

Carter Caves State Resort Park



TRAIL MAP

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
parks.ky.gov

Carter Caves State Resort Park

344 Caveland Drive
Olive Hill, KY 41164-9032
(606) 286-4411



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New Kentucky Home

Explore Carter Caves State Resort Park

Nestled in the rolling hills of Eastern Kentucky, Carter Caves State Resort Park spans 2,000 acres of mixed deciduous forest teeming with diverse plant life, wildlife, and stunning geological formations both above and below ground. The park offers year-round guided tours of some of the region's most breathtaking cave systems, including Cascade Cave and X-Cave. Seasonal tours of Bat Cave and Saltpeter Cave provide even more opportunities to explore the park's fascinating underground world. Adventurous visitors can also explore Laurel Cave (seasonally) and Horn Hollow Cave (year-round) with a permit—contact the park for details on regulations and access.

With over 30 miles of scenic trails, the park showcases remarkable geological features such as natural bridges, arches, caves, sinkholes, cliffs, and boxed canyons. More than 15 miles of multi-use trails provide a haven for hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders. Experienced rock climbers and rappellers can take advantage of a designated climbing area to test their skills. Water enthusiasts can paddle or fish on the secluded 45-acre Smoky Valley Lake or along a picturesque stretch of Tygarts Creek, which borders part of the park.

For those looking to relax and enjoy additional recreational activities, Carter Caves offers playgrounds, tennis courts, a basketball court, picnic areas, and shelters. Seasonal amenities include guided horseback riding, a swimming pool with a diving well, a gem mining attraction, an 18-hole miniature golf course, and interpretive naturalist programs. Throughout the year, the park hosts a variety of special events, such as Winter Adventure Weekend, the Fraley Mountain Music Festival, seasonal nature programs, and Halloween-themed festivities in October.

Visitors planning an extended stay have several lodging options, including a 28-room fieldstone lodge, 11 modern two-bedroom cottages, and a spacious three-bedroom cottage. The campground offers RV sites, tent sites, bunkhouses, and equestrian campsites for those seeking an outdoor retreat. For dining, Tierney's Cavern Restaurant serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily, featuring a delicious selection of sandwiches and classic country dishes.

Trail Regulations

Trails are managed as part of the natural environment. Visitors must be prepared to meet and accept nature on its own terms. All plants, animals, and natural park features are protected by state law against removal, destruction and injury. For your safety, please stay on designated trails, wear proper footwear, and avoid hiking alone. All trails close at dusk.

Raven Bridge

Fern Bridge

Smoky Bridge

Winter Adventure Weekend

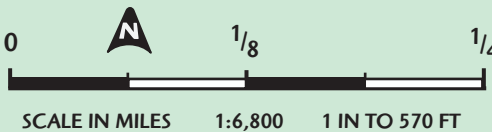
TRAILS NEAR LODGE & WELCOME CENTER

Legend on reverse



HIKING TIPS

All of the park's trails are hilly, and many pass near high cliff areas. For your safety, stay on the marked trails and walk the trails only during daylight hours. Hiking at night is not permitted. Parents should accompany children at all times. For safety, wear comfortable shoes with textured soles, since all trails have natural surfaces that may be rocky or uneven. On the longer trails, a water supply may be needed since there are no water sources on any of the trails. Snakes are rarely encountered, but if they are, leave them alone. Carter Caves is home to two venomous snakes, the Northern Copperhead and the Timber Rattlesnake. It is illegal to harm any animal in the park, including snakes. Be aware of poison ivy; it is a common plant.



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FOOT TRAILS

TBT Three Bridges Trail - 3.6 mi
This popular trail highlights three of the Parks’s natural bridges, including Smoky Bridge (the largest), Raven Bridge, and Fern Bridge. The trail overlooks many vistas of Smoky Valley Lake and traverses alongside many impressive sandstone cliffs. Red blazes mark the trail.

RBT Raven Bridge Trail - 0.7 mi
This trail is the most direct and easiest route to the delicately, balanced sandstone arch, Raven Bridge. This ridgetop trail is fairly level and can be combined with the Three Bridges Trail to make a loop from the lodge. Blue blazes mark the trail.

RHT Rockhouse Trail - 0.1 mi
This is a short connector trail between TBT and RBT trails. The trail takes you alongside some striking sandstone cliff faces. Yellow blazes mark the trail.

HHT Horn Hollow Trail - 1.5 mi
This hilly, but scenic trail, takes you from the ridges into the streamless valley of Horn Hollow, where you see multiple cave entrances. This trail is especially rewarding during the spring wildflower season from April–May. Green blazes mark the trail.

NBT Natural Bridge Trail - 0.5 mi
This impressive limestone Natural Bridge is one of the landmarks of the area and may be considered unique in Kentucky. Why? It is the only natural bridge in Kentucky that supports a paved highway. White Blazes mark the trail.

BCT Box Canyon Trail - 0.8 mi
The trail is one of the most scenic trails that supports unusual geologic features in the park, including the Cascade Natural Bridge, the Box Canyon, and the Wind Tunnel. This trail is hilly and fairly difficult. Orange blazes mark the trail.

4C’S Carter Caves Cross Country Trail - 8.3 mi
One of our longer hiking trails. Two suspension bridges are found on this trail. Johnson Homeplace and Eagles Nest are back-country campsites that require a reservation. A short portion of this trail is within Tygarts State Forest and allows equestrian and mountain bike use. During designated hunting seasons, avoid this section of the trail or wear blaze orange. The 4C’s trail crosses a creek with no bridge below Smoky Lake Dam. The creek is impassable during high water so hikers are encouraged to hike this trail clockwise. Orange blazes mark the trail.

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPSITES

The Eagles Nest backcountry campsite is located along the 4C’s Trail on the southwestern side of Smoky Lake. It has a reservable three-sided shelter and a reservable tent camping area. Both sites have a picnic table and a fire pit.

The Johnson Homeplace backcountry campsite reservable campsite is located along the 4 C’s trail on the southeastern side of Smoky Lake. It has a 10’x12’ elevated wooden tent platform that can accommodate two small backpacking tents. The site has a fire pit.

Reservations (\$) can be made by contacting the front desk at the Lewis Caveland Lodge. 606-286-4411

MAP SYMBOLS

- Foot Travel Trailhead

Equestrian Trailhead & Facilities

Mountain Bike Trailhead

Restroom

Backcountry Camp Permit Required

Tent Campsites

RV Campsites

Picnic Shelter

Picnic Area

Golfing Facilities

Playground

Welcome Center

Lewis Caveland Lodge

Cottages

Cave Tour
- Scenic Arch

Historic Feature

Cemetery

Trail Intersection

Trail Intersection

Suspension Foot Bridge

Stairs

Gate

Rock Climbing Area

Swimming Pool

Canoe Launch

Fishing Area

Dam

Boat Ramp

TOPOGRAPHY & PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Elevation contours are shown over aerial photography, which indicates canopy cover and agricultural or human uses.

Contour interval: 20 ft
Index contours labeled every 100 feet above sea level.
Hatched contours indicate a sinkhole.

100 vertical feet

Ephemeral Stream

Perennial stream

Pond or Lake with average pool elevation

Sinkhole

TRAVEL & TRAIL SYMBOLS

Hiking Trail

Multisue Trail

For example, this segment of trail shows a combined 0.7 miles of hiking & multisue along the 4C’s & Kiser Hollow Trails.

Trail line symbols are colored to match trail blazing and patterned to show to designated use. Trail names are abbreviated and mileage is shown between trail intersections.

State Highways

County & Local Roads

Gate

PAVED

GRAVEL

JEEP

All motorized travel must stay on paved or gravel public roads within the park.

Carter Caves
State Resort Park
TRAIL MAP

Two state nature preserves are located within the borders of Carter Caves State Resort Park. Both areas were dedicated into the nature preserves system in 1981 to protect several rare species and habitat. Bat Cave harbors one of the largest wintering populations of the federally endangered Indiana bat. The bats begin cave hibernation in October with sufficient fat reserves to survive until spring. The steep north-facing slopes at Cascade Caverns support two rare plants usually found in cooler northern climates; the Mountain maple and the Canadian yew. The Kentucky Department of Parks recognized the significance of these areas and pursued the highest level of protection possible for Bat Cave, 128 surface acres surrounding the cave’s openings and 18 acres of land above Cascade Caverns.

MULTIUSE TRAILS

KHT Kiser Hollow Trail - 8.6 mi
A multi-use trail that passes the mature hardwoods of Tygarts State Forest, the scenic Smoky Creek Valley, and old home places in Kiser Hollow. This trail is steep and rocky in places. During designating hunting seasons, avoid this section of the trail or wear blaze orange. Yellow blazes mark the trail.

CBT Cave Branch Trail - 2.5 mi
This is a multi-use trail within Tygarts State Forest that explores the picturesque valley of the stream, known as Cave Branch Creek. This creek flows underground through Bat Cave before it resurfaces near the park entrance. During designated hunting seasons, avoid this section of the trail or wear blaze orange. Blue blazes mark the trail.

RT Ridge Top Trail - 3.6 mi
This multi-use ridge top trail—within Tygarts State Forest—follows the border around a hardwood tree reforestation project. During the warm seasons, users need to be prepared for tick and poison ivy encounters. The trail provides some great overlooks, especially during the fall and winter months. During designated hunting seasons, avoid this section of the trail or wear blaze orange. Orange blazes mark the trail.

CPT Collings Passage Trail - 0.8 mi
This short multi-use trail connects the Carter Caves Trail System to the Olive Hill Trail Town System. From the end of this trail, there is an 8 mile trail via paved roads that will lead you to the Depot, which is the heart of the Olive Hill Trail Town System. This trail has very, steep terrain and a short creek crossing. Green blazes mark the trail.

MT Mulligan Trail - 2.0 mi
Perfect for either walking or bicycling, this trail is paved and located along what used to be the park golf course. This trail provides great habitat for all kinds of wildlife and is almost sure to allow a glimpse of deer and a variety of birds. The terrain is a bit hilly, but relatively easy. (This is a walking and bicycling trail only; no horseback riding is allowed.)

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Map Updated September 2023. Map created by outrageGIS mapping & UKy Geography in July, 2012.
GPS data provided by KY Department of Parks with additional data provided by Kentucky Division of Geographic Information and the United States Geological Survey. Projection: Kentucky State Plane Single Zone, NAD 83.