

Mammoth Cave National Park is much more than an elaborate underground cave system. It is an incredible area that includes the Green River Valley as the park's lifeblood, which controls the aboveground waterways that create the fantastic limestone tunnels below and the beautiful karst topography above. The stunning Kentucky countryside includes numerous sinkholes and caves that mesh to form an attractive, rolling landscape. Mammoth Cave is a World Heritage Site, an International Biosphere Reserve and an International Dark-Sky Park all rolled into one incredible National Park. With so many things to do, let's explore the top 10.



10 Located a short ¼ mile from the visitor center, this campground is the perfect location to park your RV or set up your tent. You're within easy walking distance to many of the park's main attractions yet in a wonderfully cared-for location with peaceful surroundings. Don't be surprised when deer or other wildlife walk through your site. Although only two sites have electricity and water, there's a nearby camp store with restrooms, showers and laundry.



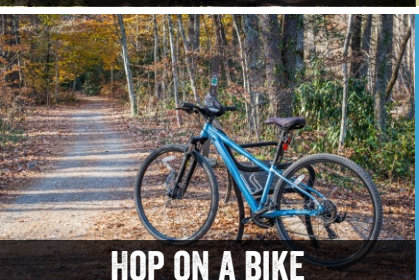
9 Because Mammoth Cave is such an unusual National Park, you should take care when visiting. Be sure not to touch the cave walls to prevent body oils from breaking down the rock, and after a tour, wipe your feet on the treated mats when exiting the caves to protect the bat population from getting White-nose Syndrome. You can volunteer to help the park complete projects or become a Lint Bunny and help keep the caves clean. Lastly, leave no trace, as everything above ground affects the delicate cave system below.



8 Near the Mammoth Cave Lodge is a wonderful .6-mile loop trail that's a perfect hike for everyone because it comprises a wooden boardwalk and concrete path. In the evening, the path is illuminated with lights and leads to the pretty Sunset Point overlook. While walking, you'll have a view from the trail overlooking the Historic Cave entrance and stroll past the historic cemetery where Stephen Bishop, the renowned cave guide, is buried.



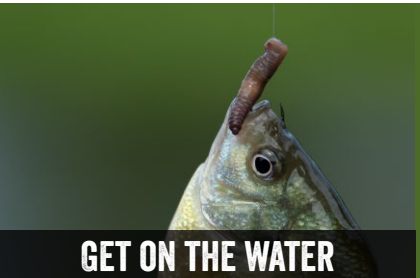
7 Ever since I was a little girl, I loved going on a trail ride, so I was thrilled you could go inside the park. With more than 60 miles of backcountry trails open for horseback riding, you could spend much time exploring the park. If you have a horse, there are five day-use trailhead parking areas, or if you want to spend the night, head over to Maple Springs Group Campground, where horses are allowed. If you don't own a horse, you can take a trail ride nearby at Double J Stables and Campground. Their property borders the National Park, and the trail rides are within its boundaries.



6 The Mammoth Cave Railroad Bike and Hike Trail is a great path to ride and see historic sites, have fantastic scenic views and enjoy the great outdoors. Following a portion of the original railroad, you'll experience some of the same views as the first visitors to Mammoth Cave did. If the thrill of mountain

biking is more to your liking, then head to the 10-plus-mile Big Hollow Trailhead and Connector Trail to burn off energy.

5 Whether you've brought your own vessel or need to rent from a local outfitter, spend some time on the water. With various access points, you'll find the Green and Noln Rivers Blueway, a part of a National Water Trails System with 36 miles of waterways, to enjoy. You can also try fishing while taking advantage of not needing a fishing license within the park. You can have a fun and relaxing day on the rivers with beautiful scenery.



GET ON THE WATER



LEARN ABOUT THE PARK'S HISTORY



BE A STARGAZER



HIKE THE CEDAR SINK TRAIL



TAKE THE EXTENDED HISTORIC TOUR

4 There are many historical stories to learn about when visiting the park. Begin at the Mammoth Cave Visitor Center to view exhibits that explain the National Park's background and the people involved from the beginning. Stop by the Mammoth Cave historic train and read how it brought thousands of visitors to the area. View the three remaining churches and numerous cemeteries that represent the communities of people who used to live within the park boundaries. The Civilian Conservation Corps built 47 park buildings between 1936 and 1941 before Mammoth Cave was established as a National Park. You can even stay in one of the historic Woodland Cottages or deluxe cottages during your visit.

3 Spend your evenings in the park enjoying the peaceful quiet—and don't forget to look up! You can say that Mammoth Cave has three parts: above ground, below ground and the night sky. Designated as an International Dark-Sky Park in 2021, it's the first Dark-Sky Place and National Park in Kentucky to receive the designation. So, pull out that telescope or camera and spend the night under the stars.

2 To truly understand the area's karst topography, you need to hike the Cedar Sink Trail. The 1.5-mile roundtrip hike takes you through a deciduous forest and down numerous staircases to the bottom of a sinkhole. When you look back up from the bottom, you'll see all the different layers of rock and earth that create the massive walls. Explore the short trails on the bottom that lead to cave openings and past moss-covered trees, and if the weather is right, you'll see the underground river that pops up from the sinkhole floor. Although the Cedar Sink Trail is a beautiful hike, be prepared for many steps and a large metal staircase at the end of the loop.

1 To get a taste of the history and science of the massive 420-mile cave system, the Extended Historic Tour is a must. You'll cover two miles during your two-¼-mile tour, and you'll see the enormous rotunda, squeeze through Fat Man's Misery and learn some incredible history about the underground environment. The park ranger will talk about the historic guide Stephen Bishop, the saltpeter mining and the huts that housed tuberculosis patients. They'll explain what animals can live in a cave environment and how the aboveground watershed created the limestone cave system. Before your tour ends, you'll be immersed in complete darkness when the ranger briefly turns out the lights before exiting the cave.