

Park Pursuits: Mushroom Rock State Park Voted Kansas' Most Popular National Park to Visit During National Park Week



“mushrooms” make for fun photos and even better hide-and-seek spots. A quick visit, but one they’ll talk about for days.

#216 Milford State Park

Located on Kansas’s largest lake, this park is great for boating, swimming, and soaking up sunny summer days. There’s also a nature center with exhibits and trails for spotting wildlife. It’s a splashy, outdoorsy escape with room to roam.

#226 Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

This sweeping prairie landscape offers a glimpse into what much of the Midwest used to look like. Families can walk through fields of wildflowers, hear the wind rustle the grass, and maybe spot a bison or two. It’s quiet, beautiful, and surprisingly magical.

#237 Clinton State Park

Just outside Lawrence, this park offers lake-front camping, bike trails, and playgrounds with wide-open space to roam. Kids can splash in the water while parents enjoy the breeze and sunsets. It’s simple, sunny, and great for a weekend reset.

#241 Kanopolis State Park

Red rock canyons, caves, and wildflower-covered hills make this park feel like a hidden desert in the middle of Kansas. Families can hike, fish, or paddle through striking scenery that’s totally unexpected. It’s off the beaten path — and that’s part of the charm.

“National Park Week is all about reconnecting - with nature, with family, and with the spirit of adventure,” says Joseph Gunther IV of Gunther Volvo Coconut Creek. “Our poll shows that no matter where families live, there’s a shared dream of hitting the road and making unforgettable memories in these iconic parks. It’s clear that America’s love for the outdoors is as strong as ever.”

For more information, visit <https://www.gunthervolvocars.net/park-pursuits.htm>.

National Park Week is rolling in from April 19 to April 27 - and there’s no better time to celebrate America’s love for the open road and the great outdoors. To mark the occasion, Gunther Volvo Coconut Creek launched a family-focused poll, asking:

Which national park would most want to visit this National Park Week, if distance was not a factor?

For many families, the journey is just as important as the destination - and nothing says adventure like packing up the car and hitting the road. By polling families across the country, they uncovered the most dreamed-of parks for a spring getaway. Nationally, the top 5 were as follows:

#1 Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee

America’s most-visited national park is a treasure trove of misty peaks, waterfalls, and wildlife. Families can hike easy trails like Laurel Falls, look for black bears, or explore his-

toric cabins from early settlers. Best of all? It’s free to enter, making it the ultimate nature playground.

#2 Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

This world wonder offers jaw-dropping views and easy trails that hug the rim — perfect for families with little ones. Ranger programs and visitor centers bring the geology and history to life in ways kids actually understand. It’s big, bold, and surprisingly accessible for such an epic destination.

#3 Yellowstone National Park, Montana

While most of Yellowstone lies in Wyoming, Montana’s gateway offers quieter access and stunning scenery. Families can visit Mammoth Hot Springs, spot bison, and explore geysers — all with fewer crowds. It’s America’s first national park, and still one of its best.

#4 Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii

Walk through lava tubes, witness steaming craters, and learn how new land is formed in real time. Kids will be fascinated by the raw, dramatic landscape, and ranger-led programs help explain the volcanic science. It’s fiery, fascinating, and full of wonder.

#5 Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky

Explore the world’s longest cave system on a guided tour that’s equal parts thrilling and educational. Above ground, families can hike, bike, or paddle the Green River through lush forest. It’s one of Kentucky’s crown jewels — and totally kid-approved.

Kansas had 5 national parks that made the rankings:

#199 Mushroom Rock State Park

It’s small, but the weird and wonderful rock formations steal the show. The sandstone

Building Better Wheat: WYOM podcast with wheat breeder Allan Fritz

By Kansas Wheat. For the audio version, visit kswheat.com.

Most farmers are familiar with the checklist of things that make a wheat variety good — high yield, good protein, disease resistance, drought tolerance and many more. But the list is much longer for K-State wheat breeder Allan Fritz, a familiar name for many Kansas wheat growers.

Fritz recently sat down with Aaron Harries, Kansas Wheat vice president of research and operations, for an episode of the “Wheat’s on Your Mind” podcast to talk about the science behind stronger wheat, better protein, value-added opportunities for Kansas wheat growers and much more.

“Whether you’re aiming for protein premiums or simply trying to stay ahead of the curve, this conversation highlights the importance of selecting the right varieties, understanding the balance between yield and protein, and staying open to rapid innovation,” Harries said. “If you’re farming in Kansas, this is one episode you won’t want to miss.”

Fritz started as the K-State wheat breeder in April 2000. K-State has two wheat breeding programs — the Manhattan-based program led by Fritz and its western counterpart led by wheat breeder Guorong Zhang at K-State’s Agricultural Research Center in Hays.

These programs operate on a large scale. The Manhattan program makes approximately 750 to 1,000 crosses of wheat annually, translating to around 1.5 million wheat plants

grown each year for evaluation. After selection for disease resistance or plant type, the program runs about 25,000 yield plots in up to 12 locations a year.

These big numbers translate into the development of successful wheat varieties, but that work requires a lot of time. The traditional wheat breeding cycle requires 10 to 12 years to go from a potential cross to a released wheat variety, but Fritz’s team is constantly looking for ways to cut years off that cycle to release better wheat varieties faster — saving time and money.

“In breeding, we’re just building. We’re just making incremental progress over time and building on finding something better, putting it back into the crossing program and trying to find something even better than that,” Fritz said. “It’s a continuous process of improvement.”

On the podcast episode, Fritz shared insights from the millions of plants evaluated over decades of research and discussed the traditional and innovative tools and targets within the K-State wheat breeding program. That list includes genetic gain, rapid-cycling, genomic modeling, high protein, high fiber, durum wheat, high water absorption, sharp root tips and much more.

The duo also discussed the story behind the BX7OE protein, a powerful trait first identified in Red River 68 and rooted in the Canadian super strong wheat class, which is reshaping how the wheat industry thinks about protein and yield.

Fritz also explained how



partnerships with institutions like Oklahoma State University and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico are helping accelerate the development of high-performing wheat that meets today’s growing demands.

The common aspect among all this research — super high protein, fiber and durum — is adding another level of value to the Kansas wheat crop.

“We will always have commodity-class wheat, but there are opportunities out there for this value-added wheat,” Fritz said. “It will keep wheat on acres in Kansas and improve profitability. We really want to make sure that wheat is a viable crop for our producers in the state, and we want to be able to capture that value.”

Listen to the full conversa-

tion with Fritz and all other episodes of the “Wheat’s on Your Mind” podcast at wheatsonyourmind.com.

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Legal Notice
(Published in The The South Haven New Era on Thursday, March 13, 2025 and Thursday, March 20, 2025 21a0t

Storage Vehicle Auction
May 2, 2025 10:00AM
Strickland Road Service
I-35 and Hwy 166
South Haven, KS 67140

2005 BUICK
1G4HP52K25U215742

2019 P J TRAILER
4P5FD4020K1302267

2004 GMC
1GTEK19T94E258030

1999 PONTIAC
1G2WP12K9XF331617

2002 DODGE
2B8GP74L32R642790

2013 FORD
1FBSS3BL7DDA87720

2020 BIG TEX
16VGX3524L6028685

1997 FORD
1FALP4045VF200532

1998 FORD
1FDEE14N6JR878125

1991 DODGE
JB3XD44S3MY010911

1990 LINCOLN
1LNLM82F6LY654827

1991 TOYOTA
JT2SW21M8M0007572

1992 LINCOLN
1LNLM81W3NY620350

Strickland Road Service reserves the right to make the final high or last bid on all items for sale in this auction.

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Events, dates, and times are correct as of print date. Updates to these events can be found on the school website calendar at www.usd509.org

Upcoming Events

APR 23 WED
School Color Run

APR 24 THU
HS Track @ Norwich
Robotics Competition @ Cowley
Wellington, 8 AM – 3 PM
JH Track @ Udall 1:30 PM – 8:30 PM

APR 26 SAT
Prom 6 PM – 9 PM

APR 28 MON
BB @ Conway Springs 4 PM – 8 PM

APR 29 TUE
HS Track @ Central 3 PM – 8 PM

APR 30 WED
Awards Banquet

May 1 Thu
JH Track @ Caldwell 1 PM – 7 PM
Baseball @ Caldwell vs. CVD 4 PM
Softball @ South Haven vs. CVD 4-8 PM

May 2 Fri
HS Track @ Wellington

May 5 Mon
Cowley College Visit (10th-12th only)
JV Softball @ CVD 3 PM – 6 PM

May 6 Tue
JHHS Spring Concert 6:30 PM – 7:30pm