A Land of Many Stories

The southern Idaho parks capture the long history of this region, a story that has been shaped by the movement of water and lava, as well as the movement of people over many thousands of years. Some of the oldest remnants date back about 2.5 billion years, when the most ancient granite of City of Rocks was formed.

Much younger stories are recorded in the rock layers of Hagerman Fossil Beds, exposed along the steep bluffs above the Snake River. Ancient but familiar fossil creatures offer clues to a wetter climate that existed here 4 to 3 million years ago. Now-extinct species of horses, ground sloths, mastodons, and saber-toothed cats thrived in lush grassland and woodland habitats that have long since turned to sagebrush steppe.

The Shoshonean peoples, or Newenee, have called this place home since time immemorial, moving with the seasons across vast plains of sagebrush and lava, through mountains, and along the winding Snake River. The Newenee were here to witness the series of volcanic eruptions that formed Craters of the Moon. The last of these took place only 2,000 years ago, leaving behind a scenic landscape of lava flows, cinder and spatter cones, and caves.

As emigrants passed through southern Idaho on the historic Oregon and California Trails in the mid-1800s, they left behind signatures on the granite at City of Rocks and wagon ruts at Hagerman Fossil Beds. Some of the newcomers settled here and began to transform the landscape, and the Shoshonean peoples too found their lives irreversibly changed.

Decades later, at the beginning of the Second World War, thousands of Japanese Americans were removed from their homes along the West Coast and incarcerated at sites like Minidoka. Today, the historic site shares the stories of survivors and commemorates the Nisei who courageously served in the armed forces.

Today, these four parks help us better understand some of the complicated national and global issues we now face, from a changing climate to civil rights. They also offer opportunities for rest, connection, and recreation. Enjoy hiking, camping, birding, caving, rock climbing, and more!

To make the most of your visit, plan ahead and arrive prepared. Check the last page of this guide for important safety information and park regulations to know before you go. The following pages also offer introductions to the four park sites, but be sure to check park websites or contact a ranger for the most up-to-date information.

One App, All Parks

Download the official National Park Service app, available free for iOS and Android.
City of Rocks

Hidden in the Albion Mountains of southern Idaho, City of Rocks rises quietly from the shadows like an ancient city in ruins. Granite spires towering 700 feet and giant monoliths of timeless age stand guard around Circle Creek Basin. Silence is common here, though the land tells many stories.

City of Rocks has been managed in close partnership with Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation since 1988. Today the partners work to preserve the story and artifacts of the California Trail (1843–1882), including views and landscapes, ruts, and signatures. New interpretive waysides exhibits, created in collaboration with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, help to tell this nationally-significant story of emigration into the homeland of the Shoshonean peoples.

City of Rocks was a place of rest and recreation long before it became a climbers’ destination. Generations of local residents have played, picnicked, hunted, and camped here. The reserve has also become an outdoor classroom to study some of the oldest exposed rock west of the Mississippi River. Scientists are also discovering that the reserve is uniquely located at a biogeographic crossroads, where plants and animals of three unique ecosystems collide.

City of Rocks is open year-round. Stop by the visitor center in the gateway community of Almo for more information and resources.

Things to Do

- **Hiking**
  - Explore 22 miles (35 km) of hiking trails through this unique landscape. Trail maps are available at the visitor center.

- **Rock Climbing**
  - Explore over 600 climbing routes, ranging in difficulty from 5.6 to 5.14. Guidebooks are available at the visitor center.

- **Birding**
  - One of the top birding destinations in Idaho, with 183 documented species! Visit the park’s website to download a free checklist.

- **Historic Sites**
  - View remnants of the California Trail and the signatures left in axle grease by emigrants in the mid-1800s.

Craters of the Moon

President Calvin Coolidge described Craters of the Moon as, “a weird and scenic landscape, peculiar to itself,” when he established the original monument in 1924. In 1970, Congress created the Craters of the Moon Wilderness, the first to be designated in the National Park system. Just a few years ago, the monument was recognized as an International Dark Sky Park for its spectacular stargazing. Craters of the Moon continues to be a strange and wonderful place that inspires lasting impressions.

The park contains three young lava fields formed by volcanic eruptions originating from a 52-mile long tear in the earth’s crust, known as the Great Rift. Eruptions began about 15,000 years ago and continued until only 2,000 years ago. The resulting volcanic features appear to have happened yesterday and will likely continue tomorrow.

The combination of harsh, young volcanic terrain and the extremes of a high desert climate have produced a diversity of habitats. The plants and animals that live here display remarkable adaptations that allow them to survive and thrive. Craters is home to a variety of birds, rodents, and larger mammals like deer and pronghorn.

Start your adventure at the visitor center, then drive the 7-mile (11 km) Loop Road for trails, caves, and stunning views!

Things to Do

- **Scenic Driving**
  - Drive the scenic 7-mile (11 km) Loop Road. Enjoy views from the car, or stop along the way to hike, stroll, picnic, and more.

- **Hiking**
  - From short, paved trails to moderate-difficulty hikes, there’s something for everyone! Check the park website or app, or ask a ranger for trail information.

- **Stargazing**
  - Stay up late for spectacular stargazing and astrophotography opportunities at this International Dark Sky Park.

- **Caving**
  - Explore the park’s caves, formed by underground rivers of lava. To protect bats, pick up a free permit from the visitor center before entering any cave.
Minidoka

Minidoka National Historic Site stands as a site of conscience and reflection in the Magic Valley.

A sentry guard tower, a historic military checkpoint station, and a barbed wire fence symbolize the unjust incarceration of over 13,000 Japanese Americans in the Idaho desert. Across the street, a World War II Honor Roll remembers those who served this country in the face of racial discrimination. The historic root cellar, mess hall, and barrack interpret a story that meets at the intersection of agriculture, civil rights, and community.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized the exclusion and forced removal of over 110,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Allowed to bring with them only what they could carry, families were incarcerated in detention centers and later in concentration camps. Minidoka was one of these concentration camps.

We invite visitors to come and experience Minidoka for themselves. During the summer season, explore the visitor center exhibits, view the park film, and take a park ranger led tour of the historic buildings. Visitors may also enjoy a self-guided tour along our 1.6-mile (2.5 km) trail with outdoor exhibit panels. The historic site is open daily from sunrise to sunset.

Hagerman Fossil Beds

Hagerman Fossil Beds is world-renowned for its Pliocene-aged fossils. These ancient animals date to 4 to 3 million years ago and include the famous “Hagerman horse,” a predecessor of modern horses. Other notable finds include now-extinct species of mastodons, saber-toothed cats, beavers, otters, giant ground sloths, pecaries, tiny rodents, and a wide variety of birds.

Set aside for paleontological research in 1988, the fossil beds offer a world-class setting to conduct research. The fossils uncovered here can better enable the scientific community and the public to understand changing climates both past and future. Due to the fragile and hazardous location of the fossil beds, this area is closed to the public.

The new Thousand Springs Visitor Center, opened in Spring 2022, offers an information desk, ranger talks, and new fossil exhibits.

We are proud to partner with Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation for the construction and operation of the new visitor center. These six state park units of Thousand Springs offer excellent opportunities for hiking, kayaking, birding, and more.

Starting in late 2022, camping will also be available at the Billingsley Creek unit. Stop by the visitor center or visit parksandrecreation.idaho.gov for more information.

Southern Idaho National Parks | Guide to the Parks | Summer 2021/2023
Know Before You Go

Help protect your parks while you enjoy a safe and memorable visit. Regulations vary by site. Contact parks for additional information.

Leave What You Find
Collecting rocks and any other natural or cultural resources is prohibited. Instead, take photos of the interesting objects you find.

Leave Drones at Home
Operating unmanned aircraft is prohibited within all parks.

Know Where Pets Can Go
Pets are welcome on roads, in campgrounds, and in parking areas on a leash. Pets are not allowed in visitor centers or on trails. Please clean up all pet waste. Leashed pets may enjoy trails at City of Rocks only.

Keep Wildlife Wild
Help keep animals wild and healthy by not approaching or feeding them.

Be Smart with Fire
Help prevent wildfires. Check locally for fire restrictions. Ensure that grills and campfires are supervised at all times and extinguished completely when finished.

Off-Trail Hiking
Hiking off-trail is prohibited in some areas. Always check regulations and use caution when traveling over uneven and fragile terrain.

Bicycle Use
Permitted on roads at all four parks. Bicycles may not be used on any trails except at City of Rocks.

Backcountry Use
Permits are required for overnight backcountry use. Obtain free backcountry permits at visitor centers.

Cave Permits
In order to protect sensitive bat populations, a free permit is required to enter caves at Craters of the Moon. Obtain permits at the visitor center.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY: DIAL 911

Distance and Driving Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City of Rocks</th>
<th>Craters of the Moon</th>
<th>Minidoka</th>
<th>Hagerman Fossil Beds</th>
<th>West Yellowstone</th>
<th>Jackson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>City of Rocks</strong></td>
<td>150 mi</td>
<td>80 mi</td>
<td>110 mi</td>
<td>260 mi</td>
<td>245 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craters of the Moon</strong></td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>4.25 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minidoka</strong></td>
<td>90 mi</td>
<td>100 mi</td>
<td>40 mi</td>
<td>265 mi</td>
<td>245 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hagerman Fossil Beds</strong></td>
<td>110 mi</td>
<td>100 mi</td>
<td>40 mi</td>
<td>295 mi</td>
<td>125 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Yellowstone</strong></td>
<td>180 mi</td>
<td>100 mi</td>
<td>40 mi</td>
<td>255 mi</td>
<td>125 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jackson</strong></td>
<td>260 mi</td>
<td>190 mi</td>
<td>40 mi</td>
<td>265 mi</td>
<td>125 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jackson</strong></td>
<td>260 mi</td>
<td>190 mi</td>
<td>40 mi</td>
<td>255 mi</td>
<td>125 mi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Navigation Notes — Be careful with digital navigation

The City of Rocks entrance and visitor center are located south of the businesses in the town of Almo, off of U.S. Highway 77.

The Craters of the Moon visitor center and Loop Drive are located on U.S. Highway 20/26/93. There is no access to the visitor center via any unpaved roads.

Minidoka National Historic Site, known locally as Hunt Camp, is located near Jerome, Idaho off of U.S. Highway 25 and Hunt Road. It is not located in Minidoka, Idaho.

The Hagerman Fossil Beds visitor center is in the town of Hagerman on U.S. Highway 30. The monument’s trails and overlooks are located along the Snake River on Bell Rapids Road, south of Hagerman.

Fees and Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City of Rocks</th>
<th>Craters of the Moon</th>
<th>Minidoka</th>
<th>Hagerman Fossil Beds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entrance Fees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reserve:</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>$20/vehicle or federal pass</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Park:</td>
<td>$7/vehicle</td>
<td></td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Campgrounds

| City of Rocks: | Lava Flow Campground: 42 RV & tent sites (first-come, first-served only) | None |
| City of Rocks: 64 RV/tent/group sites | Group campsite (by reservation only)** | Camping available at Billingsley Creek starting in 2022. Check park website for more information. |
| Castle Rocks State Park: 38 RV & tent sites (Reservations accepted*) | |

Ranger Programs

The Southern Idaho parks offer a variety of ranger talks and tours, including Junior Ranger programs. Some programs are only available seasonally or on weekends. Check park websites or contact park staff for a current schedule of programs.

Become a Junior Ranger

Earn a special badge or patch! Request a Junior Ranger booklet at any visitor center.

* Reservations for City of Rocks and Castle Rocks can be made at IdahoStateParks.ReserveAmerica.com or by calling 888-922-6743.
** Reserve the Craters of the Moon group campsite at Recreation.gov or by calling 877-444-6777