

Medicine Rocks State Park

Help Protect Your Park

In 2017, Medicine Rocks State Park was named to the National Register of Historic Places. The park was established to protect and preserve the unique scenery of the area for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. For your own safety and protection of this unique park, please observe the following regulations:

- Preserve natural. Do not carve on the rocks.
- Do not dig up or remove any soil, vegetation, or archaeological features.
- Discharge of weapons is prohibited except during lawful hunting seasons.
- Vehicles stay on roads and observe posted speed limits.
- Confine all fires to fire rings. Extinguish all fires completely before leaving.
- Pack In/Pack Out all trash.
- Please stay alert. Rattlesnakes have been observed.

For a complete copy of park rules and regulations call 406-377-6256 or visit stateparks.mt.gov



THE OUTSIDE IS IN US ALL.

MEDICINE ROCKS STATE PARK



Photo by Kristi Powell

Location and Facilities

Medicine Rocks State Park lies 25 miles south of Baker and ten miles north of Ekalaka along State Highway 7 in the extreme southeastern portion of Montana.

Park Facilities:

Camping
Picnic Tables
Fire Rings
Restrooms
Scenic Loop Road with Turnouts
Self-Guided Interpretive Trail
Drinking Water

Nearby Attractions:

Ekalaka - Carter County Museum

Montana Dinosaur Trail facility - Indian artifacts and dinosaur fossils
306 Main St., Ekalaka, MT
(406) 775-6886

Baker - O'Fallon Historical Museum

Steer Montana - the largest bovine animal in the world
723 S. Main St., Baker, MT
(406) 778-3265



MONTANA FWP



Jutting abruptly from the rolling grass and pine-covered hills of southeastern Montana are the sandy knobs and pockmarked pillars of Medicine Rocks State Park.

As the name implies, this site was one of “Big Medicine,” where Indian hunting parties conjured up magical spirits that helped to increase courage, strength and good luck. Judging by the remnants of prehistoric tools and weapons found here, this area was indeed popular with early nomadic people. Local Northern Cheyenne historians say that Native people also visited this place to collect medicinal plants and seashells, which were used for adornment.

During the late 1800s, Theodore Roosevelt camped at Medicine Rocks and commented:

“The sun was just setting when we crossed the final ridge and come in sight of as singular a bit of country as I have ever seen. Over an irregular tract of gently rolling sandy hills...were scattered several hundred detached and isolated buttes or cliffs of sandstone...cut and channelled by the weather into the most extraordinary forms; caves, columns, battlements, spires, and flying buttresses were mingled in the strangest confusion...the sand gave everything a clean, white look. Altogether it was as fantastically beautiful a place as I have ever seen.”

Today, the unique scenery and rugged beauty of Medicine Rocks is being preserved for present and future generations to see and enjoy.

The Rocks

Medicine Rocks manifests a small portion of a complex sequence of geological events that took place some 60 million years ago. At that time, a retreating inland sea covered much of the northern Great Plains. The climate was warm and tropical.

Fossils found in the rocky formations of the park attest to the existence of pre-historic plants and animals that existed here during that time. The swampy, forested margins of this huge, ancient sea teemed with mollusks (clams and other forms of ocean life), turtles and small mammals, as well as palm trees, water lilies and other vegetation.

Cutting through the lush swamps were slow-moving, shallow, silt-laden rivers which transported sediments from the newly forming Rocky Mountains. Some of these sediments were deposited as sand bars. Medicine Rocks represents the fossilized river channel of one of these ancient streams. Compaction, great pressure and eons of time turned the sediments to sandstone.

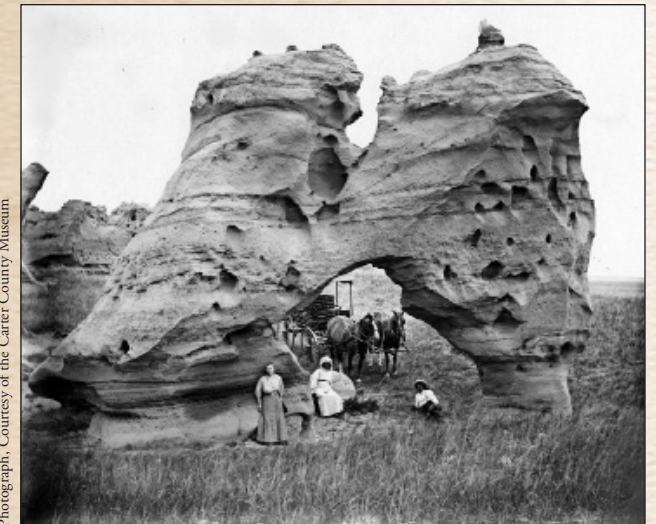
Over the ages, wind, water, and temperature extremes wore away the rock. The more resistant materials survived this erosion; these are the knobs and pillars we view today. The park’s formations owe their pockmarked features to natural and dynamic events, for it is the selective weathering process that gives the rock a Swiss cheese-like effect.

Today, geologic processes are at work just as they were millions of years ago. Driving wind, runoff from snowmelt and rain, and freezing and thawing action continuously eats away at the land, giving shape, form and life-like qualities to Medicine Rocks.

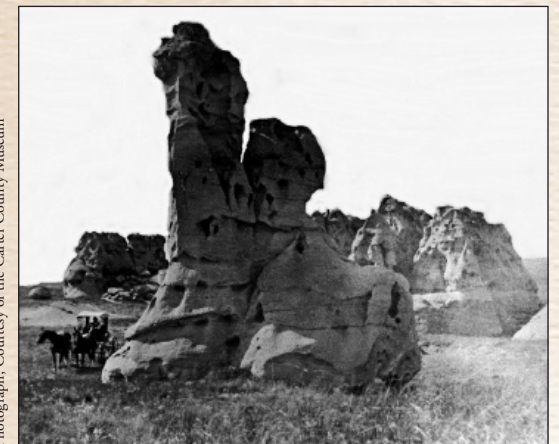
Animal Life on the Prairie

Historically, this remote region once harbored vast numbers of bison, elk, bighorn sheep, antelope, and deer. With the westward advance of Euro-American civilization, the great herds of bison disappeared from the landscape.

Fortunately, the prairie country of southeastern Montana still hosts an abundance of mule deer, white-tailed deer, and antelope. Small mammals and birds are also common. Park visitors may spot deer, coyote, fox, and grouse in the early morning or late evening. One should keep an eye out for prairie rattlesnakes.



Photograph, Courtesy of the Carter County Museum



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