

Facilities & Directions

Crystal Park Facilities:

The Forest Service works to promote, develop, and maintain this site for recreational purposes. Approximately 30 acres are currently open for digging. The digging area is a short walk from paved parking. Facilities include: a hand pump water well, three picnic sites with tables and grills, information signs, toilets, and a paved trail with benches and an overlook. The facilities are designed to be universally accessible.

Crystal Park is open for day use only; overnight camping is not allowed. There are Forest Service campgrounds along the Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway to the north and south of Crystal Park. The closest is the Price Creek Campground, located approximately one mile south. A host is usually present at Crystal Park to assist visitors, maintain the facilities, and to ensure the rules are followed.

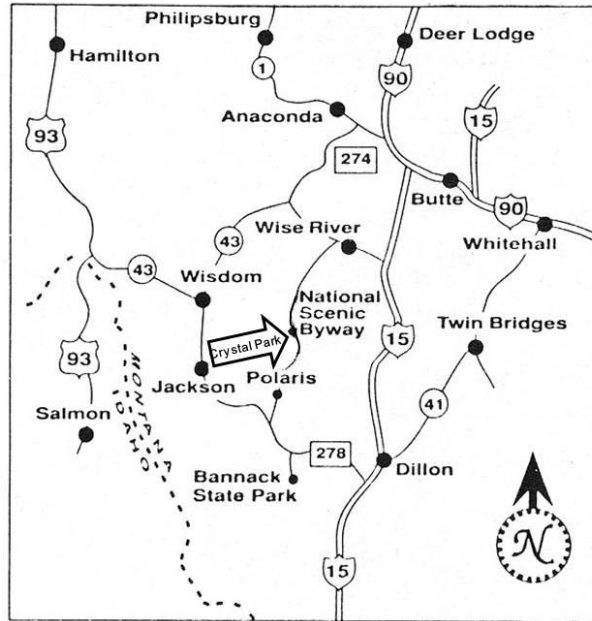
A Recreational Use Fee of \$5 per persons is charged to help maintain these facilities. Ages 10 years old and under are FREE. Senior passes and Access Passes are not accepted.

Directions:

From BUTTE: Drive 3.5 miles west on I-90 to the I-15 South exit. Drive 17 miles south on I-15 to the Divide exit. From Divide, travel 11 miles west on Highway 43 to the town of Wise River. Just west of Wise River, turn south on the Pioneer Mountain Scenic Byway and drive about 25 miles to Crystal Park. The route is fully paved.

From DILLON: Drive 2.5 miles south from Dillon on I-15 to the Highway 278 exit; then drive 22 miles west on Highway 278 to the Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway. Turn right at the scenic byway and continue for 16 miles then Crystal Park will be on your left. The route is fully paved.

Area Map



Contact Us:

Dillon Ranger District
420 Barrett Street
Dillon, MT 59725
(406) 683-3900

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday, 7:30 am–4:30 pm.

Twitter: [BvrhdDrldgeNF](#)

Facebook: [U.S. Forest Service: Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest](#)

Website: www.fs.usda.gov/bdnf

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Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF | R1-23-02 | February 2023

Crystal Park

Recreational Mineral Collection Area



Welcome to Crystal Park!

Crystal Park is a unique recreation area in the Pioneer Mountains of southwest Montana, and is open to the public for digging quartz crystals. Crystal Park is open sunrise to sunset late May through late October, depending on snow and road conditions.

About Quartz Crystals

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Quartz crystals have six sides. A normal quartz crystal is a six-sided (hexagonal) prism, terminating at both ends in two sets of rhombohedra faces, each set with three faces. Each alternate face belongs to one rhombohedra set, and in most crystals one set is larger and more developed than the other. The six faces are termed “pyramid” faces. Other small faces may be present near the junction of the prism and the rhombohedra faces.

Quartz crystals may be clear or cloudy, white, gray or purple. Within clear crystals, inclusions of water or other minerals are often seen. White “milky” crystals are the result of finely dissembled gas bubbles. Gray, purple and other colors are caused by minerals in the quartz. Gray crystals are known as “smoky” and purple crystals are called “amethyst.”

Quartz crystals at Crystal Park can be smaller than your thumb or several inches long. They may be single, in pairs or clusters. A pair of crystals joined at an 84° 39' angle is called a “Japan Law Twin”. Sometimes a larger crystal will be found on the end of a smaller one, forming what is called a “scepter”.

Crystal Tips

Handle your crystals carefully to preserve their sharp points and special features. You may wash colorless quartz crystals in a warm bleach solution to clean and brighten them. Amethyst crystals are heat-sensitive; they may shatter in hot water or lose their purple color at high temperatures.

Some crystals found at Crystal Park are suitable for jewelry, either in natural form or faceted. Some collectors prize quartz crystals of particularly high quality and unusual form. Most people simply enjoy their crystals as a memento of their visit.

Crystal Park Geology

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Like most of the eastern Pioneer Mountains, the “country rock” or bedrock at Crystal Park is granite. About 72 million years ago, the Pioneer Batholith intruded the area, pushing up molten granite to form the Pioneer Mountain range. The granite was about 300° Celsius or approximately 600° Fahrenheit. As the granite cooled, super-heated water circulated through it, carrying quartz, pyrite, and other minerals in solution. As the granite and water continued to cool, the minerals precipitated out and were deposited in veins and cavities called “vugs”.

The molten granite continued to cool and solidify for several thousand years.

Glaciers, surface and ground water, weathering and other erosional processes exposed the minerals and crystals to air and ground water. The original crystals remained unchanged, but when the rock temperature was 30° to 50° Celsius, and iron from pyrite was available, amethyst crystals sometimes formed directly on other colorless crystals.

Quartz crystals at Crystal Park seem randomly distributed because weathering of the granite has freed them from veins where they formed. Careful digging can sometimes expose traces of veins seen as reddish brown zones in the light colored granite. By tracing remnant veins, “pockets” of crystals are sometimes found.



Crystal Park Rules

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To ensure continued public safety and enjoyment of Crystal Park, the following rules have been established:

- ◆ Digging is limited to five days per person per season.
- ◆ No commercial digging.
- ◆ Only hand tools may be used.
- ◆ Safe digging practices must be followed.
 - Excavations must not have overhanging banks, or vertical walls higher than four feet.
 - Occupying an unsafe hole is prohibited.
 - No tunneling.
 - Rocks may not be placed at the edge of the holes.
 - **Do not dig under a tree or its roots.**
 - **NO overnight camping.**
- ◆ Dig only in the designated area (see digging area map on kiosk).
- ◆ Do not dig within five feet of trails or parking areas, including gravel shoulders, toilets, signs, boundary fence, and other recreation facilities.
- ◆ Crystal Park, parking lot and digging areas are closed to overnight camping.
- ◆ Pack out all garbage.
- ◆ Dogs must be on a leash or otherwise tethered and under control.
- ◆ The digging area is closed to digging between sunset and sunrise.

Crystal Park is open from late May through late October, unless weather conditions warrant otherwise.