimming, picnicking, camping and much more!

in cave country, the story of Floyd Collins and the history of Horse Cave and Mammoth Cave.

After exploring the museum, visitors can also take a historic tour of the nearby Hidden River Cave. On the tour, visitors will see a subterranean river and cave geology. The best part, the tour is included in the museum admission price! For more information on hours and ticket pricing, visit [hiddenrivercave.com](http://hiddenrivercave.com) or call **(270) 786-1466**. The museum, operated by the American Cave Conservation Association, is located at 119 Main St., Horse Cave, KY 42749.

### NOLIN LAKE STATE PARK

Camp out just minutes away from Mammoth Cave and explore a park with

thrills of its own. Located in Edmonson County, Nolin Lake State Park offers an abundance of recreational opportunities. The park offers camping, hiking, birdwatching, boating, fishing, picnicking and swimming.

The 5,795-acre Nolin Lake is actually man-made and a popular location for dropping a line. Try to reel in a bass, catfish, crappie or walleye. Boating and swimming are great summer activities for the whole family. While you're near the water, bring out your binoculars and try to spot a Great Blue Heron or a bald eagle, both of these majestic species live in the park. If you want to stay a little longer, reserve a campsite and sleep underneath the stars for a night or two.

For more information about the

park, please visit [parks.ky.gov/parks/recreationparks/nolin-lake](http://parks.ky.gov/parks/recreationparks/nolin-lake) or call the park directly at **(270) 286-4240**.

### KENTUCKY DOWN UNDER ADVENTURE ZOO

Tucked into the heart of the American South lies a slice of Australia. Skip the long plane ride and head to Kentucky Down Under Adventure Zoo. The attraction gives visitors the opportunity to experience all things down under: pet kangaroos, enter the bird garden, explore the Land of the Lories, take an Outback Walkabout and much more. After exploring, stop in for lunch at the Outback Cafe. If you want to bring home a memento, pick out a souvenir over at the gift shop. Do you happen to have a sweet tooth? You'll be sure to enjoy the Fudge Factory, which offers a variety of delicious, homemade fudge!

Located in Horse Cave, the attraction is open year-round. Tickets include admission into both the Adventure Zoo and Mammoth Onyx Cave. Entry fees are: adults, \$25.95; seniors, military and students, \$19.95; children ages four to 13, \$15.95; children three and under, free. Educational rates are also available. For more information, visit [kentuckydownunder.com](http://kentuckydownunder.com) or call **(270) 786-1010**.

"There is nothing so American as our national parks... The fundamental idea behind the parks... is that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us."

--President Franklin D. Roosevelt

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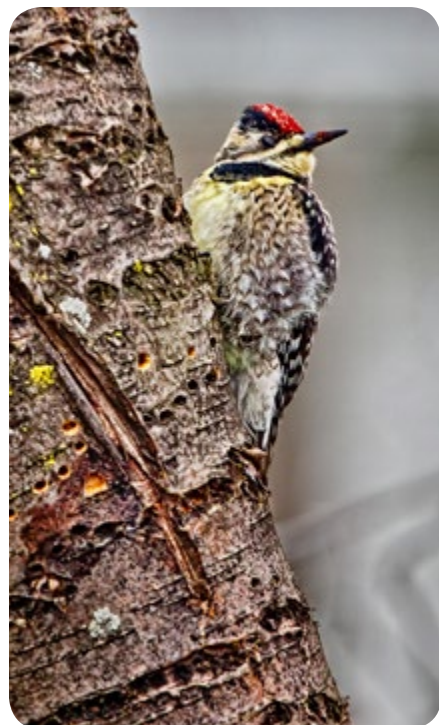


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Mammoth Cave is home to a wide variety of plant and animal life ranging from rare exotic cave species to more common woodland creatures found in eastern deciduous forest environments. Mammoth Cave is home to 70 state listed endangered and threatened species.

Scientists have discovered a total of more than 130 species that use the cave during some part of their lives, in addition to 1,200 species of flowering plants on the surface, hundreds of animal species, more than 80 types of fish, and over 50 kinds of freshwater mussels. It truly is a unique ecosystem.



Randen Peterson

The park supports a huge bird population, including brightly-colored woodpeckers.

## FAUNA

### THE SURFACE

The surface contains animals that are typical of an eastern hardwood forest. Larger mammals include bobcats, coyotes, muskrats, white-tailed deer, fox, raccoon, opossum, woodchuck, beaver, rabbit and squirrel. Smaller mammals, such as bats, mice and chipmunks, also abound.

Many reptiles and amphibians find protection in the park, too. Copperheads and rattlesnakes are also common. Birds such as **mourning doves, whip-poor-wills, owls, bald eagles, hawks, woodpeckers and warblers** fly through Mammoth Cave's forests. Wild turkeys, reintroduced in 1983, are now seen on a regular basis by park visitors.

### THE RIVERS

The Green River, which meanders through the park, supports an unusual diversity of fish. The river supports a wide variety of **freshwater mussels**, that survive in the sand and gravel. Over 50 species of mussels, including seven on the endangered species list, call the park home.

Mussels are filter-feeders that clean the river water and are crucial to its health. Aquatic animals in the river play an important role in providing nourishment for other animals — in the cave, in the river and on land.

### THE CAVES

There are 130 species that use the cave on a regular basis within the Mammoth Cave system. These species are divided almost equally among three classes of cave dwellers: **troglobites**, like **cave**

**crayfish**, cannot complete their life cycle outside of caves; trogloniles, like **cave crickets**, use caves for refuge; troglonenes, such as phoebes like to live close by, but not in the caves.

Although Mammoth Cave is not currently used by large numbers of bats, 12 species, including two that are endangered, do live in the cave. By consuming huge numbers of insects, bats work as a "natural insecticide," controlling crop pests and insects that may spread disease. **Little brown bats**, one of the more common species in Mammoth Cave, can eat about 600 mosquitoes in an hour.

When you visit Mammoth Cave, you're far more likely to see crickets than bats. Crickets are trogloniles too. They spend much of their life in the cave but depend on night-time forays on the surface to gather food. Crickets are extremely important in

delivering energy, in the form of droppings, eggs and carcasses, to other animals in the cave.

Troglobites, the group of cave animals most highly adapted to cave life, cannot survive outside caves. Many, including **eyeless fish** and **crayfish**, illustrate creative adaptations to thrive in their dark, lightless cave environment.

With no need for camouflage or protection from the sun, many of these animals have no pigmentation and are white. Some have no eyes. Most have developed other highly sensitive sensory organs to detect predators and prey. The **Kentucky cave shrimp** is an excellent example of an animal with these adaptations. Because food in caves is scarce, full-time cave dwellers tend to be smaller, with lower metabolism and longer life spans than their surface dwelling counterparts.

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## FLORA

Park vegetation features mostly second growth forests of various vintages, and small areas of old growth. Much of the park land was used for agricultural purposes prior to park establishment. These areas are largely dominated by eastern red cedar and Virginia pine mixed with deciduous trees along the outer margins. More mature upland sites are generally oak hickory forest, and in moist hollows, beech-maple-tulip poplar forests dominate.

Along the Green and Nolin Rivers, populations of **sycamore**, **silver poplar**, **river maple** and **box elder** are found. Special communities of limited distribution include upland swamps with **pin oak**, **sweetgum** and **red maple**; deep sandstone hollows with **hemlock** and **um-**

**brella magnolia**; dry limestone cedar oak glades; and cliff margin stands of **Virginia pine** on sandstone cliff margins. Mammoth Cave National Park is a great place for plant-lovers to come and explore the vegetation!

Kentucky once had a vast area of grassland known as the “Barrens.” This was, in part, a human-engineered ecosystem maintained through intentional burning by American Indians before European contact in an effort to attract deer and buffalo.

Although largely eliminated from the region because of agricultural practice and fire suppression, small remnant stands of native grasses still exist in certain areas of the park and consist of varieties of Indian Grass, Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem and others genetically distinct from a variety of their cousins in the Great Plains.



Northern long-eared bats are at home in Mammoth Cave.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife



## CAMPING

There are few better ways to discover the pleasures and curiosities of the sunlit side of Mammoth Cave National Park than to camp among the trees or by the waters.

There are three campgrounds located in Mammoth Cave National Park that can accommodate tents, RVs and even horses. Mammoth Cave Campground, Houchin Ferry camping area and Maple Springs Campground range in size from 7 to 109 sites and offer a wide range of different amenities.

Campground reservations may be made in advance for Mammoth Cave Campground. Call the National Park Reservation Service at **(877) 444-6777** or reserve online at [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov). Drive-ins will be accommodated if space is available.

Camping fees range from \$12 to \$50. Discounts apply for visitors with Golden Age/Golden Access passport. Reservations are encouraged. Picnic shelters are available and may be

reserved. One open picnic shelter, \$50 per day, limited availability, and one enclosed picnic shelter, \$75 per day, available Saturday and Sunday, March 1 through Memorial Day; daily Memorial Day through Labor Day; Saturday and Sunday, Labor Day through November 30.

*Please note that firewood from several states is quarantined due to an insect infestation that can devastate park flora. To prevent infestation of trees in the park, transport of firewood into the park is prohibited*

### BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING

Over a dozen campsites dot the 70 miles of trails on the north side. Seek solitude in the rugged hills and deep valleys, camp by river, lake or waterfall, and explore bluffs and ridge tops. Ride horses along these backcountry trails. Drive the scenic routes of Ugly Creek Ferry Road. See the visitor center for information about obtaining a backcountry camping permit.

MAMMOTH CAVE CAMPGROUNDS															
Campground	FEE	NUMBER OF SITES	RESERVATIONS	RV SITES	RV HOOKUPS	DUMP STATION	GRILL & TABLES	CAMP STORE	SHOWERS (BUY TOKENS AT CAMP STORE)	TOILETS: FLUSH	TOILETS: CHEMICALS	COIN LAUNDRY	WATER	LARGE GROUPS	GROUP CAMPING
Mammoth Cave Group/VIP	\$20 \$25/\$50	109	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
Houchin Ferry	\$12	12					•				•		•		
Maple Springs Group/Equestrian only	\$25-\$35	7	•		•		•				•		•	•	•

NOTE: Rates are subject to change. Tax and utility fees may apply.



# WALKING & HIKING

The surface of Mammoth Cave National Park is best divided into three sections: the north side, the south side and the visitor center area. The north side is the largest region and home to the park's backcountry trails. The south side and visitor center area feature shorter trails that make good day hikes that also introduce visitors to the park's natural beauties.

## SOUTH SIDE TRAILS

The Sand Cave Trail, just off the Cave City Road at the park boundary, is a short walk to the Sand Cave where unsuccessful efforts to rescue trapped cave Floyd Collins in 1925 captured worldwide attention. Sand Cave is a boardwalk. Off of the Mammoth Cave Parkway (Kentucky 70), Sloan's Crossing Trail, a boardwalk, circles Sloan's Crossing Pond atop a sandstone ridge.

The Turnhole Bend Nature Trail takes you to an overlook at Turnhole Bend blue hole, the park's largest spring at over 50-feet deep. Sloan Crossing Pond Walk is a kid-friendly, ADA accessible trail on an elevated boardwalk around a lake.

Mammoth Cave Railroad Trail is used by both bikers and hikers. The trail follows an old railroad corridor for 8.6 miles, but has many natural stopping points like Shackelford Cemetery. Use caution as sections are steep and require road crossings.

## VISITOR CENTER AREA TRAILS

From the visitor center picnic area, the Green River Bluffs Trail is an easy walk to some great views of the Green River and its nearby environment. Designed especially for wheelchair access, the Heritage

Trail will take you to a beautiful overlook and the Old Guides' Cemetery. Both of these trails are located near the visitor center and provide nice hikes.

The trails near the visitor center are some of the best places to view the unusual karst topographical features indigenous to cave country. These trails include: Green River Bluff, Sinkhole, River Styx, Echo River Spring, and Dixon Cave.

## NORTH SIDE TRAILS

On the north edge of the park, you'll come to the Lincoln Trailhead. From here you can access the Collie Ridge Trail, which cuts through the heart of the park's backcountry. The trail is nearly level over the entire course of its four-mile length.

In the remote western region of the park, Houchin Ferry Road rambles through the forest to First Creek Trailhead and Temple Hill Trailhead. Two campsites along the river are an ideal base camp for fishing the Nolin. Trails on the north side range in difficulty from relatively easy flats to challenging ascents with steep grades. Each part of the park has something different to offer and be sure to always pick a trail that is appropriate for you and your group.

## OUR READER FEEDBACK

"Walking into Mammoth Cave felt like being on a journey to the center of the earth. It was incredible!" - Audrey Moran



## PARK TRAILS - VISITOR CENTER AREA

TRAIL	BEGINS AT	LENGTH
Sunset Point Trail	Heritage Trail	0.3mi/0.5km
Dixon Cave Trail	Historic Entrance	0.4mi/0.6km
White Cave Trail	Mammoth Campground	0.6mi/1.0km
Echo River Spring Trail	Green River Ferry	1.0mi/1.6km
Green River Bluffs Trail	Visitor Center Picnic Area	1.3 mi/2.1 km
Heritage Trail	Mammoth Cave Hotel	0.5 mi/0.8 km
Sinkhole Trail	Heritage Trail	1.0mi/1.6km
River Styx Spring Trail	Historic Entrance	0.4 mi/0.7 km

## PARK TRAILS - NORTH SIDE AREA

TRAIL	BEGINS AT	LENGTH
Big Hollow Trail North Loop	Big Hollow Trailhead	5.3 mi/8.6 km
Blair Springs Hollow Trail	Collie Ridge Trail at Raymer Hollow	1.8 mi/2.9 km
Bluffs Trail	Buffalo/Good Spring Junction	0.63 mi/1.01 km
Buffalo Creek Trail	Maple Springs Trailhead	4.4 mi/7 km
Collie Ridge Trail	Lincoln Trailhead	3.8 mi/6.2 km
Dry Prong Trail	Bluffs Campsite	2.4 mi/3.9 km
First Creek Trail	Temple Hill Trailhead	6.3 mi/10.2 km
Maple Springs Trail	Maple Springs Trailhead	1 mi/1.6 km
Miles-Davis Cemetery Trail	Good Spring or Raymer Hollow Trail	0.4 mi/0.6 km
Mill Branch Trail	Temple Hill Trailhead	3.0 mi/4.8 km
Raymer Hollow Trail	Maple Springs Trailhead	6.2 mi/9.9 km
Sal Hollow Trail	Maple Springs Trailhead	0.2mi/0.4km
Big Hollow Trail South Loop	Big Hollow Trail North Loop	3.7mi/6.0km
Turnhole Bend Trail	Maple Springs Trailhead	1.8 mi/2.9 km
Wet Prong Trail	Blair Spring Hollow Trail	4.6 mi/7.4 km
White Oak Trail	Ugly Creek Road	2.47 mi/3.98 km

## PARK TRAILS - SOUTH SIDE AREA

TRAIL	BEGINS AT	LENGTH
Cedar Sink Trail	Cedar Sink Trailhead, Hwy. 422	1.0 mi/1.6 km
Mammoth Cave Railroad Hike/Bike Trail	Visitor Center	8.6mi/14.0km
Sloan's Crossing Pond Walk	Sloan's Crossing Pond Trailhead, Hwy. 70	0.4 mi/0.6 km
Turnhole Bend Nature Trail	Brownsville Road, Hwy. 70	0.5mi/0.9km





# PRESERVATION

Despite the incredible amount of work performed by dedicated scientists, park administrators and citizens since the park's establishment in 1941, Mammoth Cave's unique biologic and geologic assets continue to face threats from a variety of sources. Air and groundwater pollution, invasive species and white-nosed syndrome are just a few of the many factors that threaten this fragile ecosystem.

NPS



*Groundwater tracing is one of the many ways that the Parks Service is tracking pollution and promoting preservation in the park.*

## POLLUTION

**Degraded scenic vistas:** The estimated annual average natural visibility at Mammoth Cave is 113 miles. Air pollution, however, can reduce average visual range to approximately 14 miles from June through August, making Mammoth Cave one of America's haziest national parks.

**Ozone exposure:** Mammoth Cave is effected by ozone-pollution. Scientists are beginning to investigate whether ozone exposure in the park causes injury to sensitive species such as milkweed, tulip poplar and sweet gum trees. They've installed air quality monitoring instrumentation to measure ambient concentrations of ozone.

**Mercury deposition:** The National Park Service and other agencies began in 2002 to monitor mercury levels at Mammoth Cave. Scientists are particularly concerned about mercury's impacts on the park's seven endangered freshwater mussel species. The Green and Nolin Rivers, which flow through the park, are included in a statewide fish consumption advisory due to mercury contamination.

**Fine particle pollution:** Recent studies increasingly show that pollution in the form of small particles, called fine particulate matter,

impairs visibility and poses significant risks to human health. Monitoring in Mammoth Cave National Park has shown high levels of particulate pollution occur in the region.

## POLLUTION SOLUTION

Although there is no such thing as an easy solution to pollution, Mammoth Cave National Park is making its best efforts to



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improve the quality of the air overhead. The park was the first Department of the Interior site in the country to have a dedicated E-85 ethanol fueling station. The fueling station was purchased through a grant in partnership with the Kentucky Corn Growers Association. The park has 16 biofuel vehicles that use over 3,000 gallons of E-85 ethanol. Mammoth Cave is the first Southeast Region park to use biodiesel fuel, converting all 25 pieces of its diesel equipment to B-20 biodiesel blend in 2001.

Mammoth Cave concessioner Ortega Parks plans to introduce more sustainable and local ingredients into the food service and increase environmental measures throughout concession operations. Mammoth Cave National Park has also significantly increased the use of recycled lumber for park projects.

### EXOTIC SPECIES

Exotic species have a significant impact on park forests. Chestnut Blight and Dutch Elm Disease have virtually eliminated American Chestnut and American Elm and a similar fungal disease is currently affecting the American Butternut tree. Invasive exotic plant species such as honeysuckle, garlic mustard, kudzu, *Microstegium*, wild rose, silver poplar and *Ailanthus* crowd out native species and spread with little competition. With over 1,000 species of flowering plants—including 84 tree species—the potential for loss of biodiversity in Mammoth Cave National Park is great.

American Elm is still found along the Green River. Chestnut stumps still sprout and the park is doing work with restoration. Young chestnut still succumb to the blight, but park experts are hoping they will adapt.

The park is currently monitoring for three bugs: Emerald Ash Borer, Gypsy

Moths and Asian Longhorn Beetles. Visitors may see traps in the form of big purple boxes that hang in trees across the park. Asian Clams do exist in the park, but there are no Zebra Mussels.

### GROUNDWATER

Since large portions of the upper Green River watershed and the groundwater basins affecting Mammoth Cave National Park lay outside park boundaries, the use of these areas greatly influence water quality within the park. The primary activities that affect the park's water quality include: disposal of domestic, municipal and industrial sewage, solid waste disposal, agricultural and forestry management practices, oil and gas exploration and production, urban land-use and recreational activities. A railroad and interstate in the area contribute to pollution.

As a result, groundwater has been intensively studied for years. Groundwater dye tracing is used to determine the path of underground streams and define groundwater basins. Baseline water quality inventories have been performed, as well as investigations into the mechanisms of non-point contaminant transport and water quality. The park also operates several continuous-recording digital water monitoring sites, which yield data relative to physical and gross chemical characteristics.

### ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mammoth Cave National Park is home to over 14 federally listed threatened and endangered species. These species include bats, mussels, plants and the Kentucky Cave Shrimp. The Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 recognizes that many of our species across the United States have

been lost and others are close to extinction.

This act requires agencies to take measures to protect and restore habitat. Through education and restoration programs, the park hopes to see a growth in the populations.

### WHITE-NOSED SYNDROME SPECIES

A disease called white-nose syndrome (WNS) is spreading through the eastern United States and Canada, decimating bat populations. Although this disease is not known to affect humans, it has been associated with the death of millions of bats since it was first identified in 2006. What exactly is WNS?

WNS is a cold-loving fungus that grows on bats' bare skin (muzzles, wings, and tails) during their winter hibernation, when their body temperatures and immune systems are reduced. The fungus forms white patches on these areas, giving rise to the name. It causes bats to awake from hibernation and fly from the cave, exposing them to the elements and wasting energy and fluids vital to their survival. To date, there is no known cure for the disease that can be deployed effectively in the wild.

Bats devour millions of insect pests – a single big brown bat eats about 150 beetles/moths/bugs per night. Their guano inside a cave is an energy source for animals that never leave the cave. In the west, bats also play a role in pollination. Loss of bats could impact agriculture and the use of pesticides on crops.

WNS was discovered in Mammoth Cave in 2011. In 2014 a decline of as much as 80% was discovered in species. The potential exists for the loss of millions more bats and perhaps even extinction for some species.

Significant evidence indicates that humans can and have transmitted the fungus

from one cave to another, and so all participants in Mammoth Cave National Park cave tours are required to walk through sudsy biosecurity mats to remove spores and dirt from their shoes after exiting the Cave. We also ask for your cooperation by washing your hands and changing clothes and footwear before visiting any other caves or mines.

### WORLD HERITAGE SITE

On October 27, 1981, Mammoth Cave National Park joined the ranks of renowned places like Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Egypt's Pyramids of Giza, Nepal's Kathmandu Valley and India's Taj Mahal Historic Park.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated Mammoth Cave National Park



## CAVE DWELLERS



*The Kentucky crawfish has no pigmentation.*

Species that live in the cave on a full-time basis (trogllobites) have developed a variety of adaptations to survive in this dark environment.

The cave crayfish which lives permanently in underground water systems, lacks functioning eyes and instead uses antenna and smell to help them function. In addition, because of the lack of exposure to light, its body is colorless and translucent.

The cave shrimp is a tiny crustacean that feeds on bacteria, protozoa and other minute organisms that wash into cave streams.

Both these federally listed threatened and endangered species, like all cave life, are vulnerable to degradation of water quality in its habitat that could wipe them out completely. For these reasons, in 1990, the National Park Service and local communities constructed a regional sewage system.

as a World Heritage Site for its exceptional natural features and habitat for the many threatened and endangered species that live within the park borders.

### BIOSPHERE RESERVE

On September 26, 1990, Mammoth Cave was officially designated an International Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. A biosphere reserve is a unique category of safeguarded, natural environments designated to protect the biological and cultural diversity of a region and sustain the economic use of its natural resources.

Each biosphere reserve represents a specific ecosystem; a place for research, monitoring and education, and a place where policy makers, scientists and locals can cooperate to manage land and water resources to meet human needs.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Pack out what you pack in.** Trash is not only an eyesore, but a risk to animals,

plants, and water sources. Dispose of waste properly and use recyclable camp supplies.

If you happen to see trash, place it in a garbage receptacle. There's a real satisfaction in knowing that you left an area in better shape than you found it. By doing your part, you can help ensure that the park will be beautiful and clean for all of the other visitors.

**Don't feed the animals.** By simply not feeding the animals, you will protect their welfare. When wild animals cease to find their own food, they cease to be part of the balance of nature. Feeding animals food they are not used to can also cause them to become sick.

**Don't touch the cave formations.** Please help keep the cave clean. Oil from your hand hinders the continued growth of speleothems.

**Stay on established trails.** By taking short cuts you may get lost, and you may damage vegetation and animal life.

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 **LEAVE NO TRACE**

Leave No Trace is a national program that teaches people how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly, and promotes and inspires proper stewardship of America's public lands. Many land management agencies are cooperating partners in this program. You can help minimize impacts to the natural resources and social experiences of other visitors by practicing these seven principles. For more information, please visit [LNT.org](http://LNT.org).

- Plan ahead and prepare.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave what you find.
- Minimize campfire impacts.
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of other visitors.

Consider applying these principles during your travels. We always need your help in preserving our shared lands for future generations. It is the most important thing you can do for the places you love. Make the commitment to Leave No Trace today. You can make a difference.

Additionally, staying on the trails will help you stop erosion around the trail areas and reduce trail widening.

**Camping.** You can help protect Mammoth Cave National Park by practicing minimum-impact camping and Leave No Trace principles. Obey park regulations and camp only in designated camping areas. Help protect the forests from invasive pests. Only use dead or downed wood from inside the park or purchase wood from the Caver's Camp Store located at the Service Center.

**Get involved in groups.** Volunteering is an American tradition that has made

an immeasurable contribution to communities, organizations and individuals throughout the country.

Sign up with the park to volunteer and get involved with groups that get together to rehabilitate ecosystems, improve hiking trails where erosion and overuse are taking a toll, or identify and remove exotic plants that might encroach on the habitat of native species.

Mammoth Cave welcomes both individuals and groups to participate in its Volunteers-in-Parks Program. Volunteering is a rewarding experience that allows individuals to give back to the park and help preserve it for future generations to enjoy.



*To preserve the cave's delicate ecosystem, stay on maintained trails and manmade pathways.*

Joe Shlabotnik



# HISTORY & CULTURE

Indigenous peoples lived and hunted in Kentucky between 2,000 and 5,000 years ago in the Late Archaic Period (3000 – 1000 B.C.). These early explorers traveled miles within Mammoth Cave, using river cane torches to explore and collect the minerals mirabilite, epsomite and gypsum. How they used the minerals is still a matter of speculation, although it is hypothesized that they were valued for medicinal and/or ceremonial uses.

In addition to mining, American Indians lived in rock shelters or large cave entrances during parts of the year. Dry conditions in the cave have preserved vast quantities of artifacts, including some of the earliest evidence of organized

agriculture in the eastern United States. These part-time residents ate a variety of native plants including hickory nuts, dandelion, sunflowers, wild berries, lambs-quarters, and acorns. When they could, they supplemented this plant-based diet with deer, turkey, raccoon, other small mammals, mussels and fish.

Exploration for minerals continued during the Early Woodland Period (1000 – 200 B.C.), but for reasons not yet understood, ceased soon afterward. According to legend, about 2,000 years later, in 1797, a hunter named Houchin rediscovered the cave while chasing a bear. Frontiersmen quickly realized that Mammoth Cave contained saltpeter (used in making gunpowder), and during the War of 1812, Charles Wilkens and Hyman Gratz established a commercial saltpeter leaching factory there. Vats and wooden pipes that were used in the operation are still visible today just inside the mouth of Mammoth Cave. Take the Historic Tour or the Violet City Lantern Tour, Mammoth Passage Tour, Star Chamber Tour, Discovery Tour to see these artifacts.

Beginning in 1816, the public began to appreciate the geologic, cultural and biological importance of Mammoth Cave. Capitalizing on this interest, Franklin Gorin, the owner at the time, initiated tours.

In 1838, a new owner—Dr. John Croghan—extensively developed and explored the cave, exploiting it commercially as one of the great wonders of the world. He built roads, and a large hotel to lodge tourists.



*Stephen Bishop was one of the early cave explorers in the area.*





The Mammoth Cave Baptist Church is one of the historic buildings that still remains in Mammoth Cave National Park today.

Dr. Croghan also established an underground tuberculosis hospital in the cave. He believed that the stable temperature and humidity and apparent dryness would have a curative effect on patients. Volunteer patients lived in the cave in small stone structures with canvas roofs. The experiment was a failure. Within a few months, a few of the invalids died and many others left the cave. Ironically, Dr. Croghan died six years after the experiment—a victim of tuberculosis. To view the structures where the patients lived, take the Star Chamber Tour.

Stephen Bishop was one of the early cave explorers in the area. Before his death at the age of 36, Bishop achieved worldwide fame for his discoveries and knowledge of the cave, as well as for his wit and charm. Bishop had begun a tradition of excellence among cave guides that

included the well-known Bransford Family and that tradition continues to this day.

Mammoth Cave was authorized as a national park in 1926 and was fully established in 1941. At that time, just 40 miles of cave passageway had been mapped. As surveying techniques improved, great strides were made in describing and understanding the overwhelming extent of the cave system. Several caves in the park were shown to be connected, and today, the cave system is known to extend well beyond the national park boundary. The park was named a World Heritage Site in 1981 and became the core area of an International Biosphere Reserve in 1990. With its nearly 53,000 surface acres and underlying cave ecosystem, Mammoth Cave National Park is recognized as an international treasure.

NPS

Dave Riggs

## THE BIZARRE AND TRAGIC TALE OF FLOYD COLLINS



(Floyd Collins sidebar) The renowned explorer met his end in Sand Cave.

In 1925, Floyd Collins, today thought of as one of the world's premier cavers, met a tragic and bizarre end in Sand Cave. He knew of a small cave called Sand Cave, little explored, and situated along the road before many of the other show caves. He determined to explore the Sand Cave, and struck an agreement with the cave's owner, B. Doyel, to share one half of the profits if the cave proved worthy of show.

Floyd entered the cave with a single kerosene lantern, and shortly found that the cave offered challenges. He found himself squeezing through tight passageways—at one point so tight that he had to inch through on his stomach, with one arm stretched out ahead of him, pushing his lantern, and the other arm at his side. Beyond this crawl, the cave began to open up, but his lantern began to flicker.

Floyd knew the peril of losing light in a cave, so he reluctantly began his return journey. But as he returned through the tight crawl, his foot dislodged a 27-pound rock which wedged his ankle, and in his awkward position, he could not remove it. He was trapped in a stone straight-jacket.

Relatives noticed that he was missing, and a quick check in Sand Cave confirmed the worst. Rescuers came in search of him, and for the over two weeks the rescuers attempted by various means to extract him. Engineers and geologists were called in, and when more conventional means failed, miners began digging a shaft to reach him.

In the meantime, the story became too big for Cave City; people began to arrive from all parts of the country. A "carnival atmosphere" took hold at the mouth of Sand Cave, and hawkers appeared, selling food, drink and souvenirs. Thousands of sightseers descended on Cave City, and the state was forced to dispatch troops.

But all rescue attempts would prove useless. On the eighteenth day after his entrapment, Floyd Collins was pronounced dead of exposure, and the cave was sealed. Only months later would his body be removed for burial closer to home. Eventually, his body was exhumed and toured the country. His body was eventually returned to Crystal Cave which his family owned. Cavers from around the world came to pay their respects to him for many years.

NPS absorbed Crystal Cave and closed it to the public. In 1989, Collins was buried in Mammoth Cave Baptist Church Cemetery on Flint Ridge.





# PHOTOGRAPHY

The ecosystems of America's national and state parks and public lands are among the most diverse on the planet—from the wetlands of the Everglades to the temperate rain forests of Olympic National Park and the deserts of Death Valley to the mountains of Yellowstone and Grand Tetons. For both aspiring and experienced photographers, the goal of any trip to a national park is to capture its endemic wildlife.

Taking photographs of animals presents a unique set of challenges. Landscapes cooperate; wildlife does not. Not only are animals likely to react to a photographer's presence, but they are also driven by their own instincts and behavior, which can make capturing them difficult. The tips below will help you compose better wildlife images of all creatures great and small—from the bison to the tiniest hummingbird and everything in between.

- **Use a tripod.** If you are using a large telephoto lens, consider investing in a gimbal head, which will make it easier to track your subject.
- **Know your subject.** Before you take out your camera, understand your subject's

behavior so that you can be prepared for what it will do next.

- **The eyes have it.** Capturing your subject's eyes will lead the viewer into the picture and make your image more impactful. Always keep the eyes in focus and try to place them in the power points (the intersection of rule of third guidelines).
  - **Keep a safe distance.** You'll want to keep a minimum of 25 yards between you and your subject and more than 75 yards for larger predators. That means that you'll need a big telephoto lens if you want to get up close and personal.
  - **Shoot in burst mode.** Instead of taking a single frame, increase the probability that you'll capture the behavior, head position or angle by capturing multiple frames.
  - **Be prepared.** Wildlife, and particularly birds, move quickly and without provocation. Practice your panning skills to better catch birds when they alight.
  - **Timing is everything.** The best time to photograph wildlife is during the golden hours—at dusk and dawn—when the light is soft and less likely to cast harsh shadows across your subject's face.
  - **Keep it simple.** The easiest way to draw attention to your subject is to use a simple background. Use a shallow depth of field to blur any distracting backgrounds.
  - **Aim for the action.** Make your image more compelling by capturing your subject exhibiting its natural behavior—flying, hunting, eating or caring for young.
- The best way to take better photographs is to practice, and you don't need to go far. Buy a bird feeder and build a studio in your backyard, where you'll be able to create your own version of *A Star(ling) is Born*.



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Don't miss your shot! Be aware of your surroundings.



Arches National Park

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# JUST FOR KIDS

Mammoth Cave National Park is the perfect place to bring the kids for great outdoor activities and educational opportunities. Are you between 6 and 13? If so, do you want to learn all you can about Mammoth Cave National Park?

## BECOME A JUNIOR RANGER

Young people ages 6 to 13 years old are eligible to become Junior Rangers. The Junior Ranger packet is available at the book sales area in the visitor center for free. Pick yours up and start rangers! Follow a ranger on guided activities and record your own discoveries in the free booklet and complete it to become a Junior Ranger.

## INTRODUCTION TO CAVING TOUR

Frozen Niagara Tour: Bring mom and

dad on this daily tour good for all ages. This brief and easy-to-navigate visit passes through the most heavily decorated part of Mammoth Cave. The tour includes a 15 minute bus ride and lasts one hour and 15 minutes. You'll be amazed by this fairyland of formations. No age restrictions but there are stairs. See the "Caves" chapter of the guide for more information on this tour.

## CHECK OUT THE JUNIOR RANGER NATURE TRACK

Participate in activities designed for kids that teach them about Mammoth Cave National Park. Rangers will educate children on the park's plants, animals, cave forming process and delicate balance of the ecosystem. Only offered on weekends.



NPS

Don't miss taking one of Mammoth Cave's many tours. Family friendly tours include Domes and Dripstones and the Frozen Niagara Tour.



## Dear Adventure,

*You occupy my every thought. I don't know how much longer I can go without seeing you. I was at the water cooler today, talking to Herb in accounting. He was droning on about his wife's Etsy store. Side hustle he calls it. I couldn't take it. I filled up my cup and dumped a glass of water on my head just to feel something.*

*I know we are not supposed to see each other again until next month, but I may just drive up and see you this weekend. Is that crazy?*

*Yeah, it's crazy. But life's too short to spend another weekend inside. You're the antithesis of Netflix and Chill. The antidote to my smartphone addiction. The reason I get out of bed in the morning.*

*What I'm saying is: I love you, Adventure.*

*See you this weekend.*

**Megan**

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# IF YOU ONLY HAVE A DAY

The compact nature of Mammoth Cave National Park means you can pack a lot into just one day. Start the day with a guided tour of the world's longest cave. Please choose a tour that is appropriate for your entire group.

The tours vary in length, but most are around two hours. Depending on the tour, you'll get an entertaining and educational crash course in cave geology, history or wildlife. Check the "Caves" Chapter to see a breakdown of the tours including difficulty, cost, distance and description.

When you emerge from the cave you'll most likely be hungry. Head to Mammoth Cave Hotel's Travertine Restaurant near the visitor center where you'll find

a variety of dishes to choose from. Over lunch discuss with your party how you'd like to spend the afternoon. The park offers a number of quick and unforgettable surface activities that many visitors overlook.

You have lots of options that everyone will be sure to enjoy: rent a canoe and explore the river on your own; look for wildlife on a scenic drive through some of the park's wildest areas; or participate in one of the many ranger-led activities and learn more about the park.

Before you leave, check out the gift shops located in Mammoth Cave Hotel and take a souvenir home to remember the trip. A day in Mammoth Cave is a day you won't soon forget.



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Don't visit the park without taking one of the many tours Mammoth Cave has to offer.

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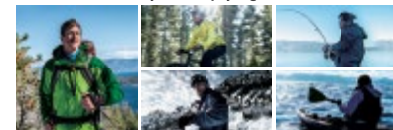


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