

Geology of Robbers Cave State Park

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Introduction

Robbers Cave State Park is in the wooded hills of southeastern Oklahoma. It is on the northern flank of the Ouachita Mountains, where sandstones of Pennsylvanian age, interbedded with shales, form rugged and picturesque landscapes. Figure 1 is a map showing the location of the park in northwestern Latimer County.

The park is a forested area that is refreshing and enjoyable, especially for persons from the grasslands of central and western Oklahoma. It offers recreational facilities of many kinds (fig. 2), including several hiking trails from which to observe trees, rocks, and wildlife. Some of the trails are short, but for energetic, adventuresome people there is a 12-mile hiking trail from Robbers Cave to the picnic area south of Lake Carlton.

Both Wayne Wallace Reservoir and Lake Carlton are formed by dams on Fourche Maline Creek and are picturesque bodies of water with high bluffs (formed by the Bluejacket Sandstone of Pennsylvanian age) on their far sides. As it flows through the park from Wayne Wallace Reservoir to Lake Carlton, Fourche Maline Creek has many interesting and scenic points. The water flowing over the dam at Lake Carlton is pretty, but even more important on a hot summer day, Lake Carlton boasts a swimming beach as well as a swimming pool.

Lodging facilities include cabins along the escarpment side of a cuesta with a lovely view of Coon Creek Valley and Coon Creek Lake. Trailer hookups

are available in the Old Circle Campground area. Group-camp cabins are available as well, and there are three campgrounds where tents can be pitched. The park even has an equestrian campground. Many picnic shelters are available, along with a cafe and grocery store.

Of course, one of the main attractions of the park is Robbers Cave (fig. 3). From the parking area a path leads to the cave, which appears rather small and insignificant at first and may be an initial disappointment to some. But very few visitors leave the park without succumbing to the temptation to climb over the rocks and boulders to explore the cave.

Origin of Caves

Man has long been fascinated by caves. His first shelter was a cave, and the caves at Lascaux, France, contain some of the earliest works of art, the wall paintings that were made by Cro-Magnon man more than 20,000 years ago. The Dead Sea Scrolls reposed for centuries in the silent security of caves, which their ancient custodians recognized as suitable repositories for their preservation and eventual recovery. Caves are often tourist attractions; witness the popularity of Luray Cavern in Virginia, Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, Onondaga and

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