The Guadalupe Mountains are often referred to as an “island in the desert.” The mountains rise up out of the desert and support a variety of plants, animals, and even entire ecosystems not found anywhere in the surrounding arid lands. McKittrick Canyon is one of the best places to witness the diversity of life that can be found in the Guadalupe Mountains. It is the only place in the park where a year-round spring-fed stream flows, creating a unique riparian ecosystem. Although the canyon is named for Felix McKittrick, an early rancher in this area, it was Wallace Pratt who was one of the first people to realize its beauty and significance. When Pratt first visited McKittrick Canyon, the landscape was even more spectacular than it is today. Extreme flooding events in 1943 and 1968 destroyed many of the travertine dams, and caused much of the stream to go underground. Pratt claimed that “it was this myriad succession of miniature lakes and miniature waterfalls, with luxuriant verdure bordering them, and the majestic rock walls surrounding them, that made McKittrick Canyon the most beautiful spot in Texas.”

Wallace Pratt fell in love with this spectacular canyon and immediately acquired a quarter interest in a part of the canyon that was for sale at the time of his visit. When the stock market crashed in 1929, he was able to buy out his partners and become owner of the major portion of McKittrick Canyon. This soon became his summer vacation getaway as he had a stone cabin constructed at the junction of North and South McKittrick Canyons. During the summers, the Pratts and their three children would leave the heat and humidity of Houston to spend time in the Guadalupe Mountains. When Pratt retired he and his family moved to McKittrick Canyon and had a new home built at the mouth of the canyon. This new house that Pratt called the “Ship on the Desert” was designed to look like an oil tanker. Today the Ship on the Desert is used as a research facility for scientists and educators coming to learn more about this unique place. In the 1950’s...continued on page 7
Welcome to Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks. Carlsbad Caverns National Park, a World Heritage Site since 1995, features a spectacular cave system of highly decorated chambers. Guadalupe Mountains National Park protects one of the world’s best examples of a fossilized reef. Both parks are located within the Chihuahuan Desert, a fascinating place to explore desert life.

Fall and Winter bring their own special rewards. Mid-October to mid-November the colorful changes in maples, ash, and sumac delight thousands of visitors to Guadalupe Mountains National Park. At Carlsbad Caverns National Park, the summertime crowds are gone and the cave can be experienced in its natural state of quiet. Both parks offer hiking opportunities. Rare winter snows are short-lived events and can only add to the beauty of these natural areas.

The Park staff are here to help make your visit a truly memorable event. They will be happy to help you plan your visit and provide information. Guided tours at Carlsbad Caverns can enrich your park experience.

John Benjamin
Superintendent
Carlsbad Caverns National Park

Thank You, Volunteers!

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the dedicated effort and talent that volunteers have brought to Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks. Volunteers play a vital role in fulfilling our mission of preserving our natural and cultural heritage and sharing that heritage with the visiting public. Volunteers do everything from staffing the information desk, roving interpretation, patrols surface and cave trails, to trail maintenance, research, cave restoration, and more. To become a volunteer contact...

Carlsbad Caverns
Jason Richards
(505) 785-3144

Guadalupe Mountains
Doug Baehler
(915) 828-3251 x105

Traveling with A Pet?

On a warm day the temperature inside a car can kill a pet. Do not leave an animal unattended; the kennel is the only safe place for your pet.

At Carlsbad Caverns, pets are not permitted in the cave or at bat flight programs; during the day your pet may be cared for at the kennel for a small fee.

At Guadalupe Mountains, pets are not allowed on trails, in the backcountry, in buildings, or at evening programs; they are permitted in the campground. In national park, your pet must be physically restrained at all times.

Hey Kids! Become a Junior Ranger!

Many national parks across America offer a Junior Ranger program for children to encourage interest in their national parks and to promote a sense of stewardship and ownership for these special places that they come to visit. This self-paced educational program allows the participant to earn a patch and/or certificate upon completion of required activities that teach the children about the park resources. Age appropriate activities are included in the Junior Ranger booklet, typically for pre-kindergarten through upper elementary-aged children.

At Carlsbad Caverns, the Junior Ranger program offers activities to teach about the resources both above ground and below the surface (including plant and animal life of the desert, cave features, and history of the park). Younger children have opportunities to color and draw, find specified objects on a visual scavenger hunt, use their senses to experience their surroundings, and complete games. Older children have opportunities to sequence events, complete word searches, and write stories and poems. Each activity in the booklet is an optional activity depending on interest and age-level. Once the booklet is checked by a park ranger, the participant is presented a Carlsbad Caverns National Park Junior Ranger patch.

The Junior Ranger booklet is available through the Carlsbad Caverns Guadalupe Mountains Association bookstore, located in the visitor center at the park. There is a charge of $1.00 to participate in the program, which includes the booklet and patch (given upon completion of the activities). Kids of any age may participate.

At Guadalupe Mountains, participants work through a separate activity booklet and visit points of interest within the park. The booklet accommodates families of varying travel plans. Many of the activities can be completed in the Pine Springs Visitor Center and Museum. Children who complete three activities earn a badge and certificate, while those who do six activities earn a patch in addition to the badge and certificate. There is no charge for participation in the program, but donations are always welcome.
The Light Man of Carlsbad Cavern

by Dave Thomas

There I was in an area of Carlsbad Cavern that only a handful of people had ever seen. I was in the Kings Palace area of the cave… but I was on a ledge 30 to 40 feet above the main trail. Why was I there? Enter Alvino Dorado—he’s in charge of replacing the lights that illuminate the largest cave chamber in the United States.

As visitors walk through the cavern, it is easy to forget the technological wonder the cave is because of the awe-inspiring sights they are experiencing. Three miles of paved trail equal twenty miles of wiring to power the 1,200 individual lights in the cavern. Ninety percent of these lights are fairly close to the paved trails and are easy to maintain, but there are several that require vertical caving ability to reach them. To replace the burned out light. Some of these jobs are not for the faint of heart. One pit in the main corridor is a straight ninety-foot drop to get to the light fixture. Another light in the Big Room is located about halfway down the one-hundred-forty-foot drop called the Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain Bottomless Pit. This is what a caver would call exposure… the only thing between you and certain

and your confidence in your caving skills.

How many rangers does it take to change a light bulb? You can’t just hand someone a bulb and expect them to complete the job safely and without damaging the cave. It takes years to become vertically proficient for caving; and then add in the difficulty of getting to some of these out-of-the-way places without causing resource damage. That is the reason why only one person is ultimately in charge of the lights. Alvino follows the same trail he learned from his predecessor years ago to reach and maintain the 1,200 individual lights.

After years of trying to come up with a reliable map, a gentleman named Thomas Rohrer, with the aid of the National Park Service, completed an all-inclusive map consisting of seventeen individual maps. Using this map, Alvino knows the location of all the lights, what light fixture is there, and the type of bulb the fixture requires.

When a bulb is reported to be out, the report is verified, the map is consulted, and the appropriate bulb is chosen… and off Alvino goes. He uses a specially designed backpack that supports the bulbs and is still easy to carry on one’s back. He must also trouble-shoot any electrical problems that he encounters while in the cave. Broken light fixtures, bad ballasts (a regulating device to control the amount of electricity used by a fluorescent light), corroded wiring—you never know what the problem might be.

Not all of the bulbs in the cave are the same. There are incandescents (like those used in your home, only at a higher wattage), mercury vapors, fluorescentes, and light emitting diodes (LEDs). The type of bulb used depends upon the degree of illumination wanted. While many people think there are colored lights in the cave, only white lights are used… but there are eleven shades of white light, so the degree of white “color” varies.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park is a spectacular park to work in—I occasionally get to see what others do not. I also continue to be awed by the wonders I see daily, thanks to those rangers years ago who had the foresight to make the Cavern visible to all who come to enjoy the beauty of this place. I am also fortunate enough to get to work with Alvino Dorado, a skilled problem-solver, caver, and the one person who continues to enlighten us all everyday!
Carlsbad Caverns

Tour the Main Cave...

Spring, Fall, & Winter Hours
Natural Entrance 8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Big Room 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Visitor Center 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Summer Hours
(Memorial Day - Labor Day)
Natural Entrance 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Big Room 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Visitor Center 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Fees
Entrance Fees
Adults—age 16 and over $6.00 plus $3.00
Children—aGe 6 to 15 $3.00 plus $3.00
Children—age 5 and under free plus $3.00

The National Parks Pass, Golden Eagle Passport, and Golden Access Passport all cover the basic entrance fee.

Entrance fee applies to self-guided tours. Guided tours require an additional fee.

All fees and tours are subject to change at any time.

Reservations
We recommend that you make reservations for guided tours at least six weeks in advance. Some tours fill quickly. Reservations are not necessary for self-guided tours. To make reservations call the National Park Reservation System at:

Reservations (800) 967-CAVE (2283)
TDD (888) 530-9796
Cancellations (800) 388-2733

Have a Safe Tour
Cave temperature is 56° F (13° C) year-round. A light jacket or sweater and good walking shoes are recommended. Do not wear sandals. For your safety:

• Stay on the paved trail.
• Supervise children closely; children under age 16 must remain with an adult at all times.
• Ask park rangers for help.
• Take prescribed medications with you.
• High humidity in the cave can affect respiratory problems; bring your inhaler just in case.
• If you are DIABETIC, be sure you have eaten enough calories.
• Leave your baby stroller in the car; child-carrying back packs are recommended.
• Leave your pet at the kennel, not in your car.

Protect the Cave
• Never touch, tap, or handle the cave formations; the oils on your skin damage the formations.
• Never take gum, food, or drinks into the cave. Water only.
• Never use tobacco of any kind in the cave.
• Never throw coins or other objects into the pools.

Photography
Photography is permitted on most tours; however, please use good etiquette. Warn those around you before you flash, keep tripods on the trail, and do not use the rocks as your personal tripod. Video cameras are permitted on the Big Room, Natural Entrance, and King’s Palace tours. Please use caution and do not use the ultra-bright lights available on some cameras.

Services
Facilities include a visitor center, exhibits, bookstore, restaurant, gift shop, and kennel service. Ranger programs are offered daily. Other activities include:

Nature Trail
This one-mile paved, partially accessible trail begins near the visitor center and highlights desert plants.

Bat Flight Programs (Summer Only)
A few hundred thousand bats fly from Carlsbad Caverns each evening from mid-May until the bats migrate to Mexico sometime in mid-October. The ranger program generally begins each evening 30 to 60 minutes before sunset at the park amphitheater, although weather and lightning can cause cancellation of the program. Check at the Visitor Center for the exact time the program starts. No Flash Photography is allowed as it may be a disturbance to the bats. This rule is strictly enforced for protection of the bats.

Surface Activities

Scenic Drive
A one-hour drive through the Chihuahuan Desert, this 9.5-mile gravel road is suitable for most vehicles except trailers and motor homes. Brochures are available for 50 cents. The Scenic Drive is open 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. mid-May to mid-October. It is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. mid-October to mid-May. These hours are subject to change.

Rattlesnake Springs
This historic oasis includes a picnic area, shade trees, restrooms, and excellent bird watching. Located 5.5 miles west on a signed county road. Day use only.

Hiking & Camping
The park’s wilderness offers day hikes and backcountry camping (permit required). Rangers at the visitor center can provide free permits, trail and weather information, and backcountry camping tips. The bookstore sells topographic maps, which are considered essential for desert hiking.
**Carlsbad Caverns**

...or try something different!

**Left Hand Tunnel**
On this lantern-lit tour your guide will highlight cavern history, formations, cave pools, and Permian Age fossils. This is the easiest of the adventure tours on unpaved trails. Be aware that the dirt trail winds over small uneven or slippery slopes and careful footing is required to avoid cavern pools and fragile formations.

Lanterns are provided. Tour departs from the visitor center lobby.

**Slaughter Canyon Cave**
This moderately strenuous tour is through a well-decorated undeveloped backcountry cave. Tours depart from the cave entrance at the scheduled time. It is mandatory for each person to bring a two to four C or D-cell alkaline battery flashlight with fresh batteries. Penlights are not permitted. The route is slippery, muddy, and at times requires a supervised ascent of a 15-foot flowstone slope using a knotted rope.

Do not drive to the visitor center for this cave tour. Allow plenty of time to drive to Slaughter Canyon and 45 minutes for the steep and strenuous 0.5-mile hike to the cave entrance. Attempt this hike only if you are in good health. Carry water—the desert is dry, and can be very hot in summer and very cold in winter. Stay on the trail and wear good walking shoes.

**Lower Cave**
This moderately strenuous tour begins with a ranger supervised descent down a 10-foot flowstone slope using a knotted rope, followed by a 30-foot series of three ladders. Bring gloves and four AA alkaline batteries per person. The park provides helmets, headlamps and optional kneepads. Tour departs from the visitor center lobby. You will see evidence of early exploration, cave pools, and beautiful formations.

**Hall of the White Giant**
This is a strenuous, challenging tour to a remote chamber in Carlsbad Cavern. You will be required to crawl long distances, squeeze through tight crevices, and climb up slippery passages. Bring gloves and four AA batteries per person. We provide helmets, headlamps, and kneepads. Tour departs from the Visitor Center for a short drive and then a short hike to the cave. Bring water for the hike.

**Spider Cave**
On this strenuous tour you can expect tight crawls, canyon-like passages, and bizarre formations. Bring gloves and four new AA batteries. The park provides helmets, headlamps, and kneepads. Tour departs from the Visitor Center after a short drive and then a short hike to the cave.

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**Cave Tour Reservations:**
1-800-967-2283

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour</th>
<th>Trail Surface</th>
<th>Offered</th>
<th>Departure Time</th>
<th>Adult Fee</th>
<th>Age Limit</th>
<th>Tour Length</th>
<th>Group Size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King's Palace</td>
<td>Paved trail; 80' hill must be climbed on return trip</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Fall-Spring 10 &amp; 2 Summer 10, 11, 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Adults $8 Golden Age $4 Golden Access $4 Children (6-15) $4 Children (4-5) Free</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Hand Tunnel</td>
<td>Packed dirt trail</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>$7.00 and General Admission Ticket</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaughter Canyon Cave</td>
<td>Strenuous climb required to reach cave entrance. Trail in cave is slippery, uneven, and rocky</td>
<td>Saturday and Sunday (Tours offered daily in summer)</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Cave</td>
<td>Must negotiate fifty feet of ladders, variable dirt trails, might get dirty</td>
<td>Monday through Friday</td>
<td>1:00 pm</td>
<td>$20.00 and General Admission Ticket</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall of the White Giant</td>
<td>Climbing and crawling, tight squeezes, drop-offs, will get dirty</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1:00 pm</td>
<td>$20.00 and General Admission Ticket</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spider Cave</td>
<td>Climbing and crawling, tight squeezes, drop-offs, will get dirty</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>1:00 pm</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wild Caving – kneepads required!**

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Guadalupe Mountains

Plan Your Trip Wisely!
Facilities and services within and near Guadalupe Mountains National Park are extremely limited. The nearest gas stations are 32 miles west or 35 miles east. There is no campstore; bring everything you need with you.

Information and exhibits

Headquarters
Visitor Center
Elevation 5,740'. On U.S. Highway 62/180, 55 miles southwest of Carlsbad and 110 miles east of El Paso. Open every day except Christmas. Open Memorial Day to Labor Day 8:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.; Labor Day to Memorial Day 8:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M. Information, natural history museum, introductory slide program.

Frijole Ranch History Museum
The ranch house features exhibits describing historic and current use of the Guadalupe Mountains. Grounds include a picnic area near a spring shaded by large oak trees. Restroom available. Staffed intermittently.

McKittrick Canyon
Highway entrance gate is open 8:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M., Mountain Standard Time; 8:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M. Mountain Daylight Savings Time begins and ends. Restrooms, outdoor exhibits, slide program.

Camping
Water and restrooms are available, but there are no showers, RV hookups, or dump stations. The fee is $8.00 per night, per site, $4.00 with a Golden Age or Golden Access Passport. No wood or charcoal fires are permitted; camp stoves are allowed.

Pine Springs Campground
Located near the Headquarters Visitor Center, there are twenty tent and nineteen RV campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis. Two group camp sites are available for groups of 10-20 people. Reservations (for group sites only) can be made by phoning (915) 828-3251.

Backpacking
Eighty-five miles of trails lead through forests, canyons, and the desert. A free permit is required if you plan to spend a night in the backcountry. Permits are issued at the Pine Springs Visitor Center and the Dog Canyon Ranger Station. Wood and charcoal fires are prohibited. Camp stoves are allowed. Pack out all your trash. Pets are not allowed on park trails. Firearms are not permitted within the park.

Day Hikes at Dog Canyon

Description

Entrance Fees ($3.00 per person 16 years and older) can be paid at trailheads. Good for one week.

Day Hikes at Dog Canyon

Easy.

Indian Meadow Nature Loop

0.6 miles roundtrip.

A guide booklet describes ecology and geology.

Moderate.

Marcus Overlook

4.6 miles roundtrip.

Follow the Bush Mountain Trail to the ridgetop for a view into West Dog Canyon. Trail climbs 800 feet in elevation.

Strenuous.

Lost Peak

4.6 miles roundtrip.

Climb out of Dog Canyon on the Tejas Trail to visit the conifer forest above. Outstanding views from Lost Peak. Trail climbs 1,500 feet in elevation.

Strenuous. The Bowl shelters a high country conifer forest. Recommended route: Tejas Trail to Pine Top, Bowl Trail to Hunter Peak, Bear Canyon Trail, Frijole Trail back to the campground. Trail climbs 2,500 feet in elevation.

Strenuous. Desert lovers will appreciate the rocky arroyos and open vistas while skirting along the base of El Capitan. Recommended Route: El Capitan Trail, Salt Basin Overlook Trail, and return on the El Capitan Trail. Beyond the Salt Basin Overview the El Capitan Trail continues to Williams Ranch, an additional 4.7 miles one-way.

Moderate.

Smith Springs Loop Trail

2.3 miles roundtrip.

Recommended route: Tejas Trail to Pine Top, Bowl Trail to Hunter Peak, Bear Canyon Trail, Frijole Trail back to the campground. Trail climbs 2,500 feet in elevation.

Strenuous.

Frijole Ranch

0.75 mile roundtrip.

Easy.

Discover the desert as you walk to the ruins of the Pinery, a stagecoach station on the Butterfield Overland Mail Route in 1858. Trailside exhibits; wheelchair accessible.

Strenuous.

Guadalupe Peak Trail

8.4 miles roundtrip.

Moderate.

Devil’s Hall Trail

4.2 miles roundtrip.

Permit is required if you plan to spend a night in the backcountry. Permits are issued at the Pine Springs Visitor Center and the Dog Canyon Ranger Station.

Strenuous.

Marcus Overlook

4.8 miles roundtrip.

Yellow Rock Trail

11.3 miles roundtrip.

Strenuous.

Pine Top

3.0 miles roundtrip.

Spectacular views. Trail climbs 3,000 feet in elevation. Avoid the peak during high winds and thunderstorms.

Moderate.

Smith Springs Loop Trail

2.3 miles roundtrip.

Easy.

McKittrick Canyon Trail

4.8 miles roundtrip.

McKittrick Nature Loop

0.9 miles roundtrip.

Desert lovers will appreciate the rocky arroyos and open vistas while skirting along the base of El Capitan. Recommended Route: El Capitan Trail, Salt Basin Overlook Trail, and return on the El Capitan Trail. Beyond the Salt Basin Overview the El Capitan Trail continues to Williams Ranch, an additional 4.7 miles one-way.

Moderate.

Frijole Ranch

0.75 mile roundtrip.

Easy.

Discover the desert as you walk to the ruins of the Pinery, a stagecoach station on the Butterfield Overland Mail Route in 1858. Trailside exhibits; wheelchair accessible.

Strenuous.

Guadalupe Peak Trail

8.4 miles roundtrip.

Moderate.

Devil’s Hall Trail

4.2 miles roundtrip.

Permit is required if you plan to spend a night in the backcountry. Permits are issued at the Pine Springs Visitor Center and the Dog Canyon Ranger Station.

Strenuous.

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McKittrick Nature Loop

0.9 miles roundtrip.

Desert lovers will appreciate the rocky arroyos and open vistas while skirting along the base of El Capitan. Recommended Route: El Capitan Trail, Salt Basin Overlook Trail, and return on the El Capitan Trail. Beyond the Salt Basin Overview the El Capitan Trail continues to Williams Ranch, an additional 4.7 miles one-way.

Moderate.

Frijole Ranch

0.75 mile roundtrip.

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4.6 miles roundtrip.

Follow the Bush Mountain Trail to the ridgetop for a view into West Dog Canyon. Trail climbs 800 feet in elevation.

Strenuous.

Lost Peak

4.6 miles roundtrip.

Climb out of Dog Canyon on the Tejas Trail to visit the conifer forest above. Outstanding views from Lost Peak. Trail climbs 1,500 feet in elevation.

Hike safely...

• There is no water available along park trails, so be sure to bring plenty with you. One gallon per person per day is recommended.

• Trails are rocky—wear sturdy shoes.

• Carry a trail map.

• Pack warm clothing and rain gear; sudden weather changes are common.

Protect the park

• Stay on trails; don’t cut across switchbacks or create new trails.

• Carry out all trash, including cigarette butts.

• Report any trail hazards to the visitor center.

• Collecting of natural, historic, or prehistoric objects is not allowed.

Weather

Temperatures (F.)

Average High Low

Jan 53 30 1.04

Feb 58 35 1.04

March 63 38 0.87

April 71 46 0.57

May 78 55 1.26

June 88 63 1.48

July 87 63 3.08

Aug 84 62 3.77

Sept 78 57 5.22

Oct 71 49 1.41

Nov 61 36 0.65

Dec 57 33 0.67

Average annual precipitation is 21.06 inches.

Pine Springs Weather Station, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, elevation 5,500'.
Think about all the wild animals you enjoy seeing in a national park area. Through the years one of the main animals people consistently see are mule deer. Seeing a deer in its natural habitat can renew one's sense of wonder. Mule deer have some amazing characteristics that enable them to survive in the rugged landscape of Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

The first thing one notices about the deer is the size of the ears. They received their common name due to the resemblance of the ears to those of a mule. These large ears swivel to detect danger from any direction and can detect sounds from miles away. The ability to hear well is a big advantage in terrain that varies with many ups and downs.

The soft, large, brown eyes of the mule deer seem to stare right through you. Deer have excellent eyesight. Many times when I am around a deer and they see me out in the open, I have found there is a less chance of spooking them when I play like I could care less if the deer was there or not, than if I try to approach them—a tip for potential deer watchers.

When rapidly moving, the deer not only runs, but also does something that looks peculiar. They seem to bounce in a stiff fashion on all four legs. This movement is called slotting. This method of movement has some real advantages. A deer can jump over obstacles that a human has to go around. Quick changes in direction are possible with slotting which makes it harder for enemies to catch them. Also they can bound up very vertical terrain with ease and leave behind an exhausted pursuer. I am not sure how the deer evade all the cops and other sharp pointed plants when bounding away, but they do a great job of landing in the right spot.

The major predators of the deer are mountain lions, coyotes, and eagles. Mule deer are most vulnerable when fawns are born. The spots on young fawns act as an effective camouflage. Fawns have very little scent, another protective characteristic. A predator can come very near and not see or smell a young fawn. Deer mature at a rapid rate and are able to do their special trick of slotting relatively quickly after birth.

One of the most noticeable things about a mule deer at certain times of the year are the antlers found on the buck deer. Antlers are different than horns, since they are shed each year, while horns continually grow the entire life of an animal. They start growing in the spring and are fully developed by fall. It is amazing how fast the antlers grow. In fact, look at your fingernails. The composition of antlers and fingernails is basically the same, a chemical called keratin. It is interesting there is seldom major fighting between the bucks with their antlers. The dominant animal that is usually larger in physical and antler size is able to establish dominance without actually fighting. There may be some actual touching of antlers between two bucks, but usually not in a real aggressive manner. When fighting off predators, antlers come in handy. Even the shed antlers on the ground are good for something. They provide a food source and chewing surface for rodents such as mice and pack rats.

Mule deer are very adaptive in what they eat. They can eat a wide variety of plants including many that other types of mammals cannot easily eat. Deer are browsers as opposed to grazers. As a result they can feed on woody shrubs and other types of vegetation other than grasses. Their digestive system can process plants that are somewhat toxic and hard to digest.

So between hearing and eyesight, a peculiar method of running, special adaptations when young, the growth of antlers and flexible eating habits the mule deer is a real survivor. The next time you see one think about some of these interesting characteristics. Their calm demeanor helps make them fairly easy to see and adds to one's enjoyment of a park. One of the great things about a national park is the fact animals are protected in their natural habitat for all to enjoy now and in the future.

...continued from page 1
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9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Last tour entry—3:30 p.m.

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The park is located high atop the Ocotillo Hills overlooking the northwest edge of Carlsbad, just off Highway 285 and features exhibits, an art gallery, gift shop, and refreshments.

Area Attractions

**Living Desert State Park**
(505) 887-5516
Open daily except December 25.
Wheelchair accessible.

**Fees**
Day Use Only—$5.00/vehicle
Camping—$14.00/night
($10.00 fee for each additional vehicle driven into same site)
Primitive Camping Area—$8.00 per vehicle/night

Located 12 miles north of Carlsbad on U.S. 285, the campground has 51 sites with water and RV electric hookups (a few with sewer), a dump station, playground, restroom with hot showers, shelters, tables, and grills.

Other facilities include picnic areas with sheltered tables and grills, playground, a fishing dock, boat ramps with docks, and a visitor center.

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Children 7 to 12—$3.00
Children 6 and under—free
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**Lincoln National Forest**
(505) 885-4181

The forest encompasses 285,000 acres for hiking, caving, camping, picnicking, horseback riding, hunting and sightseeing.

Maps are available at the Guadalupe Ranger District Office located in the Federal Building, 114 S. Halagueno, Room 159, in Carlsbad.

**Sitting Bull Falls**
Wheelchair accessible.
Day use only—no camping.
Entrance fee—$5.00 per car.

Seven miles southwest of State Highway 137 on Forest Route 276, this 130 foot falls is one of the highest in New Mexico. Picnic area, trails, and restroom.

**Five Points Vista**
Eleven miles south of State Highway 137 on Forest Route 540. A panoramic view of the desert from the top of the Guadalupe Mountains. Interpretive signs explain natural features.

**Brantley Lake State Park**
(505) 457-2384
Open all year—24 hours/day.
Wheelchair accessible.

**Fees**
Day Use Only—$5.00/vehicle
Camping—$14.00/night
($10.00 fee for each additional vehicle driven into same site)
Primitive Camping Area—$8.00 per vehicle/night

Located 12 miles north of Carlsbad on U.S. 285, the campground has 51 sites with water and RV electric hookups (a few with sewer), a dump station, playground, restroom with hot showers, shelters, tables, and grills.

Other facilities include picnic areas with sheltered tables and grills, playground, a fishing dock, boat ramps with docks, and a visitor center.

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