



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 Surpasses the 150th Mile Mark

Jewel Cave surpassed 150 miles of mapped and explored passageways this past weekend. Three exploration teams entered the cave on Saturday morning, February 27 and spent between twelve to twenty hours underground. The teams surveyed different areas of the cave, and combined together, their measurements totaled 3032.65 feet. Added to the existing 149.55 miles, the additional length means the cave exceeds the 150-mile mark.

Volunteers from Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Utah, and the local area comprised the survey teams. One team worked mainly in the Cloudy Sky Room, located in the central portion of the cave. Another group surveyed Hobgoblin's Ballroom located in the northwestern part of the cave. The third team focused its efforts in the southeastern part of the cave in an area called the Ant Farm. Dan Austin, volunteer cave explorer, states, "The fact that we mapped over one-half mile of cave passages in one day supports our understanding that Jewel Cave extends well beyond the boundaries of our current comprehension. Even at 150 miles, it is assumed that mapped passages only account for about three percent of the overall length of the cave."

At 150 miles, Jewel Cave continues to be the second longest cave in the world. It follows Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, which is more than 367 miles in length. Wind Cave is close behind with 133.96 miles, which makes it the third longest cave in North America and fourth longest cave in the world. Optymistychna Cave in the Ukraine measures 143 miles, making it the third longest cave in the world.

Acting Superintendent, Mike Tranel, comments, "Jewel Cave is truly a significant and unique resource within the National Park System. The complexity of the cave system makes it truly world class, and it continues to inspire exploration and discovery." Jewel Cave uses volunteer cavers within its Resource Management Program. The National Park Service continues to learn more about its resources beyond the typical public tours. Tranel further states, "Jewel Cave will likely offer future generations of cavers opportunities for exploration well beyond our lifetime."

In celebration of the 150-mile achievement, the Monument is offering Wild Caving Tours for interested visitors on Saturday, March 13 and Saturday, April 10. Both off-trail tours take place in the late morning and afternoon hours, lasting about three to four hours in length. Participants are required to pass through a cement block that measures eight and one-half inches from top to bottom and 24 inches from right to left. Reservations are required and can be made up to 28 days in advance by calling the visitor center at (605) 673-8300 and selecting Option 1. Tickets are sold on a first come first serve basis.

For additional Monument information, contact the visitor center at (605) 673-8300 and select Option 2. The Monument can also be visited online at www.nps.gov/jeca. The visitor center is open through the winter season from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (MT).

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