



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie
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Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve News Release

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For Immediate Release
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Holiday Visitor Events at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve



NPS Photo (Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve)

During the Thanksgiving 2009 holiday weekend, visitors to Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve were treated to a wealth of opportunities to enjoy traditional ranching period holiday season activities along with highlights among the prairie environment. No turkeys were spotted on the weekend, even though occasionally they are spotted in the area. Substituting tour buses instead of a sleigh and absent red noses due to the exceptionally warm weather, interest in the special activities was high. All bison bus tours were filled by reservation a week before the tours began.

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NPS Photo (Kristen Hase)



NPS Photo (Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve)

The October 21, 2009 arrival of 13 head of bison onto the Flint Hills area was an occupation that has not been observed in over 140 years. With the reintroduction has been brought an excitement and interest to the natural resources of the area. On Friday, November 27th, six buses filled with 148 visitors eager to view the new bison residents, toured the prairie. The bison cooperated and availed themselves to be seen among the hills and valleys of the plains. The seven male and six female bison, ranging in age from 1.5 to 2.5 years, came to the preserve from Wind Cave National Park, which manages one of only two known public bison herds without evidence of historic cattle interbreeding. The 13 animals will be the parent herd for the preserve. The desired maintained herd size of 100 bison is expected to be reached in 8 to 12 years. The iconic and majestic animals, a keystone species of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, have also brought some prairie magic for the holiday season.

On Saturday, November 28th a little over 180 visitors participated and experienced the Spring Hill Ranch at the height of the holiday season. Set among the 1880s historic structures, the ranch buildings were decorated with cedar boughs, natural berries, and buck brush. The lively ranch house was filled with the aroma of cedar, orange peel, cinnamon sticks, and 1880s period costumed characters enjoying a holiday party, including a recitation of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, and playing historic music.

The Spring Hill Ranch house and grounds will be decorated for the holidays through December 31st. While bus tours normally are stopped at the end of October each year, the outpouring of interest with the Nov. 27 tours has prompted review of park operations. More bison bus tour opportunities in December are being made available. Pending weather conditions, bison bus tours will be given at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. on December 26 & 27. For those interested in taking bison tours, call 620- 273- 8494 for reservations (encouraged) and walk- ins are welcome. Bison are also available for viewing by those willing to hike into the area any day of the week.

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