



Photography Before or After Hours FAQ



Many National Park Service areas may be entered any time, day or night, at sunrise or sunset to view wildlife. At White Sands National Monument we share our boundaries with the U.S. military at Holloman Air Force Base and White Sands Missile Range. Due to security issues, the monument has specific posted hours of operation. These FAQs will assist you in planning your early morning or after hours photography trip.

How do I Arrange for an Early Entry or Stay Late?

There are two ways to enter the monument before or after public hours. Option one: Register at the visitor center, which is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with extended hours during summer season, to backcountry camp at one of 10 sites. Backcountry camping is primitive tent camping following Leave No Trace principles. The sites are located in the Heart of the Dunes with a one-mile walk to the sites. No facilities and no water are available

at the campsites; there is a vault toilet and a dumpster at the trailhead. Camping fees and monument entrance fees apply.

Option two: Complete request for early entry/stay late located on our website (www.nps.gov/whsa/permits-for-special-park-uses.htm) and submit it to the coordinator via email at whsa_film_photography@nps.gov at least seven days in advance.

Required Paperwork for Early Entry or Stay Late

1) Complete and submit the request for early entry/stay late located on our website at www.nps.gov/whsa/permits-for-special-park-uses.htm at least 36 hours in advance of the date requested.

2) Read the General Conditions for White Sands National Monument. Check the box “I have read and understood these conditions.”

3) Email the request to WHSa_film_photography@nps.gov at least seven days in advance of your requested date.

4) Enter the requested date and “early entry” or “stay late” in the subject line.

5) A ranger will email the approval or denial of the request within five business days of receipt.

6) Final paperwork may be done by appointment or via regular mail.

7) Fees must be paid prior to the date either by appointment or via mail. To make an appointment, send an email to whsa_film_photography@nps.gov with “Appointment” in the subject line.

8) Questions will be answered by the filming coordinator via email.

What are the Fees Associated with Early Entry or Stay Late?

If your request for early entry/stay late is approved, there is a \$50 per hour or any part of an hour fee. For example, if you want to enter 30 minutes prior to opening, the fee is \$50 even though you are only entering the monument 30 minutes early. This fee is per hour not

per person. Payment must be done in cash, traveler cheques, cashier check, or money order for the exact amount. No personal or company checks will be accepted. Make travelers cheques, cashier check, or money orders payable to National Park Service.

What Happens on the Morning of an Early Entry?

A ranger will open the main highway gate at the requested time; however, the ranger will wait only 10 minutes. If you are late, the ranger will close the gate and go about his/her duties.

You will not be able to enter the monument and no money will be refunded. There will be only one opening per group. Please arrive on time.

What Happens on the Evening of a Stay Late?

You will provide a description of the vehicle(s) in your group (make, model, color, and license plate) on the Request for Early Entry or Stay Late form. The ranger closing the monument on the date of your late stay will clear the monument per normal procedures. At the designated time, you will meet

the ranger at the locked gates at the entrance to the monument. The ranger will open the gates for you to exit. The ranger will wait only 10 minutes. Citations could be issued if you fail to exit at the designated time. Please do not be late.

Local Contacts and Area Services

You can find a detailed list of location managers and scouts from the local area who can answer questions about

area services on our website: www.nps.gov/whsa/permits-for-special-park-uses.htm.

Distances and Travel Times

Alamogordo is the nearest town to the monument. The distance from Alamogordo on Highway 70 West to the entrance of the monument is 13 miles and takes approximately 20 minutes to drive.

at approximately four miles. This packed gypsum sand road is firm and does not require any special vehicle to continue into the dunes. Travel time from the entrance of the monument to the end of the eight mile Dunes Drive is approximately 15 minutes.

Distances and travel times in the monument: When you enter the monument from Highway 70 West, you will be traveling on Dunes Drive. Dunes Drive is eight miles one way and will take you into the Heart of the Dunes, where the tall, bright white sand dunes are located.

The speed limits in the monument start at 45 mph and drop to 35mph and 25 mph along Dunes Drive. Please obey all posted speed limits.

The road is a two-lane road with soft shoulders and pull-out areas along the drive. The paved blacktop road turns to a plowed gypsum sand road

A map of the monument with suggested areas for optimal photography can be obtained at the visitor center during normal operation hours or on our website: www.nps.gov/whsa/permits-for-special-park-uses.htm.

Sunrise/Sunset and Moonrise/Moonset Information

Please visit our website at www.nps.gov/WHSA and view the sun and moon tables under the Special Use Permits/Commercial Filming and Photography page: www.nps.gov/whsa/permits-for-special-park-uses.htm. The times listed are for our latitude and longitude. However, you will need to add seven minutes to the sunrise and moonrise times because

of the Sacramento Mountains to our east. You will need to subtract seven minutes from our sunset and moonset times because of the San Andreas Mountains to our west. "False dawn" begins approximately 45 minutes prior to the listed sunrise time. "Twilight color" lasts approximately 45 minutes after the listed sunset time.

General Information

White Sands National Monument is open to the public every day of the year except Christmas day (December 25). Our hours of operation vary according to season. All vehicles must enter the park one hour before closing time and exit when the park closes. It is recommended that visitors call ahead to confirm our opening and closing times or visit our website at www.nps.gov/whsa.

Occasionally the monument is closed for a short period of time while the White Sands Missile Range tests missiles and/or armament over the public lands of the monument. These closures can last from one to four hours and happen on an average of twice a week. Please consult the missile test portion of our website for missile closures (www.nps.gov/whsa/parknews/index.htm).
