



**-National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

Jewel Cave  
National Monument

11149 US Hwy 16  
Building B12  
Custer, SD 57730  
605-673-8300 phone  
605-673-8397 fax

---

## Jewel Cave National Monument News Release

Release Date: **February 19, 2015**

For Immediate Release

Contact: **Bradley Block / Chief of Interpretation / [bradley\\_block@nps.gov](mailto:bradley_block@nps.gov)**

### **Jewel Cave Surpasses the 175-Mile Mark**

Custer, SD – Volunteer cavers entered Jewel Cave on Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup> for a four-day exploration trip to discover new passages. By Sunday evening, they had surveyed enough footage to surpass the 175-mile mark. On average, about five miles of new cave are mapped and surveyed each year. Yet, this milestone extends the continued excitement of exploration and discovery at one of the longest caves in the world.

The cavers focused their efforts near a new camp site, established in the western branch of Jewel Cave this past fall. Over the past few months, cavers have been finding many large passages heading off the current “edge” of the map into unknown territory. The objective of this recent trip over Valentine’s Day Weekend was to continue mapping in this new area beyond a constriction point called The Southwest Splinter.

The cavers spent four hours on the first day hauling 15-pound camp packs into West Camp. Splitting into two groups, they spent the remainder of the day mapping nearby passages. The following day, the cavers explored a section of cave two to three hours south from West Camp, in areas named Crosscut Boulevard and Crushing Deep. Due to the holiday weekend, the group named one of the newly discovered passages “The Heartland Express.”

On day three, one team continued to explore an area about three hours south of West Camp and found the passages too tight for human entry or the passages ended abruptly. Yet, this same group discovered a new “low point” for Jewel Cave, measuring 677 feet. The second team found an interesting wall of crystalline stalagmite “fins,” which was aptly named “The Great Wall.”

John Black, Acting Superintendent, states, “This past weekend’s trip reflects the significance of Jewel Cave. Not only does the mapping and surveying lengthen the cave’s overall mileage, but the new discoveries extend its relevance as one of the great frontiers in the natural world.” The total surveyed amount for the trip was 6,557.65 feet; the actual cave length is officially 175.175 miles. However, there are still over 100 passages (leads) left to be explored in this new area.

Jewel Cave National Monument is currently open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., during the winter months and early spring season. For more information, visit the Monument online at [www.nps.gov/jeca](http://www.nps.gov/jeca) or call the visitor center at 605-673-8300.

- Over -

---

**EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



Caption: Volunteer cavers surveyed the 175-mile mark at Jewel Cave over Valentine's Day Weekend. Front row left to right are Carl Bern and Dan Austin. Back row left to right are Blasé Lasala, Ian McMillan, Rene Ohms, and Chris Pelczarski.

- NPS -

*About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 405 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).*

---

**EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.