



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Jewel Cave
National Monument

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Jewel Cave National Monument News Release

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Jewel Cave Schedules Off-Season Wild Caving Tours

Custer, SD - Jewel Cave National Monument is offering Wild Caving Tours during the winter season. Formerly called Spelunking Tours, the dates for the trips include the following: December 15, January 19, and February 16. Reservations are required and can be made up to 28 days in advance of the listed dates; however, the reservation deadline for each date is the Wednesday prior to the scheduled tour.

Wild Caving Tours offer a three to four-hour trek that takes participants off-trail within Jewel Cave. The tour is strenuous, and all cavers are required to fit through an eight and one-half inch by 24 inch opening. Participants must be eighteen years of age or older; however, young adults sixteen or seventeen are allowed on the tour with parental approval. The tour begins at 11:30 a.m. and concludes around 4:00 p.m.

Superintendent Larry Johnson states, "Even though Jewel Cave is one of the longest caves in the world, one of its most impressive traits is the idea of the cave being an undiscovered frontier. By measuring the volume of air leaving the cave on low pressure days, we suspect that only three to five percent of the cave has been mapped and surveyed. Jewel Cave is vast and complex resource, and wild caving tours offer participants a sense of exploration unmatched by most visitor experiences."

The Wild Caving Tour takes participants through maze-like openings, offering glimpses of rare cave formations. As compared to other parks and monuments, the wilderness areas of Jewel Cave lie mostly underground. Even more significant, the vast majority of visitors never witness this natural beauty within the third longest cave of the world.

Wild Caving Tours are limited to five participants on each trip. Interested cavers will be placed on a first come first serve basis. Johnson further comments, "Wild caving tours are an exciting way for visitors to experience the thrill of discovery. During the winter season, we hope some of our local outdoor enthusiasts will take advantage of these tour opportunities."

Jewel Cave National Monument also offers two Scenic Tours each day, occurring at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Scenic Tours are one hour and 20 minutes in length and take participants on a one-half mile guided hike through the cave. Discovery Tours take place at 9:05 a.m. 12:45 p.m., and 3:45 p.m. and consist of a 20-minute educational presentation inside the cave. The Monument will be closed on Christmas Day (December 25) and New Year's Day (January 1).

For Wild Caving Tour reservations and other tour information related to times and ticket fees, contact the visitor center at (605) 673-8300 and select Option 1. Jewel Cave National Monument can also be visited online at www.nps.gov/jeca. The visitor center is currently open from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (MST).

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