

## 57. Are there caves in Oklahoma? Where?

Yes. Limestone caves are present in the Ozarks and Arbuckles; gypsum caves occur in western Oklahoma.

Caves occur in some of the limestone formations of the Ozark Plateau, in northeastern Oklahoma, and in the Arbuckle Mountains in the south-central part of the State. Western Oklahoma is unusual in having caves in gypsum formations, including Alabaster Caverns State Park near Freedom (the largest commercial gypsum cave in North America) and Jester Cave in Greer County (the longest gypsum cave in the world outside of Russia).

“Pseudo-caves”—some little more than deep overhangs of rock—occur throughout the State. One is Robbers Cave State Park, near Wilburton.

Locations of most cave entrances are not publicized because vandals and thoughtless visitors deface caverns and disturb the animal communities (typically bats) that live in caves. Also, most cave entrances in Oklahoma are on private land, where permission is required for access.

Local organizations associated with the National Speleological Society are the Central Oklahoma Grotto and the Tulsa Regional Oklahoma Grotto (Appendix 5). Their members, being concerned with the geological and ecological value of caves, engage in cave mapping and conservation work, and explore caves only where damage can be kept to a minimum. The Central Oklahoma Grotto publishes an annual journal, “Oklahoma Underground.”



## 58. Can I name a creek or hill on my land?

Yes, but certain procedures must be followed.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names has established “principles, policies, and procedures” that you must follow before a name can be approved for use in federal publications and on maps. In general, the Oklahoma Board of Geographic Names follows the same guidelines, but also makes decisions based on State needs. For more information, contact the Oklahoma Board at the OGS (Appendix 1).

## 59. Why do place names change?

Despite official recognition, names change with common usage.

Every case is different; call the Oklahoma Board of Geographic Names at the OGS for a particular name change. An interesting example is the name change from “Grand Lake” to “Lake of the Cherokees.” This is one of the most misunderstood geographic names in Oklahoma. The feature has been called Grand Lake, Grand Lake O’ The Cherokees, Lake of the Cherokees, Lake O’ the Cherokees, and several additional variants.

In 1941, the State Legislature adopted House Bills No. 431 and No. 459, naming the body of water impounded by the Pensacola Dam “Lake O’ The Cherokees.” However, the lake included a stretch of the Neosho River, locally known as “Grand River,” and the reservoir quickly became known as “Grand Lake.” Over the next three decades the confusion of names grew, finally

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