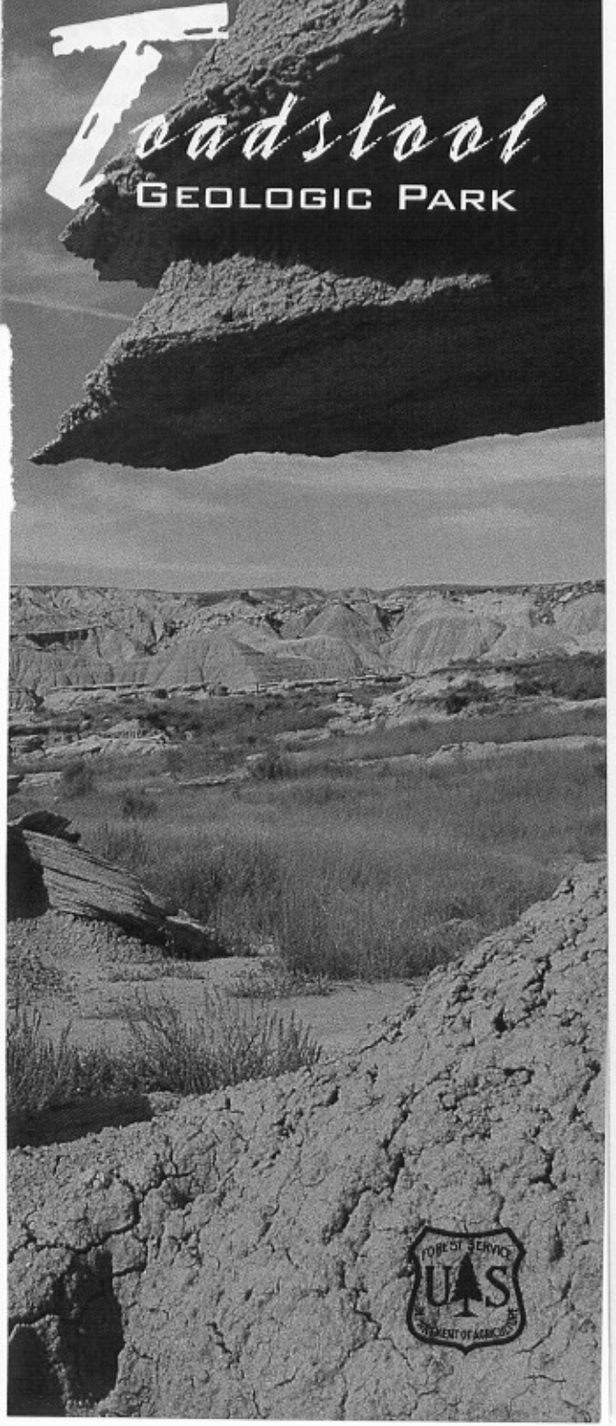


Facilities and Fees

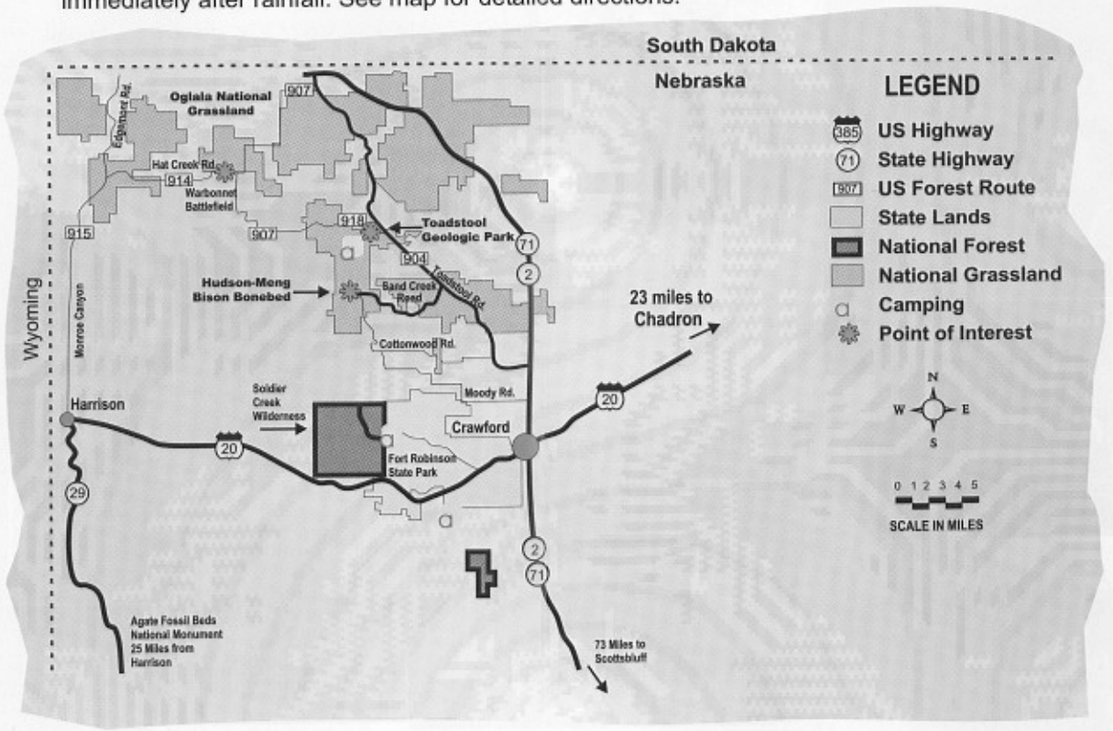
The six unit campground assures that you won't have many neighbors if you choose to spend a night under the stars.

Campground, trail, and interpretive facilities include modern vault toilets, a universally accessible trail, updated interpretive signing and self-guided trail pamphlet. Additional improvements are planned as funds become available.

Over 80% of fees collected for day use and camping go directly into maintaining and improving the facilities and services at Toadstool Geologic Park.

Getting There

To see many of the worthwhile attractions in the northwest part of Nebraska, you have to leave the pavement. Toadstool Geologic Park is no exception. Of the 19 miles from Crawford to Toadstool, 15 miles are improved dirt road. Not built for highway speeds, the roads encourage you to slow down and enjoy the rural landscape. You should also avoid traveling on them during or immediately after rainfall. See map for detailed directions.



While You're in the Neighborhood

Located 19 miles northwest of Crawford, Nebraska, Toadstool is one of several "must see" attractions in the state's northwest corner. Tucked within the USDA–Forest Service administered Oglala National Grassland, Toadstool is only two miles across country from the world-renown Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed. An archaeological site and ongoing excavation, Hudson-Meng is revealing clues to the mystery of how over 600 bison died nearly 10,000 years ago in an area about the size of a football field. A few large stone spear points found among the bones indicates that humans were likely suspects for some of the deaths. Some evidence suggests natural forces may have been the cause. The mystery continues.

Fort Robinson State Park, a refurbished military fort that saw action from 1874 and the Indian Wars through World War II. Decommissioned in 1948, the Fort now includes two museums, historic quarters converted for visitor lodging, and a host of summer activities. Many visitors use the Fort as a base from which to plan day trips to the area's many attractions.

For more information:

Nebraska National Forest
125 North Main Street, Chadron, NE 69337
(308) 432-0300
www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska

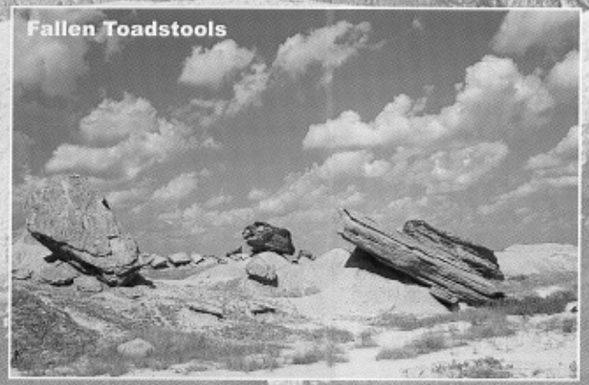
Pine Ridge Ranger District
16524 Hwy 385, Chadron, NE 69337
(308) 432-4475

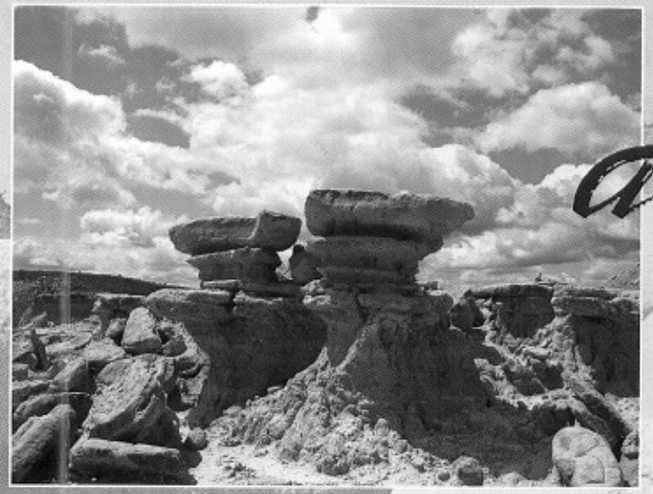
"The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service is an equal opportunity employer and service provider."

When the early French . . .

fur traders saw landscapes like those at Toadstool Geologic Park, they coined the term "terres mauvais," or badlands. As you approach the starkly eroded scenery of the Toadstool badlands you begin to feel that this gash in the surrounding grassland is worthy of further attention, "badlands" or not.

Early visitors saw large sandstone slabs perched upon eroding clay pedestals. They fancifully referred to the mushroom-like formations as "toadstools" and the name stuck. Today, the largest toadstool formations have settled to the ground but new, smaller ones are being formed by the unrelenting forces of wind and water.


Fallen Toadstools



Ancient Travelers

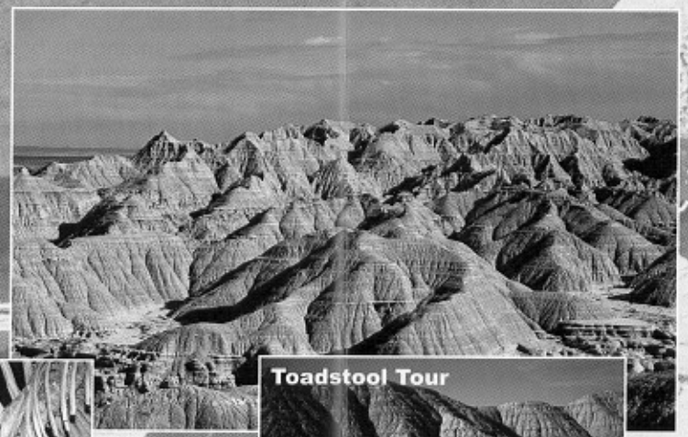
Toadstool includes a fossil trackway that gives scientists an unusual look into the behavior of animals as they migrated along a shallow braided river 30 million years ago. Leaving their tracks in the wet sand, small relatives of today's rhinoceros and larger pig-like scavengers called entelodonts, traveled north to south along a route that is now preserved in stone.

While the migration was likely an annual event, it appears that only once were conditions just right to preserve the tracks. Chance obviously plays a large part in the preservation and discovery of fossils that are millions of years old.

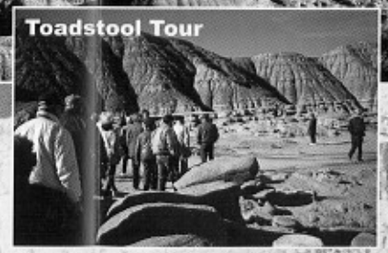
Please leave all fossils and bone fragments for others to enjoy a sense of that discovery. Fossil collecting is prohibited in the Toadstool area. Contact the USDA Forest Service for more information.

What's to See?

The most obvious and striking attraction to Toadstool is the scenery. The banded layers of clay and ash serve as silent testament to past geologic events that deposited sediments from periodic floods, and deep ash layers from volcanoes to the west. The build-up, and later erosion, have left an other-worldly landscape that is a magnet for sightseers, photographers, naturalists, and school groups.

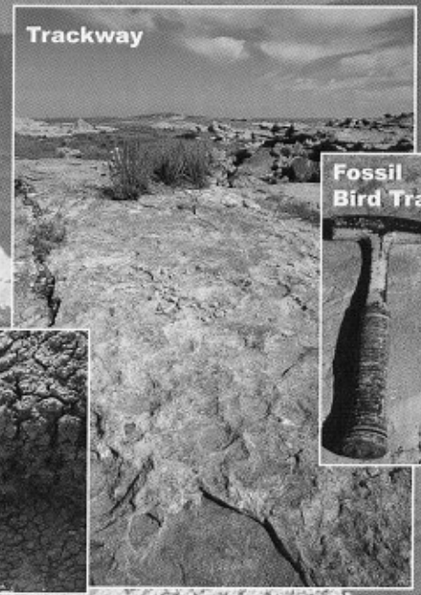


Titanothere exhibit
Royal Tyrrell Museum, Drumheller, Alberta

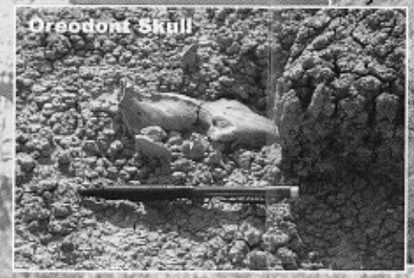

Toadstool Tour

Geologists refer to the material forming the eroded buttes and ridges as sediments belonging to the White River Group. They use the subtly colored horizontal bands as a standard against which to compare all other similarly aged deposits in North America.

Paleontologists, scientists who study past life forms, are also attracted to Toadstool. They focus on the fossils of long-extinct animals that called the area home during the Oligocene Epoch between 24 and 36 million years ago. From tortoises to titanotheres, their bones continue to be exposed by annual erosion cycles. Some animals left more than their bones to be discovered.


Trackway

Fossil Bird Tracks


Oreodont Skull