



## White Sands Trip Planner



In the heart of the Tularosa Basin lie the glistening white sands of New Mexico. Here wave-like dunes of gypsum sand cover 275-square miles of desert, ever changing and always advancing. White Sands National Monument preserves a major portion of the dunefield, along with the plants and animals that have adapted to this harsh environment. Visitors to southern New Mexico are invited to explore this vast, undulating landscape of brilliant white sand.

### Getting There

White Sands National Monument is located along U.S. Highway 70, 15 miles west of Alamogordo and 52 miles east

of Las Cruces. The monument is 100 miles from El Paso, via either Alamogordo or Las Cruces.

### Hours of Operation

The monument is open 364 days a year. The Dunes Drive opens at 7:00 am and closes one hour after sunset.

Visitor center hours change with the seasons. Call ahead for hours of operation.

### Park Closures

Due to missile testing on the adjacent White Sands Missile Range, the monument will occasionally close for brief periods of time for visitor safety.

Visitors who may be on a tight schedule are encouraged to call ahead for information on closures.

### Entrance Fees

The monument entrance fee is \$3.00 per person 16 and older; children 15 and under are free. Entrance passes are valid for seven days.

Federal Recreation Passes are available for purchase at the entrance station. There are a variety of pass options. Inquire at the entrance station for more information.

### Disabled Visitors

Facilities in the picnic areas are wheelchair accessible, as is the interdune boardwalk. The sand dunes are wheelchair accessible to a limited degree.

Free Access Passes are available for individuals with permanent disabilities. Check at the entrance station for more information.

### Weather

Month	Avg. High °F	Avg. Low °F	Avg. Precip. Inches
JAN	57	23	0.60
FEB	64	26	0.39
MAR	71	31	0.27
APR	79	40	0.29
MAY	88	49	0.49
JUN	96	58	0.89

Month	Avg. High °F	Avg. Low °F	Avg. Precip. Inches
JUL	97	63	1.41
AUG	94	61	2.07
SEP	88	54	1.44
OCT	78	41	1.09
NOV	64	28	0.68
DEC	57	22	0.79

<b>Food and Lodging</b>	There is no dining or lodging within the monument. The nearest restaurants, motels, and gas stations are in Alamogordo, which is 15 miles east of	the monument. Refreshments and snacks can be purchased at the gift shop behind the visitor center.
<b>Seeing the Park</b>	Your first stop should be the White Sands Visitor Center, which includes a museum, an orientation video, information desk, and bookstore. Allow at least 30 minutes for visitor center activities.  An eight-mile scenic drive leaves from the visitor center into the heart of the dunes. Interpretive exhibits along the	drive provide information about the natural history of the park.  Numerous parking areas along the Dunes Drive allow visitors to stop and walk in the white sands. Allow 45 minutes driving time for the 16-mile round trip, plus additional time for walking, photography or stopping at pullouts.
<b>Hiking in the Monument</b>	Hiking opportunities in the park include the Dune Life Nature Trail, which is a family friendly one-mile self-guided nature trail.  The Interdune Boardwalk is wheelchair-accessible and offers great views of the Tularosa Basin.	The one-mile backcountry loop trail is perfect for those looking to explore the heart of the dunes.  The Alkali Flat Trail is a 4.6 mile round trip backcountry trail through the heart of the dunes and is recommended for experienced hikers only.
<b>Ranger-Led Activities</b>	Ranger-guided sunset strolls are offered daily year round and start one hour before sunset. Additional programs are offered on weekends and during the summer. Check at the visitor center for the day's activities.  Monthly events include Lake Lucero tours (year round) and full moon nights	(May through October). Inquire at the visitor center for more information.  Organized groups can arrange for ranger-led bus or walking tours any time of year by contacting the monument a minimum of two weeks in advance. Call 575-479-6124, ext. 236 for information.
<b>Picnicking and Camping</b>	Picnic areas with sheltered tables are located along the Dunes Drive and are available on a first-come, first-served basis.  No water is available anywhere along the Dunes Drive. However, there is a public water faucet available for visitors to refill containers near the picnic tables at the visitor center.  There are no RV or tent campgrounds	in the park. Both public and private campgrounds are available in the area. Information on these campgrounds can be found at the visitor center.  For backpackers, there are ten primitive backcountry campsites available in the park. Please go to the visitor center upon arrival to get a backcountry camp site permit at least an hour before sunset.
<b>Park Regulations</b>	White Sands National Monument is a protected natural area. Removal or disturbance of archeological or natural objects, including sand, selenite crystals, plants and animals, is prohibited by law.  Stay on the road and park only in established parking areas.  Driving on the dunes is not permitted. Speed limits are posted and enforced.	Alcohol is prohibited within the park from February 1 through May 31. Beer kegs are prohibited year round.  Ground fires are prohibited.  Metal detectors and fireworks are prohibited.  Pets are welcome but must be leashed and under control at all times. Please pick up after your pet.
<b>Safety Tips</b>	Do not stop on the roadway. Pull off the road into an established parking area before stopping.  Remember to keep vehicles locked at all times.  Please help keep White Sands clean by using the provided trash containers and fireplaces.  Pick sledding spots carefully. Never sled near or into the road.  Sledding and sand surfing can cause injuries—be careful.	Hiking in groups of two or more is recommended.  When hiking, bring water, food, sunscreen, and a hat. Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return.  Off-trail hiking is not recommended because it is easy to become disoriented.  Do not tunnel into sand dunes. Tunnels collapse easily and can cause suffocation.