



Park Statistics

Administration

- In 2018, 603,008 visitors to White Sands National Monument spent \$32,192,000 in communities near the monument. That spending supported 443 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$37,145,000.
- In 2019, 608,785 people visited White Sands National Park/Monument.
- White Sands is the most visited National Park Service unit in New Mexico.
- Annual Budget: Appropriated funds are \$1,648,000 in fiscal year 2019.

Facts & Figures

- White Sands National Park was established in 2019 by congressional legislation, the previous designation of White Sands National Monument was created in 1933.
- Built by the Works Progress Administration, the historic complex construction began in 1936 and was completed in 1938 at a cost of \$31,600 (value 1938 dollars).
- 8 adobe structures, including the visitor center, were officially designated as the White Sands National Monument Historic District in 1990 and is an excellent example of Spanish pueblo-adobe.
- Backcountry camping with 10 sites, recording approximately 4,239 campers in 2019, 3 picnic areas, and 5 hiking trails totaling about 9 miles (14.5 km)

Landscape & Geography

- The dunefield is so large it can be seen from space.
- Size and dimensions of the gypsum dunefield in the Tularosa Basin:
$$176,000 \text{ acres} = 275 \text{ sq. mi} = 442 \text{ sq. km}$$
$$10 \times 30 \text{ mi} = 16 \times 48 \text{ km}$$
- Percentage of dunefield within the park:
$$41\% \text{ of the entire dunefield is protected by the park, which is equal to: } 115 \text{ sq. mi} = 185 \text{ sq. km} = 73,600 \text{ acres}$$
- 59% of the dunefield is on White Sands Missile Range.
- Highest point in the park is 4116 ft. or 1,255 m above sea level (asl) at NE 30, which is a former military installation.
- Lowest point in the park is 3887 ft. or 1,185 m asl at Lake Lucero.
- Depth of gypsum sand across most of the field is 30 ft. (9 m) below interdunal surface.
- The highest dunes are approximately 60 ft (18 m) high.
- The dunefield has about 4.5 billion tons of gypsum sand, which is enough to fill 45 million box cars—a train long enough to circle the earth at the equator over 25 times
- When filled with water, Lake Lucero covers approximately 10 square miles (16 sq. km) at a depth of two or three feet.

Research

White Sands National Park is currently the research site for 14 active permits providing data for projects still in progress.

Researchers at White Sands National Park are studying topics such as:

- The interaction of Ice Age megafauna and humans through the study of fossilized footprints (trackways) - a globally significant finding.
- Adaptation of animals to living in the white dunes, including comprehensive studies of lizards, moths, plants, and mammals.
- Wind and weather patterns within the monument, and its effect on dune movement, sand transport, and dust storms.
- The formation and movement of dunes using LiDAR and other remote sensing technologies.
- Hydrology and groundwater movement within the monument and its role in the creation of gypsum and stabilization of the dunes.
- The formation of gypsum and other evaporite minerals that make up the dunes within Lake Lucero and Alkali Flats.

Universities, agencies, and NGO's conducting research at White Sands include: Yale University, West Virginia University, United States Geologic Survey, New Mexico State University, University of California at Berkeley, University of Arizona, and others.

Plants & Animals

Over 300 plants, 250 birds, 50 mammals, 30 reptiles, 7 amphibians, and 1 fish species call White Sands National Park their home.

White animal species found in the monument include 3 reptiles, 2 amphibian, 3 mammals, and numerous insects.

At least 80 species are endemic, meaning they are only found at White Sands and nowhere else on earth. These include: Apache pocket mouse, White Sands wood rat, bleached earless lizard, two camel crickets, 60 species of moths, 2 spiders, 2 grass hoppers, 5 gypsum loving plants and 5 soil crusts.

Paleontology

In 2014, the park was officially designated as a megatrack site, protecting the most extensive Late Pleistocene megatrack site in the world. The site protects such ice age megafauna as the giant ground sloth, mammoths, camelids (camel-like), large canines interpreted as dire wolf and American lion or saber tooth cat. In 2017, human fossilized foot prints were confirmed as was the coexistence of humans with giant ground sloth and mammoths. This is unique in the fossil record to date and makes White Sands one most important track sites in the world today.

Cultural History

The park has documented over 10,000 years of more recent human history. For example, over 4,000 thousand gypsum hearth mounds, unique to White Sands, have been located and were used as roasting pits for various native plants and foods.

Evidence of thousands of years of human occupation represents the significance of the area and White Sands National Park, and the Tularosa Basin continue to be historically and culturally significant to this day.

