

Nature

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the hike online only at nps.gov/whsa.

"Skins and Skulls" mammal identification talks are 3 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays in the Visitor Center. Rangers will have pelts, skulls, and other props for an up-close look and feel of the elusive wildlife of White Sands.

Map Talks are 1:30 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday.

Lake Lucero tours are offered on the last weekend of each month. Upcoming tours are 2 p.m. Saturday, **Jan. 28**, and Sunday, **Feb. 26**. Participants drive their own vehicles 17 miles beginning at the Small Missile Range gate on U.S. 70, 25 miles west of the White Sands Visitor Center, then hike 3/4 mile to the source of the white sands. Reservations required (accepted online only). Cost is \$3 per adult; \$1.50 age 16 and under.

Crafty Kids craft and interpretive programs are 10 a.m. Sundays for ages 6-10. Parents welcome to participate.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park — The park is about 160 miles east of El Paso, off the Carlsbad Highway (U.S. 62-180). Information: (575) 785-2232 or nps.gov/cave.

Winter Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; tours available 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Last entry into cave via natural entrance is 2 p.m. with last entry into cave via elevator 3:30 p.m.

Elevator renovations will continue through the summer months; visitors taking elevator entrance should expect longer waits.

Plan 3-1/2 hours for a walk-in tour and 1-1/2 hours for Big Room tour. Cost is \$6 (\$3 for ages 6-15 or seniors with discount card). The park's audio self-guided tour is \$3 extra (also available in Spanish).

For an extra fee (\$8 adults, \$4 youth and seniors with card), visitors can go on a ranger-guided tour of the King's Palace, Papoose Room, Queen's Chamber and Green Lake Room; reservations are required.

Guided tours also are available for Slaughter Canyon Cave, an undeveloped cave 23 miles from the main cavern. Call for reservations. Cost is \$15 (\$7.50 ages 6-15, seniors with card). The 1-1/4-mile tour lasts about 2-1/2 hours. Flashlight with fresh batteries required. Wear good walking shoes and bring water.

Other special guided tours are available, including "Wild Cave Tours."

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument

— 44 miles north of Silver City on NM Highway 15, the dwellings are in the middle of the majestic Gila Wilderness, the first and one of the largest wilderness areas. The slow, winding mountain road between Silver City and the dwellings takes about 1-1/2 hours to drive. Long trailers are advised to come up the back way via NM 152 and 35 through the Mimbres Valley. Entrance fee: \$3 per person; \$10 per family. Information: (575) 536-9461 or nps.gov/gicl.

Winter hours (through Memorial Day): The trail to the cliff dwellings is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Everyone must be off the trail by 5 p.m. Visitor center is open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Visitors for the 1 p.m. guided tour, which begins at the cliff dwellings, need to arrive at the trailhead by at least 12:30 p.m. to walk up the trail to the dwellings.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park

— 110 miles east of El Paso on the way to Carlsbad, the 86,416-acre park includes the highest point in Texas: Guadalupe Peak, 8,749 feet. Entry fee: \$5 for ages 16 and older, good for one week and all trails. Winter hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Camping is \$8 per site per

night. Information: (915) 828-3251.

The park's headquarters, visitors' center and museum are at Pine Springs, off of U.S. 62-180. Camping for tents and RVs, a nature trail, and ruins of the Butterfield Overland Mail Station are nearby. McKittrick Canyon Visitor's Center is seven miles east of Pine Springs, and offers nature, canyon and geology trails.

On the north side of the park, accessible by a 110-mile drive around Carlsbad Caverns, is Dog Canyon Visitor Center and Campground.

One of the best examples of a Permian Period fossil reef, the national park offers camping and more than 80 miles of trails. Hikes range from easy, wheelchair-accessible nature trails to moderate (level, but rocky) canyon hikes to strenuous mountain hikes.

New Mexico State Parks — Day-use fee is \$5 when visiting any state park. Camping fees: \$8 for primitive site; \$10 for developed site (electrical hookup \$4 extra). All programs are free with park entrance, unless otherwise listed. Information: (575) 744-5998 or nmparks.com.

• Oliver Lee State Park, Highway 54 south of Alamogordo at the Dog Canyon turnoff. Information: (575) 437-8284.

A sunset presentation on Celestial Cycles: Imbolc (the halfway period between the Winter Solstice and Vernal Equinox also known as Groundhog Day) is 5:30 to 7 p.m. Saturday, **Feb. 4**, at the Group Shelter.

A Dog Canyon at Sunset stroll is 5 p.m. Saturday, **Feb. 11**, departing from the Visitor Center.

A Ranch House Hike is 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, **Feb. 18**, departing from the Visitor Center. Walk is not rigorous, but plan on at least 4 hours. Bring plenty of water, and snacks, wear comfortable sturdy shoes and sun protection. Friendly pets are welcome on leash.

A night sky viewing of Venus and the Crescent Moon is 6 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, **Feb. 25**, at the Group Shelter.

• Mesilla Valley Bosque Park — 5000 Calle del Norte, Mesilla. Guided bird tours are first Saturday of every month. See separate listing for other events.

• Elephant Butte Lake State Park — Information: (575) 744-5998.

• City of Rocks State Park, north of Deming off U.S. 180. Information: (575) 536-2800. A "Rattlesnake Myths" presentation is 3 to 4 p.m. every Saturday.

• Rockhound State Park, five miles south of Deming on State Road 11 and then east on Rockhound Road (State Road 141) for nine miles. Day use hours: 7:30 a.m. to sunset. Information: (575) 546-6182 or (575) 744-5998.

• Pancho Villa State Park, Columbus, N.M., State Roads 11 and 9. Day use hours: 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Information: (575) 531-2711.

• Caballo Lake State Park, 60 miles north of Las Cruces on Interstate 25. Information: (575) 527-8386.

• Percha Dam State Park, 60 miles north of Las Cruces on Interstate 25. Information: (575) 744-5998.

• Leasburg Dam State Park, Radium Springs, two miles off Interstate 25 at Exit 19. Information: (575) 524-4068. Day use hours: 7 a.m. to sunset.

• Brantley Lake State Park, 12 miles north of Carlsbad via U.S. 285. Information: (575) 457-2384.

A Star Party is 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday, **Feb. 18**.

• Bottomless Lakes State Park — 13 miles east of Roswell, (via U.S. Hwy 380 and NM Hwy 409). Information: (575) 624-6058.

Alameda Park Zoo — Alameda Park, 1321 North White Sands Blvd. (U.S. 54/70), Alamogordo. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission: \$2.50 (\$1.50 ages 3-11 and 60 and older; free for ages 2 and younger). Information: (575) 439-4290.

The oldest zoo in the Southwest (established in 1898) is part of the park that lines Alamogordo's main highway. The zoo covers about 12 acres, with about 250 exotic and indigenous animals.

Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park — Carlsbad, N.M. Admission: \$5 (\$3 ages 7-12; free for 6 and under). Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (last entry at 3:30 p.m.). Information: (575) 887-5516.

To get there: Take U.S. 285 north of Carlsbad. A free star party is 6 to 7 p.m. Saturday, **Jan. 28**.

Sweetheart Serenade is 2 to 3 p.m. Saturday, **Feb. 11**, with music by the Cavernaires Barbershop Chorus.

Cavern City Carvers Woodcarving Show is 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, **Feb. 18**.

While most zoos feature exotic animals from faraway countries, Living Desert offers visitors an up-close look at the mammals, reptiles and birds that inhabit the Chihuahuan Desert.

A large greenhouse is devoted to succulents and cactus from around the world. The headquarters building includes exhibits on minerals,

history, archaeology and other subjects.

Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue — The nonprofit organization that serves West Texas and Southern New Mexico offers resources for those who find a wild bird or mammal in need of help. Information: 772-6011, (575) 882-2910 or whc.net/cdwr.

Uninjured baby birds may be returned to their nest; the mother will not reject them if they have been touched by humans. If the nest cannot be found, create one with a basket or container with good drainage that can be attached to the tree so the parent bird may find it. If the bird is injured, contact the rescue immediately.

Community Tool Sheds — Keep El Paso Beautiful, in partnership with Paso del Norte Health Foundation, Home Depot and El Paso Fire Department, offers community tool sheds available at area fire stations. The sheds will be stocked with push brooms, shovels, rakes, a gas weed eater, gloves and trash bags for use for cleanup or beautification projects. The items may be borrowed for no charge to the public for community cleanup projects. Information: 546-6742.

Parks and Rec Memorial Tree Program

— The City Parks and Recreation Department offers its Memorial Tree Program to honor a loved one. Trees will be planted in a public park or other public area. Donation levels begin at

In a couple of recent conversations about various world problems, a scene from the 1991 movie "Grand Canyon" kept popping into my head.

You may remember the scene. Kevin Kline plays a lawyer whose luxury car breaks down after taking the wrong turn in Los Angeles. A tow truck driver played by Danny Glover shows up, but by then a gang of young men has surrounded the car, threatening the lawyer, and blocking the tow truck driver's attempts to help.

"Man, the world ain't supposed to work like this," the tow truck driver tells the gun-wielding gang leader. "I mean, maybe you don't know that yet. I'm supposed to be able to do my job without having to ask you if I can. That dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you ripping him off. Everything is supposed to be different than it is."

The Danny Glover character speaks for most of us. On any given day, we can easily come face to face with a situation that merits the same response: "The world ain't supposed to work like this." If our personal problems don't trigger that reaction, all we have to do read the day's news.

Our economy, government, schools, health care, families ... how many areas of our world work they way they are supposed to? Even if we think we know what the "supposed to" would look like, we have a hard figuring out what road would take us there.

I don't think is something new. Imagine the world of Jesus' day: A nation under foreign oppression. Religious leaders who dictated every detail of people's lives. The poor and the lame regarded as pariahs. That doesn't sound like the way the world was supposed to work either.

Here are three ways we typically look at the evil we see in the world:

• This is the best of all possible worlds,



a philosophy popularized by the famous optimist Pangloss in Moliere's "Candide." This is an approach that tends to overlook evil or to simply accept it the inevitable price of existence.

• The world is broken but I'm not. We accept that the world around us is a mess, but somehow we are good and if the world was filled with people like us, everything would be OK.

• The world is broken and so am I. We detect in ourselves some of the same mutated DNA that accounts for the mess we see around us. The selfishness, anger, pride, etc. that influence us are related to the causes of evil on a world-wide scale.

I say "mutated" because not only is the world not supposed to work like this, but if we're honest, much of the time we are not working like we're supposed to.

Oddly enough, there are people who admit they cannot fix their own personal issues and yet think they have the answers to the world's problems. Some of them even run for office!

Trying to fix a broken world and trying to fix a broken self are not exclusive. In fact, trying to do one without the other maintains our self-deception about both.

I believe the third view is the Christian world view. What's wrong at the world level is also tied to what is wrong at the personal level. And we cannot fix either on our own.

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