



Fact Sheet



What is found in this National Park?

Mammoth Cave National Park encompasses 52,830 acres in south central Kentucky and protects the diverse geological, biological and historical features associated with the longest known cave in the world. Above the cave, the surface landscape highlights rare plants and dense forest, a diverse aquatic ecosystem in the Green and Nolin Rivers, and hallmark geologic features of a classic karst terrain. Great Onyx Job Corps Center, under the U.S. Forest Service, is located in the park on the north side of the Green River.

What is the history of this place?

Native Americans discovered Mammoth Cave about 4,000 years ago and continued to use it for 2,000 years. In the late 1790s settlers “rediscovered” the cave, and during the War of 1812 slaves mined saltpetre from the cave sediments to be used in the manufacture of gunpowder. Tours began in 1816, increasing the cave’s notoriety, and drawing visitors in ever greater numbers. Over a century of private ownership and exploration of the cave followed.

Then, in 1926, Congress authorized the formation of a national park in the Mammoth Cave area to protect the caves, hilly country, and scenic river valleys typical of south central Kentucky. The park was officially established on July 1, 1941. It later gained World Heritage Site designation in 1981, and became the core area of an International Biosphere Reserve in 1990.

What is there to do in the park?

The park has 14 miles of developed cave trails, 31 miles of the Green and Nolin Rivers to canoe and fish, 101 miles of roads to drive, and 80 miles of hiking trails, some for horses and bikes. Visitors can participate in ranger-led cave trips and surface walks, campfire programs, and children’s activities. They can hike, picnic, backpack, camp, ride horseback, bike, boat and fish. School groups can participate in the Environmental

Education program, or go on a regular cave tour. Reservations are strongly recommended for cave trips and are required for school group programs. Concessioners operate canoe and horse liveries. Overnight accommodations and a camp store are available within the park. Many facilities are handicap accessible.

How much cave is down there?

Nobody knows. To date, the Cave Research Foundation (CRF) had mapped and surveyed more than 390 miles of passage, but exploration and re-survey continue. In addition to exploring and mapping the cave, CRF also contributes to our knowledge of the cave through many research projects.

On average how do people use the park?

Each year: 650,000 visitors in the park
400,000 visitors on cave tours
50,000 visitors in the campgrounds
18,000 backcountry visitors

6,500 horseback riders
3,000 bicyclists
12,000 hikers
10,000 boater/canoists

What lives in the park?

Mammoth Cave National Park protects native Kentucky plants and animals that are found either underground or in surface habitats.

In the cave: 130 animal species use the cave on a regular basis, some as visitors and some for their entire life cycle. Twelve species are eyeless, unpigmented cave dwellers. These include freshwater cave shrimp, fish, crayfish, beetles and harvestmen. Three are endangered species – Kentucky cave shrimp, Indiana bat and Gray bat. All call Mammoth Cave home.

On the surface: While most of the park consists of second-growth woodland, a number of special plant communities – (upland ponds,

prairie remnants, hemlock groves and sinkhole microclimates) harbor many of the park's rare species. The park's diverse plant communities support deer, raccoon, opossum, gray squirrel, rabbit, woodchuck, muskrat, beaver, fox, coyote, hawks, owls, and wild turkey – just to name the most common creatures.

In the rivers: The Green River supports more than 100 species of fish (drum, bluegill, catfish, bass, muskie). More than 50 species of freshwater mussels (six endangered species) live in the river sand, gravel and mud. This bounty of life makes the Green River one of the most biologically diverse river habitats in the National Park System.

Where is the Park located?

Mammoth Cave National Park is located in southcentral Kentucky between Elizabethtown and Bowling Green along Interstate 65, via the Cave City and Park City exits.

For those using onboard navigation:

Physical Address:
1 Mammoth Cave Parkway
Mammoth Cave, KY 42259

Lat/Long:
N 37° 11' 13.115" | W 86° 06' 05.197"

Decimal Degrees:
+37.186976 | -86.101444

UTM (Zone 16N, NAD83):
579779.491 | 4115977.605 m

What's the weather like?

Kentucky has a moderate climate, characterized by warm, yet moist conditions. Summers can average in the mid-90s(F), while winters average in the low 40s(F). Much of the park's average annual 52 inches of precipitation falls in the spring. Storms occur year-round, through most occur March – September.

Year-round, the cave temperature in interior passages fluctuates from around 54°(F) to 60°(F). Winter temperatures, however, can be below freezing at the cave entrances.

What does it take to run this park?

Mammoth Cave National Park receives a congressional budget of approximately \$6.5 million per year. The park collects an additional \$4.0 million in fees for cave tours and camping. Eighty percent of the fees collected (\$3.2 million each year) is spent on facility improvements such as visitor center renovations, campground/picnic area upgrades, and trails for hiking and biking.

The park is managed by 89 permanent employees with an additional 70-75 seasonal/temporary staff hired in the summer. Individuals and groups often volunteer to help with various park projects; Volunteers-in-Park contribute 25,000-30,000 hours of work annually to the park.

How can I get more information?

For park information, call (270)758-2180 or write:

Superintendent
Mammoth Cave National Park
1 Mammoth Cave Parkway
P.O. Box 7
Mammoth Cave, KY 42259-0007

For general information go to the park website: www.nps.gov/macaca

For cave tour, campground, and picnic shelter reservations, contact ReserveAmerica at (877)444-6777 or reserve online at: www.recreation.gov.