

# Craters of the Moon

National Park Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Craters of the Moon National  
Monument and Preserve

## Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve



Craters of the Moon is a vast ocean of lava flows with scattered islands of cinder cones and sagebrush. The lava landscape is the result of periodic eruptions along the Great Rift, a chain of cracks and fissures nearly 52 miles (83 km.) long running north to south through the monument. A series of Hawaiian-style eruptions over the past 15,000 years has produced lava tubes, cinder cones, and a variety of lava flows that are accessible from the 7 mile (11 km.) loop road.

We invite you to explore this "weird and scenic landscape" where yesterday's volcanic events likely to continue tomorrow...

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### Climate

The park is situated in the high desert of southern Idaho. Summer days are warm and dry, with afternoon winds being the norm. Winters are cold—daytime highs rarely break the freezing mark. Craters of the Moon receives most of its 15 inches (38 cm.) of precipitation during the winter, primarily in the form of snow. Against this backdrop of barren lava and little moisture a surprising diversity of plants and animals survive here.

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### Safety

The lava is extremely sharp and abrasive. Wear sturdy shoes and watch your step. The summer months are dry, hot, and windy. Carry drinking water if you plan to be out for more than an hour. A reliable flashlight is needed for all caves.





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## Things to Do

**Visitor Center** – Begin here with films, exhibits, and schedules for ranger-led walks and evening programs. The Craters of the Moon Natural History Association bookstore is located in the visitor center.

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### Camping

There is a 51-site campground among the lava formations beyond the visitor center. Campsites are equipped with a picnic table and grill, with running water and restrooms nearby. There are no hookups, showers, or dump station. Because wood is scarce in this volcanic desert, wood fires are prohibited in the campground. Charcoal for cooking is for sale at the visitor center. Campsites are available on a first come, first served basis. However, the campground rarely fills, and finding a campsite is usually not a problem.

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**North Crater Flow** – A short trail (.3 mi/0.5 km) crosses one of the youngest flows to monoliths—crater fragments rafted here by lava flows. A nearby longer trail (3.5 mi/5.8 km) winds through the vent of North Crater and exits at the Spatter Cones/Big Craters parking lot.

**Devils Orchard** – Island-like lava fragments stand in a sea of cinders. Take the spur road and short walk (.5 mi/0.8 km, accessible) through these weird features. Learn about human impacts on the park, and how the park is being protected today.

**Inferno Cone** – From atop this cone (a short, steep .5 mi/0.8 km walk) you see cinder cones lined up along the Great Rift. Big Cinder Butte, towering above the lava plain to the south, is one of the world's largest basaltic cinder cones.

**Spatter Cones and Big Craters Area** – Take the short accessible trail to view these miniature volcanoes. You can also view the spectacular Big Craters by hiking a steep .5 mi/0.8 km portion of the North Crater trail that branches off to the west.

**Trails to Tree Molds, Broken Top, and Wilderness** – A spur road just past Inferno Cone leads to this trailhead. View the imprint of lava-charred trees along the Tree Molds Trail (2 mi/3 km). Broken Top Trail (self-guiding) circumnavigates a cinder cone (2 mi/ 3 km). The Wilderness Trail leads to molds of upright trees called lava trees (8 mi/6.4 km) and the wilderness area beyond.

**Cave Area** – See lava tubes—Dewdrop, Boy Scout, Beauty, and Indian Tunnel—via a .5 mi/1 km trail across the lava. In all but Indian Tunnel you must carry flashlights and extra batteries. **Warning:** exploring these natural, wild caves can be dangerous. Stay out of the hazardous sections marked with signs or barriers.

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