

Caves at Maquoketa Caves State Park open April 15: Tips to plan your visit

Visitors to Maquoketa Caves State Park can fully explore the park's caves starting April 15, 2021 after being closed for more than a year due to COVID and winter bat hibernation. Located in eastern Iowa's Jackson County, Maquoketa Caves State Park is one of Iowa's most popular outdoor destinations, with the largest cave system in the state, gorgeous scenery and unique geological formations drawing thousands of visitors each year.

Because of the park's popularity and expected high crowds in the 2021 travel season, here are some tips and suggestions for planning your trip:

- **Parking is limited.** With less than 150 parking spots and as many as 1,500 people coming to the park on a summer weekend day, park staff recommend visiting mid-week or avoiding the peak window of 11-4 p.m. on weekends. Parking will only be allowed in designated spots for the safety of visitors and to protect natural areas. If parking spots are not available, please come back at a later time.
- **Same-day camping now an option.** Campers to Maquoketa Caves can now reserve as late as the day they plan to visit, with 100 percent of campsites reservable. The campground was recently renovated to offer more modern amenities. To find links for camping reservations, visit: www.iowadnr.gov/Maquoketcaves
- **Learn from interpreters.** In summer months, naturalists offer programming on a variety of outdoor topics. If entering the caves, upon your arrival plan on attending a short, required program about White Nosed Bat Syndrome and how you can prevent its spread.
- **In the time of COVID, be ready for enclosed stairways and boardwalks.** Exploring Maquoketa Caves involves a boardwalk system with enclosed railings in some places, along with several staircases and limited walkways. Please be mindful of other visitors by keeping social distances as much as possible. Wash your hands and stay home if you are sick.
- **Explore the stars of the show.** The main draws to Maquoketa Caves are its natural features and caves. Highlights include the **Natural Bridge**, a towering arch 50 feet above Raccoon Creek; **Balanced Rock**, a 17-ton rock formation that defies gravity; and **Dancehall Cave**; the largest cave in Iowa's park system, reaching more than 1,000 feet in length with a sidewalk and LED lights. Plus visit several unique caves and scenic views on the park's **six-mile long trail system**.
- **Make the most of your trip.** If the caves are busy, you can also visit a few nearby attractions to fully enjoy your trip. Explore the charming town of Maquoketa, or learn about nature at Jackson County's [Hurstville Interpretive Center](#). Three other state parks are within a 30-45 minute drive: [Bellevue State Park](#) offers breathtaking views of the Mississippi River; [Mines of Spain State Recreation Area](#) features historic sites and hiking; and [Wapsipinicon State Park](#) near Anamosa, showcases the historic 1800s-era Hale Bridge and walking path.

Enjoy Maquoketa Caves State Park this summer. Find maps, directions, amenities and reservation links at: www.iowadnr.gov/maquoketacaves