Discovering Lechuguilla Cave
by Stan Allison

IN THIS MODERN AGE OF SATELLITE images, remote sensing and Google Earth it can be difficult to imagine discovering new places on our planet earth. Yet here at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, cave explorers are still discovering unknown passages and rooms that no satellite or other remote sensing technology can detect in a special place called Lechuguilla Cave. Lechuguilla Cave is the longest of the 89 known caves in the park. Imagine the excitement and awe we would experience if a new geyser was discovered in Yellowstone National Park that was larger than any of the previously known geysers. What if Mesa Verde National Park revealed the recent discovery of a cliff dwelling larger than any previously known containing artifacts that had never been seen anywhere else? As unrealistic as these scenarios are for the above ground portions of national parks, this is exactly what has been occurring below the surface of Carlsbad Caverns National Park for the past 21 years in a wonderful place called Lechuguilla Cave.

In 1984, Lechuguilla Cave was first documented as a bat guano mining claim. Guano was mined for use as a nitrogen-rich fertilizer for California orchards. Guano mining proved unprofitable at this location and was soon abandoned. All that the guano miners left was a guano hopper for filtering rocks out of the guano and a small test pit. The extent of Lechuguilla Cave was known to be about 500 feet long with a 30-foot deep entrance pit. Those early guano miners surely must have noticed the strong winds issuing from between the rocks, guano and dirt that filled the bottom of the entrance pit. Perhaps as they took a break from their work they wondered where all of that airflow was coming from. Certainly cave explorers visiting the cave in later years noticed the tremendous airflow and wondered about the amount of cave that must exist on the other side of the fill.

In 1984, cavers under National Park Service (NPS) supervision initiated a digging project in Lechuguilla Cave to find the source of the air. On Memorial Day weekend 1986, after digging through rubble, dust and wind for 40 feet, a breakthrough was made into large unexplored passages that just kept going and going. Those first explorers were excited, but even in their wildest dreams they probably didn't imagine the miles of cave passages, unique formations and microbes that would be found.

After 21 years of discovery and research in Lechuguilla Cave 120 miles of cave has been surveyed making it the fifth longest cave in the world. Winds more than 160 miles per hour have been recorded near the entrance, indicating that much more cave remains to be found. Lechuguilla Cave is 1,604 feet deep making it the deepest limestone cave in the United States. Although Lechuguilla Cave is longer and deeper than Carlsbad Cavern, the Big Room still remains the largest room in any cave in the U.S. Lechuguilla is the longest of the 89 known caves in Carlsbad Caverns National Park. An average of 2.5 miles of previously unknown cave is explored and surveyed every year in Lechuguilla Cave. In fact, as you are reading this article it is quite possible that someone is taking the first steps into a previously unknown passage.

Lechuguilla contains one of the world's largest known displays of selenite chandeliers in a room called the Chandelier Ballroom. Lechuguilla Cave was the first cave in the world where cave formations called helictites, previously known to only form above water were found growing under water. Large deposits of canary yellow, elemental sulfur occur in Lechuguilla that smell like firecrackers. Lechuguilla Cave contains massive gypsum cave deposits on a scale never seen...continued on pg. 3
Greetings

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. From late-October to early-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.

Traveling with a Pet?

On a warm day the temperature inside a car can kill a pet. Do not leave your pets unattended.

At Carlsbad Caverns National Park, pets are not allowed on trails, in the backcountry, in buildings or at evening programs; they are permitted in the campground.

In any national park, your pet must be physically restrained at all times.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park
400 Pine Canyon
Salt Flat, TX 79847
915-828-3251
www.nps.gov/gumo

Carlsbad Caverns
Guadalupe Mountains Association
Operates both parks’ bookstores. Books may also be purchased by mail or online.

P.O. Box 1417
Carlsbad, NM 88220
575-785-2232
www.carlsbadchamber.com

Carlsbad Caverns
1225 National Parks Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220
575-785-2232
www.nps.gov/cave

Guadalupe Mountains
3225 National Parks Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220
575-785-2346
www.nps.gov/gumo

Guadalupe Mountains National Park
400 Pine Canyon
Salt Flat, TX 79847
915-828-3251
www.nps.gov/gumo

Carlsbad Caverns
3225 National Parks Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220
575-785-2232
www.nps.gov/cave

Visitor Guide

Emergency: Call 911

Carlsbad Weather Watch
575-885-1848

Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce
575-887-6516
www.carlsbadchamber.com

Van Horn Texas Visitors Bureau
915-238-2682
www.vanhornadvocate.com/community-ad.html

Weather Conditions
Carlsbad Weather Watch
575-885-1848

Road Conditions
New Mexico: 800-432-4269
Texas: 800-452-9292

Emergency: Call 911

Volunteerism Makes a Difference

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, patrolling surface and cave trails, to trail maintenance, research, cave restoration, and more. To become a volunteer contact:

Senior Ranger Programs are a new development, currently available at limited locations, aimed at an audience that enjoys a challenge and desires. Senior Ranger programs include the booklet and patch (given upon completion of the activities). Children of any age may participate.

Junior Ranger programs 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 children to earn a patch and/or certificate 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 $3.00 to participate in the program, which includes the booklet and patch. (given upon completion of the activities). Children of any age may participate.

At Guadalupe Mountains, children 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 at the Headquarters Visitor Center located at Pine Springs. Children who complete three activities earn a badge and certificate, while those who do six earn a park in addition to the badge and certificate. There is no charge for participation in the program, but donations are always welcome.

Senior Ranger books are available at the Headquarters Visitor Center at Pine Springs for anyone 11 years and older. Activities include visiting sites, learning about the park’s history, geology, flora and fauna. Upon completion, participants earn a patch and certificate. 

Junior and Senior Ranger Programs

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 children to earn a patch and/or certificate 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.

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seen anywhere else in the world. A new formation type, Rusticules, rusty red and black stalactites were discovered in Lechuguilla Cave. No other known cave in the world contains such a wide variety and abundance of cave minerals and formations.

The cave also contains fascinating microbes that we can’t see without the aid of a microscope. These microbes have adapted to a very low energy environment where there is very little organic material and no sunlight for photosynthesis. In fact due to the extremely starved environment that they have evolved in, some of these microbes appear to be “eating” iron and manganese in the bedrock to produce carbon energy. Researchers are continuing to study these microbes and what roles they played in the past formation of the cave and what roles they play today. Some of these microbes may even prove to be useful to humans in the future as potentially new antibiotics, anti-fungals and cancer fighting agents.

For safety reasons, entering Lechuguilla Cave is limited to experienced cavers who have the skills and fitness to rappel and ascend numerous ropes into pits as deep as 300 feet and stay in the cave in established cave camps for as long as one week. To protect delicate cave formations, access is further limited to work trips such as exploration, survey and research. Some areas have hair-like filaments of gypsum that hang down as much as 15 feet from the ceiling and will move precariously from the heat of visitors and major challenges for park operations—are in temporary trailers set up in the parking lot west of the visitor center. During the renovation, all park operations will be affected by the renovation and will operate in a manner that conserves their pristine environment. What happens when you cross a group of free-tail bats. This name is a book containing excellent pictures of Lechuguilla Cave called “Lechuguilla, Jewel of the Underground.” Or try doing a web search on Lechuguilla Cave and see where your online explorations lead you.

Who knows what additional wonders you, your children and your grandchildren may one day learn about on a future trip to Carlsbad Caverns National Park due to the ongoing exploration and research discoveries in Lechuguilla Cave.

What’s in a Name?

You may hear rangers talk about Brazilian free-tail bats. You may read about them in the park’s informational brochures, books, and websites. You may hear or see the names – Mexican and Brazilian – used interchangeably. For years, people have called the area’s large colony Mexican free-tail bats. New studies suggest that we should be calling them, Brazilian free-tail bats. This name change is confusing for many, perhaps you, too.

The scientific name for Mexican (or is it Brazilian)? free-tail bats is Tadarida brasiliensis mexicana. This kind of bat is found throughout much of the southern and western United States, Central America, and western South America. Due to differences in size and habit, for several decades researchers believed that there were a handful of separate subspecies. The “Mexican” free-tail bat being one, as indicated by its last name. However, recent genetic research shows that the Tadarida brasiliensis bats across the US and Central America have the same genetic code, thus are in fact one species, not separate subspecies. (In other words, some say we should drop the mexicana part of the name.)

As is common in the scientific community, the findings are still being examined in depth. All have not agreed to adopt the idea that there are not various subspecies. So, what that means to you is that area parks, rangers, and researchers are using the terms Mexican and/or Brazilian. Keep in mind, that by any name, the famous colony of bats that emerges from Carlsbad Cavern is still the same kind of bat, no matter what it’s called. You may get a chance to see them if you are visiting between April and October.

To Lechuguilla Cave is limited to only 100 people.

The NPS Organic Act of 1916 established the dual fundamental purposes of the National Park Service “…to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Protecting resources while providing opportunities to enjoy them is the great challenge of the NPS. Carlsbad Caverns National Park manages the paved trails in Carlsbad Cavern as a place where anyone can come to enjoy the beautiful cave. Other caves, such as Lechuguilla Cave, are managed in a manner that conserves their pristine environments by only allowing a very limited number of people access. Even though very few people have the opportunity to enter Lechuguilla Cave you can enjoy the cave by taking a virtual tour of Lechuguilla Cave on a 360 degree interactive computer tour at the Carlsbad Cavern-Guadalupe Mountain Association Bookstore while visiting the park. Or you can order a copy of the CD from http://www.360parks.com or at http://www.ccgma.org. Also available in the bookstore is a book containing excellent pictures of Lechuguilla Cave called “Lechuguilla, Jewel of the Underground.” Or try doing a web search on Lechuguilla Cave and see where your online explorations lead you.

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Carlsbad Caverns Cave Tours

**Spring, Fall & Winter Hours**
- Natural Entrance: 8:30 - 2:00
- Big Room: 8:30 - 3:30
- Visitor Center: 8:00 - 3:00

**Summer Hours**
(Memorial Day—Labor Day)
- Natural Entrance: 8:30 - 3:30
- Big Room: 8:30 - 5:00
- Visitor Center: 8:00 - 7:00

**Entrance Fees**
- Adults—age 16 and older: $6.00
- Children—15 and younger: $3.00
- Free: Active Duty Military, Golden Access Passport, and Golden Age Passport
- Free for those with an NPS Passport issued in 2006 and not yet expired
- Free for those who own any of the following passes (up to three individuals plus the cardholder): Annual Pass, Senior Pass, Access Pass, National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Pass, and National Parks Pass

There is no entrance fee for those who own any of the following passes (up to three individuals plus the cardholder):
- The Annual Pass
- The Senior Pass
- The Access Pass
- The National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Pass
- The National Parks Pass

This pass is valid in 2016 and not yet expired.

Reservations
- 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: 877-444-6777 or visit www.Recreation.gov

Have a Safe Tour
- Cave temperature is 56 degrees F (13 degrees 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 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.
  - If you have an infant with you, child-carrying backpacks 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.
- Never throw coins or other objects into the pools.

Photography
- Photography is permitted on most tours; however, please use good etiquette.
- Wear 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.
- Photography is not allowed at the Bat Flight Program offered from mid-May to mid-October.

**NATURAL ENTRANCE SELF-GUIDED ROUTE**
- Length: 1.25 miles
- Fee: Entrance Fee
- This hike is similar to walking into a steep canyon (a descent of about 800 feet in one mile). It is recommended only for those physically fit and healthy, sturdy footwear required. Highlights include the Natural Entrance, Devil’s Spring, Whale’s Mouth, and Iceberg Rock.

**BIG ROOM SELF-GUIDED ROUTE**
- Length: 1.25 miles
- Fee: Entrance Fee
- This moderately strenuous tour begins with a ranger-supervised descent down a 10-foot flowstone slope using a knotted rope, followed by a 50-foot series of three ladders. Bring gloves, four AA alkaline batteries per person and optional kneepads. The park provides helmets and headlamps. The tour departs from the visitor center lobby. You will see evidence of early exploration, cave pools and beautiful formations.

**KING’S PALACE GUIDED TOUR**
- Length: 1 mile
- Fee: Entrance Fee and $8.00 Tour Ticket
- Tours depart from the Underground Rest Area. Tickets may be purchased at the visitor center; however, reservations are recommended. You will visit four highly decorated chambers: King’s Palace, Papoose Room, Queen’s Chamber and Green Lake Room. The tour guide will turn on the lights for a blackout experience. The trail is paved, however, there is a steep hill that you must walk down and then back up.

**SLAUGHTER CANYON CAVE**
- This moderately strenuous tour is through a well-decorated backcountry cave. It is mandatory for each person to bring two flashlights with fresh batteries. Penlights are not sufficient. The route is slippery, muddy and may require an ascent of a 15-foot slope using a knotted rope.

- Allow plenty of time to drive to Slaughter Canyon and 45 minutes for the steep and strenuous half-mile hike to the cave entrance. Attempt this hike only if you are in good health.
- Carry water—weather may be very hot in summer and very cold in winter. Stay on the trail and wear sturdy hiking shoes. Tours depart from the cave entrance at the scheduled time.

**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 50-foot series of three ladders. Bring gloves, four AA alkaline batteries per person and optional kneepads. The park provides helmets and headlamps. The 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 slippery passages. Bring gloves, kneepads and four AA batteries per person. We provide helmets and headlamps. Tour departs from the visitor center lobby.

**LEFT HAND TUNNEL**
- On this lantern-lit tour your guide will highlight cave 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.

**SPIDER CAVE**
- On this strenuous tour you can expect tight crawls, canyon-like passages and bizarre formations. Bring gloves, kneepads and four new AA batteries per person. The park provides helmets and headlamps. The tour departs from the visitor center for a short drive and then a short hike to the cave. Bring water for the hike.

**LOWE R C A V E S T A R T**
- On this strenuous tour you can expect tight crawls, canyon-like passages and bizarre formations. Bring gloves, kneepads and four new AA batteries per person. The park provides helmets and headlamps. The tour departs from the visitor center for a short drive and then a short hike to the cave. Bring water for the hike.

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For Reservations call 877-444-6777

<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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King's Palace</td>
<td>Paved Trail; 80' hill must be climbed on return trip</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Summer 10:11, 2 &amp; 3 Friday to Spring 10 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Adults $8, 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>Unpaved dirt trail and slippery slopes</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>$7.00 and General Admission Ticket</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>15</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 p.m.</td>
<td>$20.00 and General Admission Ticket</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>12</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>Summer 10:00 &amp; 1:00 Fall through Spring 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For Reservations call 877-444-6777

Surface Activities

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.

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.

RATTLE SNAKE SPRINGS
This historic oasis includes a picnic area, shade trees, restrooms and excellent bird watching. Located 5.5 miles south of White’s City on U.S. Highway 62/180, then 2.5 miles west to County Road 418. 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.

BAT FLIGHT PROGRAMS (SUMMER ONLY)
A few hundred thousand bats fly from Carlsbad Cavern 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, though weather and lightning can cause cancellation of the program. Check at the visitor center for the exact time the program starts or call 505-775-3082. Cameras are not allowed.

The lights and high frequency sounds made by the cameras disturb the bats. This rule is strictly enforced.

America the Beautiful—The National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Pass

GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NF ANNUAL PASS
Guadalupe Mountains National Park offers an annual pass for $20.00 for regional visitors who plan on visiting the park more than once a year, but may not visit other federal fee areas.

The pass covers entrance fees and is good for 3 individuals plus the cardholder (persons 15 years and younger are free with or without the Guadalupe Mountains NP Annual Pass). The pass is available for purchase at the park.

ANNUAL PASS
The America the Beautiful—National Parks & Federal Recreational Annual Pass replaces the Golden Eagle Passport, the National Parks Pass, and the National Parks Pass with Golden Eagle Sticker. The annual pass will be replaced each year. A Federal Lands photo contest will be held each year. The grand prize winning image will be featured on the subsequent year’s annual pass. Information on the current contest for the 2008 annual pass image can be found at http://www大家分享经验.org.

The annual pass sells for $80.00 and is good for one year from date of purchase. The pass covers entrance fees at National Park Service and Fish & Wildlife sites and standard amenity fees at Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation and Forest Service sites. The pass can be purchased at federal recreation sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.

SENIOR PASS
The new Senior Pass replaces the Golden Age Passport. Golden Age Passports will continue to be honored.

The Senior Pass sells for $80.00 and is good for life. Any permanent resident of the United States 62 years or older may purchase the Senior Pass.

It covers the entrance fees to National Park Service and Fish & Wildlife sites and standard amenity fees at Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and Forest Service Sites. Camping and guided tour fees are discounted 50% for cardholders. The pass can be purchased at federal recreation sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.

ACCESS PASS
The new Access Pass replaces the Golden Access Passport. Existing Golden Access Passports will continue to be honored.

The Access Pass is available for free to any U.S. citizen or permanent resident of any age that has been medically determined to have a permanent disability that severely limits one or more major life activities.

The Access Pass covers the entrance fees to National Park Service and Fish & Wildlife sites and standard amenity fees at Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and Forest Service Sites. Camping and guided tour fees are discounted 50% for cardholders. The pass can be purchased at federal recreation sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.

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Facilities and services within and near Guadalupe Mountains National Park are extremely limited. The nearest gas station is 32 miles west or 35 miles east of El Paso. Open every day except Christmas. Open Memorial Day to Labor Day 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Mountain Time Zone); after Labor Day, 8:00 a.m. to 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. Grounds include a picnic area near a spring shaded by large oak trees. Restroom available. Staffed intermittently.

### Hiking

#### Pinery Trail

**Distance:** 6.7 miles  
**Difficulty:** Easy, wheelchair accessible, slight incline on return trip.  
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.

#### McKittrick Canyon Trail

**Distance:** 4.8 miles roundtrip  
**Difficulty:** Moderate, level but rocky trail, 200’ elevation gain to Grotto.  
Follow an intermittent stream through the desert and canyon woodlands to the historic Pratt Cabin. A guidebook is available at the trailhead. One mile beyond the Pratt Cabin is the Grotto Picnic Area and Hunter Line Cabin. Please do not drink the water or wade in the creek. To protect this fragile environment, you are required to stay on the trail.

#### Guadalupe Peak Trail

**Distance:** 8.4 miles  
**Difficulty:** Strenuous. Approximately 3,000’ elevation gain, steep, rocky path.  
Hike to the “Top of Texas” at 8,749’ for spectacular views. Avoid the peak during high winds and thunderstorms. During warm temperatures carry a gallon of water per person.

**Trailhead**  
**Trail**  
**Distance Roundtrip**  
**Description**  
Visitor Center  
Pinery Trail  
4.7 miles  
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, slight incline on return trip.

Pine Springs Campground  
Guadalupe Peak Trail  
8.4 miles  
Strenuous. Hike to the “Top of Texas” at 8,749’ for spectacular views. Trail climbs approximately 3,000’ feet in elevation. Steep, rocky path. Avoid the peak during high winds and thunderstorms.

Devil’s Hall Trail  
9.1 miles  
Strenuous.  
Hike to the Schuler Shelter, a high-country conifer forest. Recommended route: Tejas Trail to Pine Top, Boswell Trail to Hunter Peak, Bear Canyon Trail, Frijole Trail back to campground. Trail climbs 2,500’. Bear Canyon Trail is very rocky and extremely steep.

El Capitan Trail  
11.3 miles  
Strenuous.  
Hike to the “Top of Texas” at 8,749’ for spectacular views. Trail climbs approximately 3,000’ feet in elevation. Steep, rocky path. Avoid the peak during high winds and thunderstorms.

Frijole Ranch  
Manzanita Spring  
4 miles  
Easy.  
Locate a good pool that serves as a desert oasis. Dragonflies, butterflies, and birds are active here in the warmer months. During winter, bluebirds frequent the area. Opportunities for chasing upon other wildlife are higher here as well.

McKittrick Canyon  
McKittrick Canyon Trail  
4.8 miles  
Moderate. Follow an intermittent stream through the desert and canyon woodlands to the historic Pratt Cabin. A guide book is available at the trailhead. The Grotto Picnic Area and Hunter Line Cabin is one mile beyond the Pratt Cabin. Please do not wade in the creek. To protect this fragile environment, you are required to stay on the trail.

McKittrick Nature Loop  
0.9 miles  
Easy.  
Hike to the “Top of Texas” at 8,749’ for spectacular views. Trail climbs approximately 3,000’ feet in elevation. Steep, rocky path. Avoid the peak during high winds and thunderstorms.

Frijole Ranch  
Frijole Ranch  
2.3 miles  
Easy.  
Look for birds, deer and elk as you pass Manzanita Spring on the way to the shady oasis of Smith Spring. Trees around Smith Spring include madrones, maples, oaks, chokecherry, ponderosa pines, and pines.

### 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 Senior Pass (or existing Golden Age Passport) or Access Pass (or existing 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 campsites are available for groups of 10-20 people. Reservations for group sites only can be made by phoning 915-828-3251 up to 60 days in advance. Hikers planning on hiking in McKittrick Canyon, to Guadalupe Peak or the Bowl will want to stay here.

#### Dog Canyon Campground

Located at the end of New Mexico Highway 137, 70 miles from Carlsbad and 10 miles from Park Headquarters, at an elevation of 6,290’ in a secluded, forested canyon on the north side of the park. The campground has nine tent and four RV campsites. There is one group site for groups of 10-20 people. Reservations for the group site can only be made up to 60 days in advance by calling 915-828-3251.

#### Frijole Ranch Campground

Located in the upper Frijole Canyon, southwest of the park, 4.6 miles from the visitor center. Facilities and services within and near the park trails, so be sure to bring plenty with you. There is no water available along the park trails, so be sure to bring plenty of water.

**Cabin** is the Grotto Picnic Area and Hunter Line Cabin. Please do not drink the water or wade in the creek. To protect this fragile environment, you are required to stay on the trail.

#### Firearm Regulations

Firearms are not permitted within the park.

### Backcountry

Eighty-five miles of trails lead through forests, canyons, and desert. A free permit is required if you plan to spend a night in the backcountry. Permits are issued at the Headquarters Visitor Center and the Dog Canyon Ranger Station. For those coming through Carlsbad, Dog Canyon is a great place to begin a backpacking trip because it requires less elevation gain to get into the backcountry.

**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.

Preparation is the key to an enjoyable backpacking trip. Be prepared for changing weather conditions. Carry plenty of water—there are no water sources in the backcountry. Topographic maps, hikers’ guides, and information can be found at the Headquarters Visitor Center and the Dog Canyon Ranger Station.

### Designated Backcountry Trails

- **McKittrick Nature Loop:** Easy  
- **Frijole Ranch:** Easy  
- **Pinery Trail:** Easy  
- **McKittrick Canyon Trail:** Moderate  
- **Guadalupe Peak Trail:** Strenuous  
- **Devil’s Hall Trail:** Moderate  
- **El Capitan Trail:** Strenuous  
- **The Bowl:** Strenuous  

**Weather**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Average Temperature</th>
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<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dec</strong></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average annual precipitation for Pine Springs (1980-2003): 17.4 inches**
By Sarah Renee Furtney

to 100 square miles, males generally having bigger territories than females. Because males disperse further than females and compete more directly for mates and territory, they are most likely to be involved in conflict. The size of a mountain lion’s home range and an area’s population will depend on terrain, vegetation and prey abundance. They are known to travel long distances in search of food, as much as 25 miles in one night.

Labeled as a very successful predator, the mountain lion will eat any animal it can catch, from insects to large ungulates. Throughout its range in North America, various ungulates are its number one prey item and vary from mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk and even the occasional moose. Studies on mountain lion scat collected within Guadalupe Mountains National Park show that mule deer are the most commonly consumed prey. Rabbits were also eaten with some frequency. Porcupines, minus the quills of course, are even sometimes consumed.

The mountain lion does not run long distances to catch its prey; rather it is an ambush predator. It stalks through bushes, tall grass and trees before jumping or pouncing onto its prey. They have large paws with retractable one-inch claws used for gripping power, while the lion delivers a lethal suffocating neck bite or one that paralyzes the animal by severing its spinal cord. Mountain lions can live off one large deer for up to two weeks at a time. However, a female with kittens, can have kills every three days. They drag their prey to a safe location and are known to conceal it with brush and sticks. They will revisit the site later to continue feeding. Cougars rarely scavenge and will usually not eat prey that they have not killed. Visual sightings of mountain lions are relatively rare events. They generally stay away from people. At times, if you are lucky and sight a lion, it is more likely that its approach is due to curiosity. Try to look bigger by gathering together with fellow hikers, raising your arms above your head, or opening your jacket wide. If hiking with small children, pick them up. Never run from a mountain lion or turn your back on it. Speak firmly and let the lion make its escape. If an attack seems imminent, prepare to defend yourself. Mountain lion attacks in other parts of the country have been stopped by people fighting back with sticks, rocks and even bare hands. No attacks have occurred at Guadalupe Mountains National Park. The fear of cougars is mostly based on its mysterious ways, its size and power to do harm, not its aggressiveness. In 2006, there were four sightings of mountain lions by visitors and park staff. With 174,000 people visiting in that same year, you can see the chance of encountering a mountain lion is extremely low.

Theodore Roosevelt describes it best when he said, “The cougar is large and powerful, and very capable to attack man; yet, the instances of it having done so are exceedingly rare. But it is foolish to deny that such attacks on humans never occur…It cannot be too often repeated that we must never lose sight of the individual variation in character and conduct among wild beasts.”

From the CCGMA Bookstore

The Cat with Many Names

The Carlsbad Caverns-Guadalupe Mountains Association (CCGMA) is a private, nonprofit organization whose main objectives are to provide interpretation for the park visitors and to support the purposes and mission of the National Park Service at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and the lands related to them in New Mexico and West Texas since 1957. To date, CCGMA has donated over $2.7 million to both Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks. The goals of CCGMA are accomplished through educational programs using a variety of educational media and scientific investigations resulting in a greater appreciation of those resources being conserved for this and future generations. CCGMA has five retail bookstore outlets located at Carlsbad Caverns, the Guadalupe Mountains, and the administration office building in the city of Carlsbad.

Books may also be purchased by mail or online.

PO Box 1467
Carlsbad, NM 88221
(505) 789-2466
(505) 789-2358 FAX
www.ccgma.org

Consider joining CCGMA. As a member you will receive a 15 percent discount on all purchases. This discount is extended to several cooperating associations of other national parks as well. You will also receive the CCGMA newsletter and the Visitor Guide for Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks (2 issues a year). In addition to these benefits, you will receive a free book on the work of artist Clark Cox or a coffee mug. Most importantly, your contribution helps further our mission of providing aid to these parks.

Membership (1 year) $25.00

The Guadalupe $ 4.00
Stories from Stones $ 7.95
Trails of the Guadalupe $ 5.00

Carlsbad Caverns National Park:
Worlds of Wonder $ 6.95
Lechuguilla Cave CD $ 19.95

Purchases may be made by credit card or check. Include your address and daytime phone number. If ordering by credit card include the card number, the date of expiration, and the signature of the cardholder. The following cards are accepted: American Express, Discover, MasterCard, and Visa. Make checks payable to CCGMA.

Shipping and handling charges for book orders are as follows:
$4.00 for purchases up to $15.00
$5.00 for purchases $15.00-$30.00
$6.00 for purchases $30.00-$50.00

This CD includes 20 interactive views of the park’s longest cave with interpretive text, maps, photographs with a bonus screensaver and a 3D map.

This picture book provides a general overview of Guadalupe Mountains National Park history, biodiversity, and geology. Full color photography throughout, 32 pages, 8.5 x 11 in.

Guide for Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks (2 issues a year). A thorough, but still accessible, discussion on Guadalupe Mountains’ geology. Includes sections on cave and speleothem formation. Color photography, 40 pages, 8.5 x 11 inches.

$4.00

$19.95

$6.95

$7.95

$4.00
Come face to face with a mountain lion at this unique zoo and botanical garden offering an opportunity to experience the Chihuahuan Desert firsthand. See a large collection of live animals, including the rare Mexican gray wolf, and the roadrunner, the state bird of New Mexico. There is also an unusual collection of cacti and other succulents from around the world.

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.

Open daily except December 25.
Wheelchair accessible.

Summer Hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day)
8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Last tour entry—6:30 p.m.

Winter Hours (after Labor Day)
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Last tour entry—3:30 p.m.

Fees
Ages 13 and up $5.00
Children 7 - 12 $3.00
Children 6 and under free
Group (20+) discount available.

Sitting Bull Falls
(in Lincoln National Forest)
Wheelchair accessible.
Day use only—no camping.
Entrance fee—$5.00 per vehicle.

Seven miles southwest of State Highway 137 on Forest Route 540, an improved gravel road. A panoramic view of the desert from the top of the Guadalupe Mountains. Interpretive signs explain natural features.

Open all year—24 hours/day.
Wheelchair accessible.

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

Nearby Attractions

Sitting Bull Falls
Day use only—no camping.
Entrance fee—$5.00 per vehicle.

Seven miles southwest of State Highway 137 on Forest Route 540, an improved gravel road. A panoramic view of the desert from the top of the Guadalupe Mountains. Interpretive signs explain natural features.

Located 12 miles north of Carlsbad on U.S. Highway 285, the campground has 35 RV sites with water and RV electric hookups (a few with sewer), a dump station, playground, restroom with hot showers, 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.

Open all year—24 hours/day.
Wheelchair accessible.

Fees
Day Use Only—$5.00 per vehicle
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Located 55 miles south of Carlsbad, NM on Hwy 62/180 and 65 miles north of Van Horn, TX on Hwy 54, the park offers a range of hiking trails through wooded canyons that blaze with color from late October to early November. Call 915-828-3251 for updates on the color progression.

Fees
$5.00 per person (16 years and older)

Hours
McKittrick Canyon
Through November 4, 2007
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Mountain Time)
After November 4, 2007
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Mountain Time)

The best color viewing is in McKittrick Canyon between the Pratt Cabin and the Grotto. The roundtrip distance for the Pratt Cabin hike is 5 miles and takes 2-3 hours to complete. The roundtrip distance for the Grotto Hike is 7 miles and takes 4-5 hours to complete. Both hikes are on level, but rocky trails. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

There are no restrooms available in McKittrick Canyon. Hikers must carry their own food and water. Picnic tables can be found at the Pratt Cabin and the Grotto. Please pack out all of your trash.

Weekends can be very busy. To avoid crowds, try visiting on weekdays or hiking in Devil’s Hall or Dog Canyon as alternatives.