Great Sand Dunes

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Great Sand Dunes
National Park and Preserve

Pets at Great Sand Dunes

We want your visit to Great Sand Dunes to be a positive, safe experience for you and your pet. Following these common sense guidelines will protect you, your pet, wildlife, natural resources, and other visitors.

Where are pets allowed?

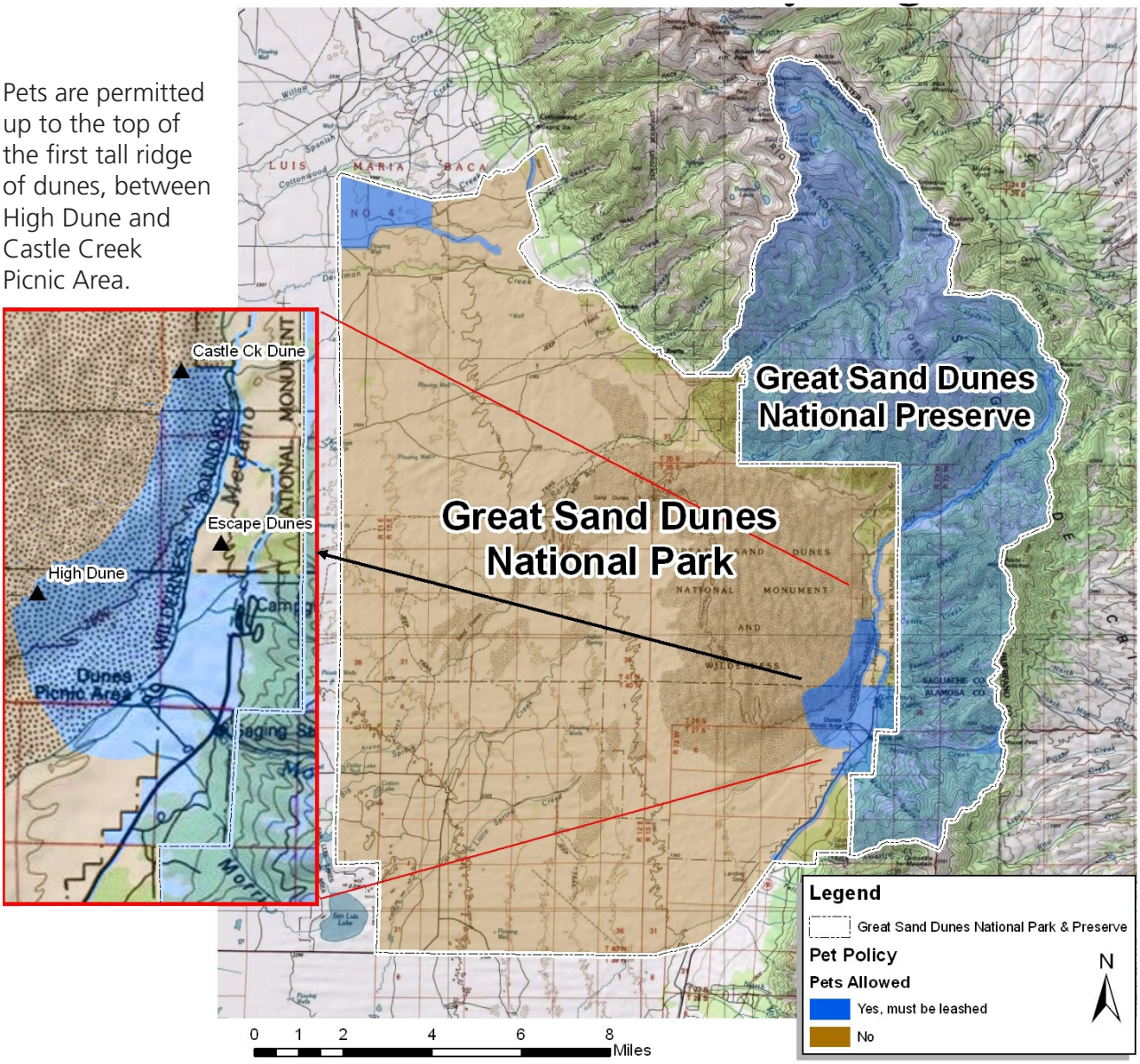
Pets are permitted in most commonly used areas of the park and all of the preserve. They must be **leashed at all times** (except for licensed hunters in season in the national preserve only), and owners must clean up after them.

Pets are **not** permitted in:

- Dunefield outside the main day use area
- Sand Ramp Trail north of Point of No Return, including backpacking sites
- Undeveloped parts of the national park outside the day use areas and road corridors

Map of Pet Areas

Pets are permitted up to the top of the first tall ridge of dunes, between High Dune and Castle Creek Picnic Area.



Your Pet's Safety

The dunes, grasslands, wetlands, creeks and mountains of the park and preserve have some potential dangers to pets. Be aware of these dangers to protect your pet.

• **Pet Safety** **For the safety of your pet, pets should not be left in a vehicle unattended. Leaving your pet unattended in vehicles creates a danger to the animal.** Summer temperatures in a vehicle can quickly soar to dangerous levels and pets left in vehicles can overheat and die. Extreme cold temperatures in the winter can also pose a grave danger to your pet.

• **Hot Sand** In summer months, sand surface temperatures can quickly get painfully hot from late morning through late afternoon. Plan to hike on the dunes in early morning or evening in summer months. If you must hike the dunes on a mid–day in summer, protect your pet's feet with socks or pet booties. Watch your pet carefully for signs of heat exhaustion. Their bodies are closer to the hot sand surface than yours is. When Medano Creek is flowing, keep your pet close to the cool, wet sand for relief.

• **Cactus Spines** The desert grasslands surrounding the dunes contain prickly pear cactus. If you walk your pet in the grasslands, walk slowly and carefully to to avoid injury to your pet from the sharp spines.

• **Dangers from Wildlife** Keeping your pet on a leash less than six feet long is the best protection against negative wildlife encounters. Pets may not be left tied to vehicles, trees or other objects. To prevent injuries, do not allow your pet to get close to a wild animal. Deer may kick, mountain lions or bears may attack, coyotes may chase, badgers may bite, and porcupines may release quills. On rare occasions, coyotes or other animals may approach your leashed pet. Raise your arms and shout loudly; coyotes will typically run away. Please report any unusual encounters to a park ranger. Never leave pet food out in your picnic site or campsite, as it may attract wild animals.

Protecting the Park and Other Visitors

All visitors come to Great Sand Dunes hoping for a safe, relaxing time surrounded by nature and wildlife. Pets, if not properly restrained and cared for, can ruin other visitors' experiences by threatening people and pets, scaring away wildlife, leaving pet waste in the creek and hiking areas, and barking in the campground or day use areas.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is one of only a few national parks that permits pets in many areas. Responsible pet ownership in the park and preserve will enable the park to continue to allow you to visit with your pets in the future. Pet owners violating park regulations may be cited and/or fined.