

Crater of Diamonds State Park

Murfreesboro, Arkansas

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My wife and I have been to Crater of Diamonds SP in Arkansas for the second year now (2007 & 2008). My wife loves it there, but I would rather be in a stream bed looking for gold. It is however quite educational and interesting to say the least. We were there a few days after a fellow from Wisconsin had found a 5ct diamond and many smaller stones were found while we were in the fields. There are many other gems and rocks of interest there so brush up on your identifications, but be sure to keep all the pretty stones and heavy ones too.

The search area is about a 37 acre field that is periodically plowed into furrows and if you are lucky enough to get there just after they have plowed you will have the easiest digging. The cost is \$6.50/day. Bring lunch and water with you as well as sun block and a hat.

How to search for the elusive gem is determined by the weather mostly. The soil is quite heavy and clay like. It sticks to everything if it's moist and you will be cleaning it off of your tools for months. Probably half of the gems found are just

picked up off the top of the ground. Many folks just walk up and down the furrows looking for a glitter. They do have two or three "sluice boxes" which are really just rectangular tubs of water in which you can wash the junk away from your diggings.

While you can use most of your gold retrieval tools, you will need some additional items. The best source of info is on the park website listed below. They do a great job of telling you what to bring and what to look for. Also you have the opportunity to tour a mini museum and attend short talks by the "rangers" on various aspects of mining and gem identification. We were fortunate to meet a fellow who has found over 400 diamonds at the park and he gave quite a talk on his experiences there.

If you intend to camp at the State Park during the Summer, you will need to get your reservations in early. Both years we went at the end of October (on our way to Florida for the Winter) and it was almost full then. This is the busiest park in the state. The rates are cheaper during the week for seniors if you fit in this age group. The campground is fairly clean and they have two shower houses that you will need.

There are other campgrounds in the area, one just up the road from the Crater, Miners' Camping & Rock Shop. It has a few full hook ups and will cost a little more than the SP. They are members of North America Camping Club and you get to camp there for \$10/night if you are a member. For info on the club visit www.campnacc.com. The shop itself should be part of your trip to the area as they have a great selection of gemstones from the area and out of the area.

Be prepared because as many other Southern states there is a sales tax on food purchased in a grocery store, selection is weak and you'll have better luck in finding a 10ct diamond than you will a cold beer or any other alcoholic beverage for 45 miles around as many of the adjoining counties are dry.

It is worth the trip just for the hunt, but be sure to take in the surrounding area if you have the time. Historic Fort Smith and Hot Springs should keep you busy for more than a few days.

Please contact us at: zhills43-mngp@yahoo.com if you have any questions or comments.

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