

Carlsbad Caverns National Park

727 Carlsbad Caverns Hwy., Carlsbad, NM 575-785-2232 (operator on duty M-F)

The park website has maps and other information not provided in these directions:

[www.nps.gov/cave](http://www.nps.gov/cave)

Bring a **face mask** in case one is required.

Bat Flight Program: Evenings in early spring through October. Check at Visitor Center for information.

The Caverns are located southwest of Carlsbad, NM. From highway 62/180, turn north/west at Whites City onto Highway 7 and continue 7 miles up to the Visitor Center. It is open year-round, except for Thanksgiving Day, Dec. 25, and Jan. 1. Whites City and Carlsbad have food and lodging. Check the park website for hours and fees. At some point in the mid-afternoon depending on the season, the ticket counter will close, so be aware.

In the Visitor Center there is park information, book store, restrooms, cafeteria, gift shop, and exhibits. Pay at the ticket counter or present a National Parks pass. **Hang on to your receipt/ticket.**

**This walk includes two portions; the Old Guano Trail and the Caverns.** The current weather conditions may help you decide which portion to complete first. The caverns are 56 degrees year-round.

**Note: There are different options for how to handle the cave portion.** 1) you can hike down through the Natural Entrance and proceed around the Big Room, then take the elevator up topside, or 2) you can take the elevator down to the Big Room, tour that area and then hike up through the Natural Entrance\*\*\*, or 3) if you have low mobility that prevents using the steep Natural Entrance, you could take the elevator both up and down, and just view the Big Room, which is spectacular.

**\*\*\*Note: Due to Covid precautions,** hiking up to the top via the Natural Entrance might not be allowed. Also, the wait for the elevator could be extensive, due to Covid restrictions on occupancy of the elevator. You might want to visit the Caverns during non-peak times.

If you choose to begin with the elevators, they are located inside the Visitor Center.

If you choose to begin with the Natural Entrance or the Old Guano Trail, then walk past the bookstore and exhibits and exit the building through the double doors.

Outside of the Visitor Center you will encounter another ranger who gives a short presentation about rules etc. To save time, tell the ranger right away if you want to do the Old Guano Trail first. He/she will direct you to the start of the trail (to the right of the amphitheater at the Natural Entrance) and you won't have to listen to the spiel twice. Also, the ranger will let you pass to the Old Guano Trail with food, beverage, etc.

**The Caverns:** The Natural Entrance is 1.25 miles (2K) and is quite strenuous and steep. The Big Room is another 1.25 miles (2K) and is an easy/moderate walk. All paths inside the cave are paved and have hand rails. No food or drink is allowed inside the cave, except for plain water. There is a small snack area and restrooms close to the Big Room by the elevators. It is fun to have a powerful flashlight. Strollers are prohibited. A kennel for pets is available at the Visitor Center. According to the website, canes and walking sticks may be used in the cavern only if medically necessary.

**The Old Guano Trail** (or Old Guano Road) begins near the amphitheater and goes 3.7 miles (about 6K) (**one way**) to the campground at Whites City. The Trail follows the old road (no longer visible) that was used to haul guano from the cave down to Whites City in the early 1900s. The Trail is of moderate difficulty over gravel and flat rock and the path is marked with rock cairns. You will see sweeping vistas of New Mexico and Texas, and El Capitan in the distance. In the spring there are flowering cacti.

Shortly after starting out, you will see a fork in the trail – Go to the LEFT. (The trail heading to the right is the paved Chihuahuan Desert Nature Trail (0.8K) which is wheelchair accessible). Further along the Old Guano Trail you will see a fenced enclosure. The fence blocks an old entrance that was blasted into the cave to facilitate guano mining. You might be able to feel the cool air coming from deep underground. Go around the RIGHT side of this fenced area.

You can hike 1.85 miles or about 3K on the Old Guano Trail, *then turn around and head back to the Visitor Center.* (This portion of the Old Guano Trail, plus the 2.5 miles or 4K in the caverns will equal 10K.) There is not a clearly identifiable turn-around spot, so you will need to keep track of the time walked or use a phone that indicates the distance walked. However, at about 1.90 miles (3K) you will see, off to the left, a 4-ft. wire mesh cage which is guarding native plants used for ecological research.

Note: Adventurous souls who wish to follow the Old Guano Trail all the way down should be aware that once Whites City comes into view the trail is much steeper and not as easy to follow. The trail descends the escarpment and ends at Whites City campground. Check with a ranger for further information.

#### **5K walk directions:**

Go through the Natural Entrance 1.25 miles or 2K, and tour the Big Room (another 1.25 miles or 2K), or vice-versa. When outside the cave, go around the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Trail (0.5 mile or 0.8K). On the Old Guano Trail, just go as far as the blasted entrance with the fence around it (see previous section), and then turn back.

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**Event related assistance: Point of Contact (POC): Carolyn Petersen, 432-770-9988 (text messages preferred) or [gary.petersen@mygrande.net](mailto:gary.petersen@mygrande.net)**

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES: DIAL 911**

**“Be sure to log back into the OSB system to finish/complete your online registration after doing the event. The OSB system does not deduct any event fee from a participant’s Event Bank until they have submitted event completion info including the date the event was walked, the distance walked, and the selection of applicable special programs that person is participating in. Nevertheless, a fee of \$2 for a downloaded PDF is deducted from the Event Bank when the PDF is downloaded. Later, any PDF fees are credited back to a user’s Event Bank when they submit the event completion info as a ‘paying for credit’ participant. Note, however, that the \$2 coupon for the downloaded PDF expires in 60 days.”**

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