Jewel Cave National Monument
South Dakota

Welcome!

For the past century Jewel Cave has been the center of science and world class discoveries. It is possibly the largest, longest, and most complex cave in the world. The geologic puzzles and spectacular passages hold many intrigues of exploration. Although the cave extends hundreds of miles, the current explored area is only within a few square miles.

Geology

Formed around 20-50 million years ago in the Mississippian Pahasapa (Madison) Limestone after the Black Hills uplift around 60 million years ago. Jewel Cave lies under a caprock of Pennsylvanian Minnelusa, which protects the cave from hydrologic erosion. Divided into distinct layers within the Madison, the cave cuts through paleozoic rock - primarily the southeast corner and the western end. Trips last between sixteen hours and four days. A survey camp was established to allow further exploration in the southeastern corner beyond the restricting Miseries. Through the help of organized volunteers and the Paha Sapa Grotto, Jewel Cave's surveyed length increases a few miles a year.

Jewel Cave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cave Length</td>
<td>146.18 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cave Depth</td>
<td>332.53 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years of Known Exploration</td>
<td>1900 - present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visitors per Year</td>
<td>~100,000</td>
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Speleothems

The unique setting and speleogenesis of Jewel Cave results in many extraordinary speleothems. Calcite spar covers nearly every wall. Rare hydro-magnesite balloons line passages and conulite baths rest gently in ancient chambers.

Research

Through cooperation with international universities, research institutions, and other federal agencies, Jewel Cave National Monument continues to pursue ground breaking research in karst science. Further research in the park includes an intensive geologic investigation into the faulting patterns and a paleontological flood study to correlate the role of large scale floods with the current speleogenetic model.

Access

Three tours are available to the general public: a 1/2 mile scenic tour, a 1/2 mile wild caving tour, and a 1/2 mile lantern tour. These tours allow people to see the great diversity of Jewel Cave. Jewel Cave's trip leader program provides additional access to key spots in the cave and prepares people for exploration and survey trips.

Contact Information

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