

Important Tips

Taking Great Photos in the Dunes

By Erv Nichols,
Volunteer Park Guide

Anyone can take good pictures at White Sands—if you have a camera, film or digital, a way to push the shutter and lots of batteries. It's such a unique, fascinating place that it can't be helped! **Great** pictures, however, require the same techniques and way of looking at things that pros have learned.

Time of day

Most professionals know the golden hours are around two hours after sunrise and the same before sunset. Every day is different. Sometimes there are crystal clear views of the surrounding mountains, sometimes awesome cloud formations that change hues by the minute. The Sacramento Mountains to the east are especially beautiful just after the sun dips below the horizon. They are bathed in a pink afterglow followed by the rise of the earth's shadow. Set your ISO high enough to keep your shutter speed at 125th of a second or higher, and take a deep breath before pushing the shutter.

Look for untouched places

If you want the complete experience of the dunes, find an area with little, if any, human presence. Open your senses to the vastness around you. It not only relieves stress, but also helps you see the world in a different perspective and light. Speaking of light, take your camera off auto at least part of the time and experiment with different exposures. The dunes are highly reflective and give a false reading to your camera sensor. The interdunal areas are great places to find animal tracks and rugged, gnarly plant growth.

Change your point of view

* Climb high! Hike to the top of the highest dune around—the highest ones are toward the end of the road—and look around you.

* Get down! Drop to your knees and look up. Low-angle yuccas against the sky are a favorite of mine. The delicacy of the dune grasses is another.

* Get close! The patterns left in the sand by wind blowing grasses and leaves are fascinating. Sometimes you will find the tiny tracks of a darkling beetle (better known as a stink bug) just waiting to be recorded; sometimes you find the actual beetle.



Just before sunset



Pristine dunes



A different point of view

Want to be a VIP?

By Sandra Noll, Volunteer Park Guide

Do you enjoy travel, exploring, learning, and connecting with special places? Do you have hobbies you'd like to pursue in a new setting, such as photography, hiking or stargazing? Do you enjoy meeting new people from around the world and sharing the wonders of our national parks with them? If your answer is "yes" to any of these, you could make a great VIP—Volunteer In Parks!

For the past five years, my partner and I have served as volunteers in national parks and other nature-related sites from Alaska to the Texas gulf coast. Although we like a nomadic lifestyle, live in an RV and generally volunteer for 3-month periods, that sort of commitment isn't required. You don't even need to have an RV; many parks provide housing for volunteers. If you'd rather stay close to home and volunteer for a short term, your time and contributions would be valued, too. There are a variety of opportunities for VIPs!

Here at White Sands, for instance, RV and resident volunteers are scheduled to work about 32 hours per week, which includes time for planning and projects. Some of us join rangers and local volunteers at the front desk, greeting visitors, sharing information about the park, and working with kids to become "Junior Rangers." Others work on construction or maintenance projects. Given time to learn about the animal and plant life and special geology and geography of the dunes, volunteers also lead Sunset Strolls and tours.

How great is that? It is my "job" to explore all corners of the park and learn as much as I can about this unique place. Then, I get to share its special features with visitors from all over the world. Plus, I can build on my hobbies, such as photography and writing, to work with rangers on publications and programs. Best of all, I have time to explore the many nuances of White Sands and this fascinating part of the Southwest.

Want VIP status? Ask for more information at the visitor center.



A volunteer leading the Sunset Stroll

Staying Safe at White Sands

By Jacqueline Aguilera, Intern

Visiting White Sands National Monument is an exciting experience, but it is very important to safely enjoy the park. Please take a moment to read through the safety tips below.

- Stay hydrated! Water is very important. Each individual should have at least one gallon of water per day. Sledding and hiking in the dunes is fun, but it is easy to become dehydrated.

- Be sure to wear a hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses. Apply sunscreen to all exposed areas. Sunburns are common because the white sand reflects the sun. Wear light-colored clothing. This will help keep your body cooler on hot summer days. Clothing should be loose long sleeves and pants.

- Rest often and out of the sun. All of the picnic tables are shaded. While you are taking a break, be sure to drink water to help your body recover from the heat.

- Be sure to eat plenty to keep your energy up. Bring high-energy foods, such as granola bars with you.

- Spring is our windy season. High winds can cause hikers to get lost since the wind will erase all of your footprints in the dunes. In addition, high winds lower visibility. Orient yourself to landmarks in the park before leaving the trailhead and during your hike. Take a compass, GPS, map, and mirror (easy way to shine in the sun to indicate your location) with you while hiking. This will help you find your way back to your vehicle. If you become lost, either dial 911 from your phone or call 575-679-2599, ext. 206 and sit on top of a high dune. Do not continue to wander. Conserve your energy.

- Be cautious of lightning storms, which can occur even in the absence of rain. If you are in the dunefield during a lightning storm, take cover in a solid, closed-door building like our restrooms or in your vehicle. If you are not near any of these shelters, lay flat between dunes. Remember "If you hear thunder roar, go indoors."

- If you see any wildlife, be sure to observe from a distance. Do not touch or feed any animals. Be cautious of sticking any body parts into burrows or holes.

- Digging holes into the dunes is fun, but keep in mind that the dunes move. Digging holes can cause them to collapse on you and cause suffocation.

- Absolutely no off-road driving. This not only causes resource damage but is unsafe for all visitors.

- Stop by the visitor center for more safety information.

White Sands

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



White Sands National Monument

Footprints

Spring/Summer 2011



The Galapagos Islands of North America

In the heart of the Tularosa Basin lie the glistening white sands of New Mexico. Here, wave-like dunes of gypsum sand rise from an ancient lake bed, covering 275 square miles of desert. The dunes grow, crest and slump, always advancing and ever-changing. They make up an ecological island whose uniqueness is similar to that of the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador.

Here in this harsh environment, a number of plants and animals have adapted to survive. From the bleached earless lizard to the soaptree yucca, many forms of life live and thrive in the gypsum dunes, each with its own method of coping with life in a virtually waterless world.

White Sands National Monument preserves a major portion of the dunefield, along with the plants and animals that make this place their home. Visitors to southern New Mexico are invited to explore this vast, undulating landscape of brilliant white sand.

A Warm Welcome from the Superintendent

Welcome to White Sands National Monument! It's our pleasure to share this special place with you. We hope while you're here you take the time to enjoy what makes White Sands unique. Slip off your shoes and climb a dune, go hiking, or enjoy a picnic. Make sure to read the safety tips on page 8.

White Sands is one of nearly 400 national parks across the United States. National parks preserve America's most important natural areas and historic sites. They represent our national heritage and define who we are as Americans.

We are always striving to make White Sands a better place for our visitors. If there is something we can do to make your experience better, please don't hesitate to fill out a comment card, which is available at the visitor center or entrance station. Also, please feel free to send me an email at the address below.

Kevin Schneider
Superintendent
WHSA_Superintendent@nps.gov

Junior Rangers

Hey, kids! Would you like to have some fun while you explore White Sands? Then why not become a Junior Ranger? It's free, and you'll even earn a badge or patch! For more information and some fun activities, see page 7!

In Interpretation...

The visitor center has a new orientation video! Stop by the information desk to find out when it will be playing.

From Resources...

Want to know more about some of the amazing research going on in the monument? See page 6 for a glimpse at a few of the research projects being done in the dunefield.

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Monument Information

Footprints

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

The sand, plants, crystals, and animals of the monument are national treasures.

We know it is tempting to take home a souvenir, but even attempting to remove natural objects from within the monument is not just a matter of taking home a small bag of sand or a really cool selenite crystal. It's also a matter of robbing others of the chance to enjoy those things, too.

And, if that's not bad enough, consider that it is also a violation of federal law (36 CFR 2.1) that carries with it a hefty fine and can result in criminal charges!

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, CALL 911 OR (575) 437-2210 24-hours a day
During monument hours, contact a park ranger by calling the visitor center at (575) 679-2599, ext. 236 or the entrance station at ext. 206.

Information and Services

Dunes Drive
The Dunes Drive is open from 7 a.m. until one hour past sunset, but can be closed due to missile testing or inclement weather. Please call ahead to confirm road conditions or check the website at www.nps.gov/whsa.

Fees
Monument entrance fees are \$3 per person 16 and older; children 15 and under are free. Federal park passes are accepted and are also available for purchase at the entrance station.

Accessibility
The visitor center, auditorium, museum, gift shop, restrooms and boardwalk are wheelchair accessible. Inquire at the visitor center for additional programs or other ways in which we can accommodate you.

Backcountry Camping
Vehicle camping is not allowed in the park, but 10 primitive backcountry sites are available for \$3 per person per night. Ask in the visitor center to obtain a permit. First-come, first-served; no advance reservations.

Pets
Pets are permitted within the monument but must be leashed and under control at all times; you are required to clean up after your pet. Pets are not permitted inside any buildings.

ATVs and Off-Roading
ATVs and other off-road vehicles are not allowed in the monument. Driving on the dunes or interdunal areas is strictly prohibited. Violators will be fined.

Alcohol
Alcohol is prohibited in the park from Feb. 1st through May 31st. It is allowed the remainder of the year.

Visitor Center
The visitor center and gift shop are open 364 days a year, closing only on Christmas Day. Hours of operation vary by season. Please call for specific times or for information on missile closures.

Restrooms
Restrooms are located in the small building next to the visitor center. For your convenience, pit toilets are also provided at the picnic areas, Dune Life Nature Trail, Boardwalk, and Evening Program Area gate.

Bicycles
The Dunes Drive is open to visitors who would like to ride their bikes through the monument. For safety reasons, a permit is required. Inquire in the visitor center or at the entrance station to obtain one.

Picnic Areas
There are three established picnic areas in the monument, complete with canopied tables and grills. These picnic sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Tables cannot be reserved in advance.

Recycling
Containers for glass, aluminum, and plastic recyclable items are located in front of the visitor center and near the entrance to the gift shop. Help keep the park clean and place your recyclables in these receptacles.

Sledding
Sledding on the dunes is allowed in the loop portion of the Dunes Drive, where there is little to no vegetation. When choosing a sledding location, make sure you will not be sledding into the road. New and used sleds are available for sale in the gift shop. Visitors who return their sleds with a receipt can sell them back for a portion of the purchase price.

Missile Tests and Road Closures

From time to time, White Sands Missile Range performs missile tests that may close Highway 70 to traffic. Depending on the nature of the testing, they may also require us to close the Dunes Drive for a few hours. During these times, the visitor center remains open. Visitors are invited to view the museum exhibits or peruse the bookstore and gift shop while they wait for everything to reopen. If you are planning on traveling to White Sands National Monument and would like to know if either the highway or monument are closed, call us at (575) 679-2599, ext. 236.

Are horses allowed in the monument?

Visitors are welcome to ride their horses in the monument. We do, however, ask that you do not ride on any established trails or through any of the picnic areas. We also require that a permit be filled out for each horse trailer you bring. You can pick up the permit in the visitor center on the day of your visit.

Become a Junior Ranger

Explore. Learn. Protect.

That's the Junior Ranger motto. Why? Because while exploring, you'll discover amazing new places and things.

During your explorations, you and your family will learn about the national parks you visit and experience things that each of you will remember for a lifetime.

Finally, after you've discovered the wonder of our National Parks, you will understand why they need to be protected and know what you can do to help protect them for future visitors.

So, how do you become a Junior Dunes Ranger at White Sands? Just stop by the information desk in the visitor center and ask for a free activity book. Then, once you've finished it, bring it back to the desk to be sworn in and receive your certificate and choice of a badge or patch!



THE OFFICIAL EMBLEM OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The Arrowhead is the official emblem of the National Park Service and is proudly displayed in all national parks. On building entrances, official vehicles, and rangers uniforms, the Arrowhead identifies National Park Service people and places. The emblem is designed to represent the plants, animals, land, waters, and history protected and preserved through the National Park System. Can you find each of these things on the Arrowhead?

Earn Your Badge with a Ranger this Summer!

Saturdays at 9 am
June 18 through August 6, 2011

Join a ranger on the visitor center patio for fun activities and become a Junior Ranger while learning about White Sands. The program is approximately one hour. *Parents must remain with their children at all times.*

Word Search

Can you find the words listed below?

Adapt	W	G	Y	P	S	U	M	D	U	E	N
Animals	X	H	F	O	L	A	N	H	U	A	I
Avalanche	O	C	I	D	E	E	N	R	X	K	S
Basin	M	A	P	T	U	Z	A	D	L	I	A
Desert	S	V	J	X	E	N	U	E	S	T	B
Dunes	L	A	A	U	G	N	I	S	L	E	S
Gypsum	I	L	C	E	E	R	O	E	A	M	F
Kit Fox **	Z	A	R	S	A	W	G	R	M	A	O
Lizard	A	N	Q	P	D	W	K	T	I	S	X
Map	R	C	V	S	A	X	Q	L	N	B	V
Playa	D	H	N	T	P	L	A	Y	A	P	E
Ranger	W	E	E	B	T	N	G	O	L	E	R
Safety	X	R	A	Y	T	E	F	A	S	O	L
Sands											
Water											
White											

**HINT:
You'll need to look for "kit" and "fox" separately!



Web Rangers

www.nps.gov/webangers

No time to do an activity book? Then become a Web Ranger through the online interactive Junior Ranger Program. Print out your personalized membership card, select your ranger station, and have fun learning about your favorite National Parks!

In the Heart of the Dunes

New Research at White Sands National Monument

By David Bustos, Chief of Resources

As New Mexico's most-visited park, who would think anything new could be found at White Sands National Monument? At first glance the landscape appears bleak and devoid of life, but a closer look reveals tremendous diversity, including a high number of endemic plants and animals, traces of prehistoric giants, amazing geological features that are being compared to Mars, and incredible hidden interactions within the unique soils of the monument. The sheer size of the world's largest pure white gypsum dunefield has allowed for amazing new discoveries.



Of all the new discoveries, the most surprising have come from the hidden interactions of the microbes that live in and feed on the gypsum soils, and the microbes that are associated with the root system of plants (endophytes) from the monument.

These endophytes allow the plants to be extremely drought and saline tolerant. Through new research, it has been found that by introducing these microbes to the root systems of other plants, they can take on these same traits, allowing them to also become highly drought and saline resistant.

As the need for antimicrobial resistance increases as antibiotics become less effective, the search for novel antimicrobial agents is of great importance. Some of the newest research at the monument is focused on the antimicrobial properties of the microorganisms that live within the gypsum soils and their incredible ability to repair themselves. It is believed that there is a wealth of knowledge to come from these microorganisms.

It is astonishing to think that so much has been discovered in a place that at first glance would appear to be a barren dunescape. New discoveries are waiting to be found over every dune, so next time you have a chance to visit, bring a camera and stay alert. Who knows what you will find?



Protogygia whitesandsensis



Euxoalfontainei

Over the last three years, two research volunteers have made incredible discoveries of new species at White Sands National Monument. In a paper recently published in the online journal *Zoo Keys*, Dr. Eric Metzler and Dr. Greg Forbes described two of the species as new to science and are working on describing 14 others. One of the two species, *Protogygia whitesandsensis*, the White Sands Moth, was named in honor of the unique habitat of the monument. Metzler and Forbes also have documented more than 450 species of moths new to the monument. A few other discoveries that have occurred through this study include a transparent bee, a pure white leaf hopper, and a wasp with white eyes.

When Does the Desert Bloom?

By Don Leibel, Volunteer Park Guide

There is no single "best time" to see desert wildflowers as different types of plants bloom at different times. At White Sands National Monument, flowers bloom later than those in the surrounding desert foothills due to the pool of cold air from the mountains that settles into the Tularosa Basin at night.

Annual wildflowers: Most begin blooming around the middle of April. Common early bloomers include Wright's verbena, yellow evening primrose, and slender green thread. Some of these continue to produce flowers throughout the summer, especially after monsoon-season rains in July and August.



Wright's verbena

Mountain Peppergrass, also called Pepperweed, is an often-overlooked white-flowered mustard. It grows throughout the dune margins. As the hardest wildflower in the park, it is also the first to bloom in the spring, around March 1st, lasting throughout the summer and into the fall. Pepperweed has been seen in flower in the park during every month of the year.

Cactus: The red flowers of the claret cup hedgehog cactus start appearing in late April and extend through mid-May. Those around the visitor center will usually bloom a week or so earlier than those out in the dunes. Chollas bloom much later than the claret cups. Cane cholla (the tall, branching cholla with magenta flowers) usually blooms in mid-May, when the claret cups are fading. Christmas cholla usually blooms in early June.



Claret cup cactus

Yucca: Soap tree yucca begins blooming in late May and extends through mid-June. The tall torrey yucca that grow in front of the visitor center do not grow in the sand dunes but are native to the Northern Chihuahuan desert. They usually bloom in late March.



Yucca blooms

Cottonwood trees: The Rio Grande cottonwood trees bloom in early March, and the first leaves appear in early April. Their beautiful fall color display is usually the last week of October through the first week of November.



Rio Grande cottonwood

Fall wildflowers: A number of flowers do not bloom until after the summer rains. Starting in late August, several members of the sunflower family, including rabbitbrush, jimmyweed, and prairie sunflowers, begin to bloom. Tall purple-flowered asters and orange-flowered globemallows are also fall bloomers that may continue to bloom into November.



Globemallow

Need a postcard or maybe a book?



Ask for a membership form at the visitor center desk.

WESTERN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1938, aids and promotes the educational and scientific activities of the National Park Service.

WNPA members save 15% on purchases in the parks and on our website at www.wnpa.org.

¡Bienvenido!

¡Como tener la mejor experiencia en White Sands National Monument!

By Julia Treu-Fowler, Park Guide

Ocho cosas para aprovechar durante su visita a la zona de dunas de yeso más grande del mundo:

1. Ir a un programa o caminata con un guardaparques. Hay muchas oportunidades para conocer más que las dunas blancas. Hay la caminata de Lake Lucero, un Sunset Stroll, un programa de la luna llena, charlas en el patio y un programa de guardaparques jóvenes para niños. Para planificar y atender todos nuestros programas súper interesantes por favor revisa nuestro calendario de eventos.
2. Ver la película nueva sobre White Sands National Monument en el centro de visitantes. La película se puede ver en español o inglés y dura 17 minutos. Se puede ver la película cada media hora cuando está abierto el centro para visitantes.
3. Tener una barbacoa o picnic con la familia en las áreas de picnic. Hay tres áreas para tener su barbacoa o picnic: Roadrunner, Yucca y Primrose. Las áreas de picnic tienen mesas cubiertas que provienen sombra y barbacoas para carbón.
4. Hacer una gira del parque en coche por la vía de Dunes Drive. Ida y vuelta de Dunes Drive solo es 26 kilómetros. Si no se detienen en el parque no dura más que 45 minutos para conocer.
5. ¡Pasearse sobre un trineo! Si no se paseó en las dunas sobre un trineo no se puede decir que estuvo en el White Sands National Monument.
6. Fotografía del amanecer, cactus y flores silvestres.
7. Observando animales silvestres y/o sus huellas.
8. Se prohíbe remover o alterar todo objeto, ya sea natural o arqueológico, tales como cristales de selenita, plantas, arena o animales. Por favor ayude a mantener limpia la arena usando los asadores y los basureros existentes. Las condiciones naturales de las dunas pueden ser peligrosas. No haga túneles en la arena, ya que se colapsan fácilmente y pueden asfixiar rápidamente a quien sea atrapado dentro.



An Intern's Tale

By Jacqueline Aguilera, Intern



Cha Cha representing White Sands at the Upward Bound Program in July 2010

Hello and welcome to White Sands National Monument! My name is Jacqueline Aguilera, although I prefer to go by Cha Cha—it's a nickname I've had since I was born. Currently, I am a fourth-year student at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), majoring in Environmental Science with a concentration in Biology. As part of my major, I am doing my internship at White Sands.

So how did I do it? Last year I went to my advisor and asked him what I needed to do to get an internship. He gave me several ideas, ranging from doing research in a lab to going out and doing field studies. As I was leaving his office that day, he stopped me and said, "Hey, why don't you become a park ranger?" My next question was, "What is a park ranger?"

After he filled me in on what interpretive park rangers do, I knew without a doubt that that was what I wanted to do for my internship. My advisor sent me an e-mail from White Sands National Monument, detailing their available summer internships. I didn't waste any time! I immediately contacted the Chief of Interpretation, applied, interviewed, and accepted the position for the summer.

White Sands National Monument hired me through the Youth Internship Program, which targets area college students who speak Spanish and are interested in careers with the National Park Service. I learned a lot about myself, and it really opened my eyes. It gave me the opportunity to think "outside the box" in regards to career choices and what I wanted to do with my life.

Taking this internship was the best decision I've ever made. As an interpretive ranger, I am able to help visitors in the visitor center and tell them all about White Sands, develop and lead interpretive programs such as sunset strolls, swear in Junior Rangers, and create posters, flyers, and other publications. And I wasn't limited to interpretation, either! At various times during the summer, I also got the chance to work in Resources, Maintenance, and Law Enforcement. While helping out in Resources, I went out into the dunefield and made sure areas in the park were maintained. I helped the Maintenance Division make sure the trails were maintained and safe for visitors. I also got to ride around with Law Enforcement and learn how to protect the visitors and our resources. Working with all of these different divisions matched perfectly with my major. I was already well-informed about nature, and this internship just improved my knowledge with scientific explanations and gave me a chance to apply what I know.

I loved my time at White Sands. The knowledge and experience I gained during my time here are invaluable. I strongly suggest that students who are searching for an internship look into opportunities with the National Park Service. It might just be exactly what you're looking for, and you never know what doors it could open!

Things to Do

2011 Schedule of Events



Sunset Strolls

Take a leisurely one-hour, ranger-guided walk through the sand dunes and learn about the geology, plants, and animals of this unique area. Offered daily one hour before sunset.

Balloon Invitational

Watch balloons of all sizes and shapes float over the dunes.
Saturday, Sept. 17
Sunday, Sept. 18

Junior Ranger Program

Earn a Junior Ranger badge and learn about White Sands. Every Saturday for one hour starting at 9 am, June 18—Aug. 6. Parents must be present.

Holiday Open House

Join us on Dec. 2, 2011 from 5 pm to 8 pm for live music, luminarias around the historic adobe visitor center, and interpretive programs. No charge for the program.

Full Moon Hikes

Hike the moonlit dunes with a ranger. Reservations required and accepted 2 weeks in advance of the hike. Register at www.nps.gov/whsa.

- 7:30 pm Monday, May 16
- 7:30 pm Tuesday, June 14
- 8:00 pm Thursday, July 14
- 8:00 pm Saturday, Aug. 13
- 7:15 pm Monday, Sept. 12
- 6:30 pm Tuesday, Oct. 11



The moon over the dunes

Full Moon Bike Ride

Take a leisurely bike ride through the monument. No cars are allowed during the event. Reservations required and accepted one month in advance. Visit www.nps.gov/whsa for reservations. Cost is \$5 per person 16 and older, \$2.50 per person 15 and under.

- 9 pm Saturday, April 16
- 8 pm Friday, Oct. 14

Patio Talks

Offered daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day and on weekends the rest of the year. Begins at 1:30 pm at the visitor center.

Lake Lucero Tours

Hike with a ranger to the dried lake bed that makes up a part of the source of the sands. Learn about the formation of the dunes and the special plants and animals that live in and around the dunes.

- 2 pm Saturday, Jan. 29
- 2 pm Sunday, Feb. 27
- 9 am Saturday, March 26
- 9 am Saturday, April 23
- 5 pm Sunday, May 29
- 5 pm Sunday, June 26
- 8 am Saturday, July 30
- 5 pm Saturday, Aug. 27
- 9 am Sunday, Sept. 25
- 9 am Sunday, Oct. 30
- 10 am Saturday, Nov. 26
- 2 pm Saturday, Nov. 26
- 10 am Saturday, Dec. 31
- 2 pm Saturday, Dec. 31



Selenite Crystals at Lake Lucero

Reservations required and accepted one month in advance of tour date. Special fees apply: \$3 per person 16 and older; \$1.50 per person for 15 and younger. Visit www.nps.gov/whsa for reservations.

Full Moon Nights

Listen to music, learn about desert wildlife, or see the beauty of the dunes by moonlight. Monument entrance fees apply: \$3 per person 16 and older. No additional fee for program.

- 8:30 pm Tuesday, May 17 - *Randy Granger, an American Indian Musician*
- 8:30 pm Wednesday, June 15 - *Ralph Estes performs "The West: Singing its Story" and Steve Cormier gives his presentation "Music from the Ranch and Open Range"*
- 8:30 pm Friday, July 15 - *Loretta's Barbwire Band*
- 8 pm Sunday, Aug. 14 - *Ranger Vignettes*
- 7:30 pm Tuesday, Sept. 13 - *Linda Sanchez speaking on "The Mescalero Apache"*
- 7 pm Wednesday, Oct. 12 - *Dr. Irene Blea "Doña Tules: Lady Gambler of Santa Fe"*

Hiking White Sands

Venturing out onto any of our five established trails provides you with an opportunity to experience the timeless majesty and wonder of the dunes. We invite you to take a trek into the heart of the world's largest gypsum dunefield and explore the wonders of White Sands.

Playa Trail

Length: 330 yards (300 m) round-trip
Average Completion Time: 20 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

The Playa Trail is a short, level hike leading to a small playa. Playas are shallow depressions or low-lying areas that temporarily fill with rainwater from storms.

Dune Life Nature Trail

Length: One mile (1.6 km) loop
Average Completion Time: 1 hour
Difficulty: Moderate

Meet Katy the Kit Fox on this family-oriented trail and learn about the plants and animals common to the dunes.

Interdune Boardwalk

Length: 650 yards (585 m)
Average Completion Time: 20 minutes
Difficulty: Easy
Fully accessible for people using wheelchairs and strollers, the boardwalk leads you through a fragile interdune area.

Alkali Flat Trail

Length: 5 miles (8 km) round-trip
Average Completion Time: 3 hours
Difficulty: Strenuous
Leading you through the heart of the dunes, the Alkali Flat Trail skirts the edge of what is now the final remnant of Lake Otero, once a 1,600-square-mile lake.

Backcountry Camping Trail

Length: 2.2 miles (3.5 km) round-trip
Average Completion Time: 1.5 hours
Difficulty: Moderate
Hiked most frequently by backpackers, this trail is also open to visitors that want a shorter hike through the heart of the dunes.

Dunes Drive Map

