

Nature

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White Sands National Monument

The glistening gypsum dunes are about 15 miles southwest of Alamogordo, N.M., on U.S. 70. Visitor Center hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Sept. 15. Park hours are 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Last entrance is 8 p.m. Entrance fee: \$5 age 16 and older. Free for children.

Information: (575) 479-6124 or nps.gov/whsa.

Sunset strolls are offered at 7 p.m. daily.

Full Moon Hikes are 7:30 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 25**, and 6:45 p.m. Sunday, **Sept. 23**. Online reservations required, starting one month in advance; online only. Cost: \$8; \$4 age 15 and young, plus monument entrance fees.

Full Moon Night programs, with extended park hours, are 8:30 p.m. Friday, **July 27**, 8 p.m. Sunday, **Aug. 26**.

Ranger-guided Lake Lucero Tour is offered the last weekend of the month to learn about the formation of the sands and the special plants and animals that live in and around the dunes. Program fee is \$8 (\$4 age 15 and younger). Check website or call for details; reservations required, available one month prior to tour.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park

— 110 miles east of El Paso on the way to Carlsbad, the 86,416-acre park includes the highest point in Texas: Guadalupe Peak, 8,749 feet. Entry fee: \$5 for ages 16 and older, good for one week and all trails. Pine Springs Visitor Center hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. Camping is \$8 per site per night. Information: (915) 828-3251 or nps.gov.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park — The park is about 160 miles east of El Paso, off the Carlsbad Highway (U.S. 62-180). Information: (575) 785-2232 or nps.gov/cave.

Visitor Center is open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Last entry into cave via natural entrance is 5 p.m. with last entry into cave via elevator 5 p.m. (be in line to exit cave by 6:30 p.m.).

The "bat season" generally lasts through mid-October. Daily bat flight talks offered just before sunset at the amphitheater outside the natural entrance. Admission is free. Then — bats willing — visitors are treated to the sunset spectacle of clouds of bats flying out of the cave entrance. Best flights are usually in August and September.

Night Sky programs begin after the bat flight programs, and are suitable for all ages. Hike is 1/2 mile for star walks and 1.5 miles for moon hikes on a rugged desert trail. Dress comfortably (long pants recommended); no open-toed shoes. Bring water, snack, blanket or towel to lie on and red light flashlight. Rangers can provide red light headlamps. Upcoming Star Walks are **Aug. 10-11** and **Sept. 7-8**, and Moon Walks are **Aug. 24-25**. Free, but space is limited on a first come, first serve basis.

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument

— 44 miles north of Silver City on NM Highway 15 in the middle of the majestic Gila Wilderness, the first and one of the largest wilderness areas. Entrance fee: \$10 (annual park pass is \$45). Information: (575) 536-9461 or nps.gov/gicl.

The trail to the cliff dwellings is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. year round. Everyone must be off the trail by 5 p.m. Visitor center is open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Interpretive Park Ranger-led 45-minute guided tours of the cliff dwellings are 1 p.m. Friday through Sunday, at the dwellings; allow enough time to hike from the trail head to the cliff dwellings for the tour.

Special programs (advance reservations required, space is limited to 30 participants). Call for times:

• Full Moon Hikes are Saturdays, **July 28**,

Aug. 25 and Sept. 22.

• Canyon View hikes are Saturday, **Aug. 11**

and **Sept. 8**. Wear sturdy outdoor clothing and hiking boots, bring water and snack for 3-4 hour program. Strenuous hike, may not be appropriate for young children and others not familiar with off-trail hiking.

Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park

— 1504 Miehl Drive N., Carlsbad, N.M. Admission: \$5 (\$3 ages 7-12; free for 6 and under). Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (last entry at 3:30 p.m.). Information: (575) 887-5516 or livingdesertnm.org.

New Mexico State Parks

— Day-use fee is \$5 when visiting any state park. All programs are free with park entrance, unless otherwise listed. Information: (575) 744-5998 or nmparks.com.

• Oliver Lee State Park, Highway 54 south of Alamogordo at the Dog Canyon turnoff.

Information: (575) 437-8284.

Night sky viewing of "Our Planetary Neighbors" is 8 to 10:30 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 11**, and of the First Quarter Moon 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday, **Sept. 15**. Ranch house tours are 10 to 11 a.m. Saturdays and 3 to 4 p.m. Sundays.

• Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. 5000 Calle del Norte in Mesilla. Information: (575) 523-4398. Audubon Bird Walks are 7:15 a.m.

Saturdays, led by park volunteers. Ranger-led Nature Hikes are 2:30 p.m. Sundays. Fitness in Nature walks with the Second Chance Walker Program are 8:30 a.m. every Saturday beginning at the Visitor Center.

• Leasburg Dam — 12712 State Park Road in Radium Springs, two miles off Interstate 25 at Exit 19. Hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. for day use. Information: (575) 524-4068.

Music and the Stars night sky events and concerts are 6:30 to 9 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 4** and **Sept. 1**. Bird ID Walking Tours are 8 to 10 a.m. Saturday, **Aug. 25** and **Sept. 29**.

• Percha Dam State Park and Caballo Lake State Park, 60 miles north of Las Cruces on Interstate 25. Information: (575) 743-3942 (Percha Dam) or (575) 527-8386 (Caballo Lake). "Black Bears-The Lone Survivors" presentation is 11 a.m. to noon Saturday, **Sept. 1**.

• Elephant Butte Lake State Park. Information: (575) 744-5923. The Wacky Triathlon is 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 11**. NM Bass Team Trial Tournament is 5:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 25**.

• Bottomless Lakes State Park — 13 miles east of Roswell, N.M. via US 380. Information: (575) 624-6058. Enchanted Evenings talks are 8 to 9 p.m. Saturdays, **through Sept. 1**. The 32nd annual Paddle Boat races are 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday, **Aug. 4**.

Alameda Park Zoo — Alameda Park, 1321 North White Sands Blvd. (U.S. 54/70), Alamogordo. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission: \$2.50 (\$1.50 ages 3-11 and 60 and older; free for ages 2 and younger). Information: (575) 439-4290, or on Facebook at Alameda Park Zoo-AFOTZ

The oldest zoo in the Southwest (established in 1898) is part of the park that lines Alamogordo's main highway. The zoo covers about 12 acres, with about 250 exotic and indigenous animals.

The City of Alamogordo hosts free "Fourth Fridays" summer events 6 to 10 p.m. the fourth Friday of the month during the summer months (**July 27 and Aug. 24**) with live music, outdoor movie, food vendors, prizes, giveaways and more.



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