

# MAQUOKETA CAVES STATE PARK

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Maquoketa Caves State Park has more caves than any other park in Iowa. There are over a dozen caves, although most of them are small, and require a bit of wriggling to explore. This is a great park to learn the basics of caving, and is appropriate for any age scout. The limestone caves and bluffs are very scenic, and the park has beautiful trails to hike, for those non-cavers.

Dance Hall Cave is the largest cave in the park, and in most areas, you won't even have to bend over to walk through this cave. (See photo on left) Some of the more fun caves, however, are the ones that are challenging to enter. The park also boasts a natural bridge, which spans across the canyon 50 feet above Raccoon Creek.

**Campfire Rules:** Ground fires and wood gathering is permitted at this park.

**Water:** Water pumps and showers are usually on by mid April.

**Seasonal information:** Park is open year-round for camping (caves are always the same temperature year-round!) Caving at Maquoketa is excellent any time of year, although fall is probably ideal. Some caves are flooded in the spring (like Wye cave), in the summer the scouts tend to not wear enough clothing to protect from scrapes and scratches while crawling through the caves, and in the winter hypothermia can be an issue if the scouts crawl out of the caves wet with mud or water. Most of these caves are dry, but no doubt your most adventuresome scouts will find a way to crawl through water and mud while exploring.

**Area Attractions:** Caving! This is a great trip to earn Geology merit badge. Not only is there plenty of exposed rock that tell a fantastic geologic history over the past several hundred million years, but the cave formations are amazing. There are also plenty of signs and kiosks by the caves that explain the different geologic features and significance of the rock formations. There is even an interpretive facility with tons of teaching materials on the geology of the park.

**Additional Comments:** Kneepads and elbow pads are very helpful. A hardhat is important too, and always keep 2 sources of light on you at all times. And don't forget the camera! Some of the most popular caves include Dance Hall Cave, Wye Cave, Barbell, and Fat Man's Misery.

**Interesting fact about the park:** The park was once featured on an episode of *Rescue 911* when a hiker had fallen while at the park and was injured.

**Must do before you leave:** Explore Wye cave! It is a straight drop to get into the cave, but once you are inside, it is very cavernous, and has some tough places to get through for those looking for more of a challenge.

*Authored by Chris Brown*

