



## White Sands Trip Planner



In the heart of the Tularosa Basin lie the glistening white sands of New Mexico. Here, wave-like dunes of gypsum sand cover 275 square miles of desert, ever changing and always advancing. White Sands National Monument preserves a major portion of the dunefield, along with the plants and animals that have adapted to this harsh environment. Visitors to southern New Mexico are invited to explore this vast, undulating landscape of brilliant white sand.

### Getting to the Monument

White Sands National Monument is located along U.S. Highway 70, 15 miles west of Alamogordo and 52 miles east

of Las Cruces. The monument is 100 miles from El Paso, via either Alamogordo or Las Cruces.

### Hours of Operation

The monument is open every day of the year except for Christmas, December 25th. Dunes Drive opens and closes at varying times throughout the year.

Visitor center hours also change with the seasons. For monument hours: Call (575) 479-6124, ext. 236, or visit [www.nps.gov/whsa](http://www.nps.gov/whsa)

### Park Closures

Due to missile testing on the adjacent White Sands Missile Range, the monument will occasionally close for brief periods of time for visitor safety.

Visitors who may be on a tight schedule are encouraged to call ahead for information on closures.

### Entrance Fees

The monument entrance fee is \$5.00 per person ages 16 and older; children 15 and under enter for free. Daily passes are valid for seven days.

Federal Recreation Passes are available for purchase at the entrance station. There are a variety of pass options. Inquire at the entrance station for more information.

### Disabled Visitors

Facilities in the picnic areas are wheelchair accessible, as is the Interdune Boardwalk. The sand dunes are wheelchair accessible to a limited degree.

Free Access Passes are available for individuals with permanent disabilities. Check at the entrance station for more information.

### Weather

Month	Avg. High °F	Avg. Low °F	Avg. Precip. Inches
JAN	57	23	0.60
FEB	64	26	0.39
MAR	71	31	0.27
APR	79	40	0.29
MAY	88	49	0.49
JUN	96	58	0.89

Month	Avg. High °F	Avg. Low °F	Avg. Precip. Inches
JUL	97	63	1.41
AUG	94	61	2.07
SEP	88	54	1.44
OCT	78	41	1.09
NOV	64	28	0.68
DEC	57	22	0.79

## Food and Lodging

There are no dining or lodging facilities within the monument. The nearest restaurants, motels, and gas stations are in Alamogordo, which is 15 miles east

of the monument. Refreshments and snacks can be purchased at the gift shop behind the visitor center.

## Seeing the Park

Your first stop should be the White Sands Visitor Center, which includes a museum, an orientation video, information desk, and the park bookstore. Allow at least 30 minutes for visitor center activities.

An eight-mile scenic drive leaves from the visitor center into the heart of the dunes. Interpretive exhibits along the

drive provide information about the natural history of the park.

Numerous parking areas along Dunes Drive allow visitors to stop and walk in the white sand. Allow 45 minutes driving time for the 16-mile round trip drive, plus additional time for stopping at pullouts, walking, and/or photography.

## Hiking in the Monument

Hiking opportunities in the park include the Playa Trail, the Dune Life Nature Trail, the Interdune Boardwalk, the Backcountry Camping Loop Trail, and the Alkali Flat Trail.

\*Playa Trail: Easy, level hike that leads to a small playa (length: .5 mile).

\*Dune Life Nature Trail: Family friendly, nature trail (length: one mile).

\*Interdune Boardwalk: Wheelchair-accessible boardwalk which offers great views of the Tularosa Basin (length .36 mile).

\*Backcountry Camping Trail: Explore the backcountry area of the dunes (length: two miles).

\*Alkali Flat Trail: Challenging and scenic hike into the heart of the dunes. Recommended for experienced hikers only (length: five miles).

## Ranger-Led Activities

Ranger-guided sunset strolls are offered daily year round. Additional programs are offered on weekends and during the summer. Check at the visitor center for the day's activities and specific times.

Monthly events include Lake Lucero tours (once a month November through April) and Full Moon Nights (May

through October). Inquire at the visitor center for specific dates and times.

Organized groups can arrange for ranger-led bus or walking tours any time of year by contacting the monument a minimum of two weeks in advance. Visit [www.nps.gov/whsa](http://www.nps.gov/whsa) for information.

## Picnicking and Camping

There are picnic areas with sheltered tables along Dunes Drive and are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

No water is available anywhere along Dunes Drive. Please fill up water containers at the public water faucet located near the visitor center.

There are no RV or tent campgrounds in the park. Information on area

campgrounds can be found at the visitor center.

Backpackers have the option of using one of our ten primitive campsites. Please stop by the visitor center upon arrival to get a backcountry camping permit. Please call ahead to inquire about the cut-off time, restrictions due to missile testing, and site availability. Call (575)479-6124, ext. 236.

## Park Regulations

\*White Sands National Monument is a protected natural area. Removal or disturbance of archeological or natural objects, including sand, selenite crystals, plants, and animals, is prohibited by law.

\*Stay on the road and park only in established parking areas.

\*Driving on the dunes is not permitted.

\*Speed limits are posted and enforced.

\*Alcohol is prohibited within the park from February 1st through May 31st. Beer kegs and glass bottles are prohibited year round.

\*Ground fires are prohibited.

\*Metal detectors and fireworks are prohibited.

\*Pets are welcome but must be leashed and under control at all times. Please pick up after your pet.

## Safety Tips

\*Pull off the road into an established parking area before stopping.

\*Remember to keep vehicles locked at all times.

\*Please help keep White Sands clean by using the provided trash containers.

\*Pick sledding spots carefully. Never sled near or into the road, and look out for plants.

\*Sledding and sand surfing can cause injuries —be careful.

\*Hiking alone is not recommended.

\*When hiking, bring water, food, sunscreen, and a hat. Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return.

\*Off-trail hiking is not recommended because it is easy to become disoriented.

\*Do not tunnel into sand dunes. Tunnels collapse easily and can cause suffocation.