

# BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK

## FACILITIES AND FEATURES

- 71 semi-modern campsites
- 40 sites with electrical hookups
- 14 cart-in campsites
- Primitive group camp
- 2 Tipis
- Travel trailer sanitary dump station
- Lake fishing and canoeing
- 15 miles of hiking trails
- 4.5 miles of Hiking Club trail
- 2 miles of snowmobile trails
- 2.8 miles of bike trails
- 1.5 miles of quartzite cliffline

### TRAILS

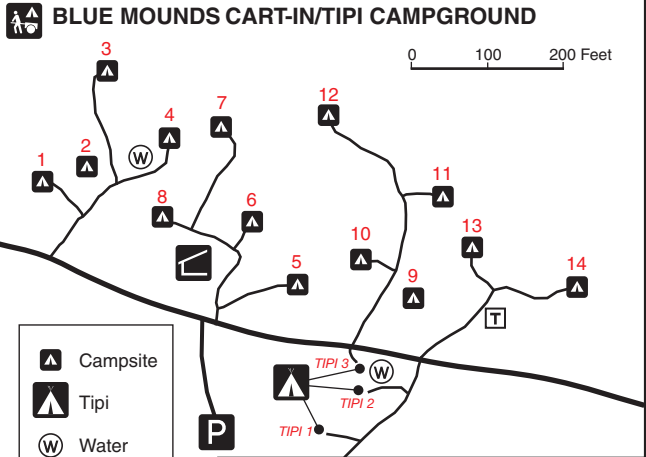
- Hiking
- - - Hiking Club
- Biking (paved trail)
- ..... Snowmobile

### FACILITIES

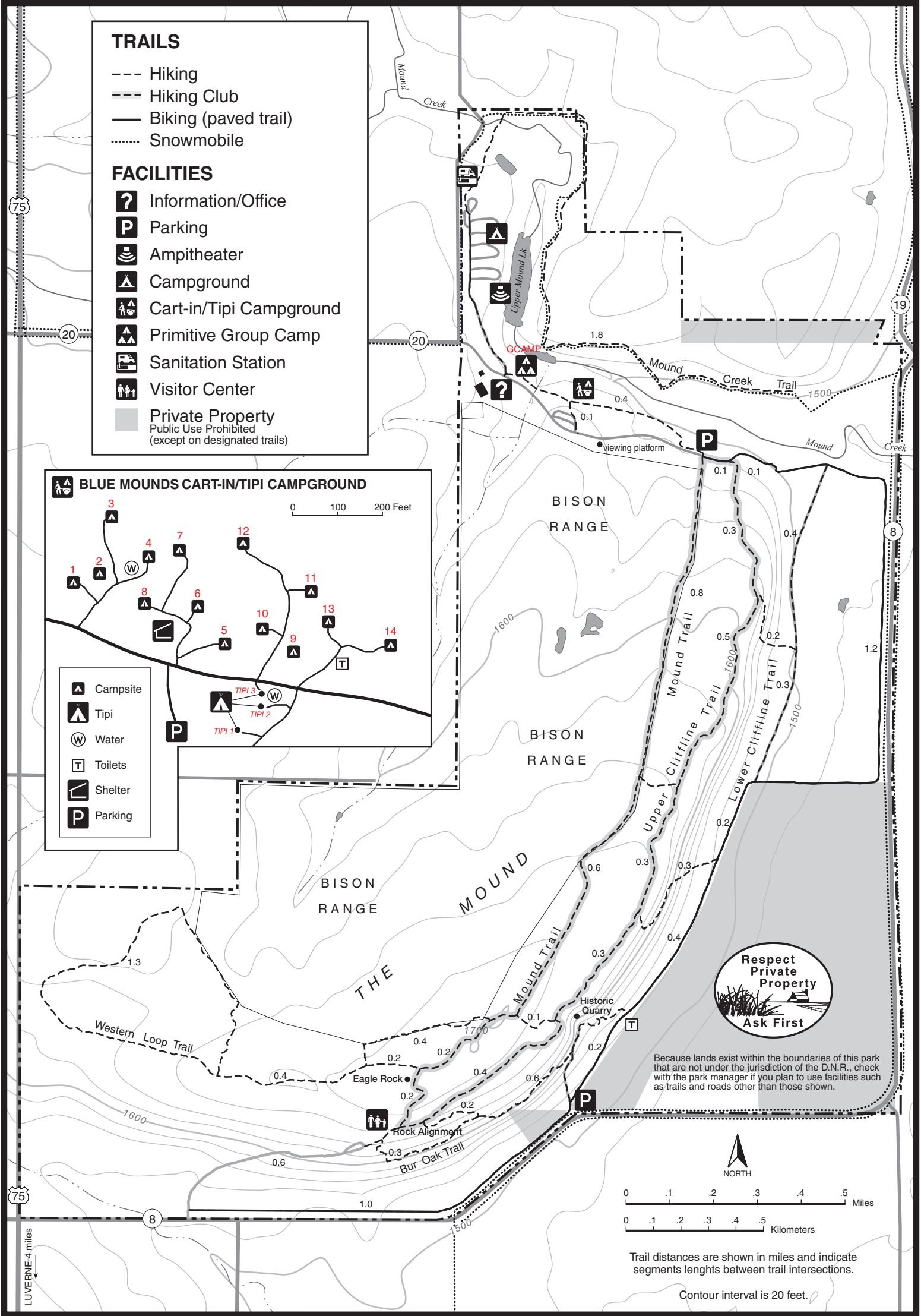
- Information/Office
- Parking
- Ampitheater
- Campground
- Cart-in/Tipi Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Sanitation Station
- Visitor Center
- Private Property  
Public Use Prohibited  
(except on designated trails)

#### BLUE MOUNDS CART-IN/TIPI CAMPGROUND

0 100 200 Feet



- Campsite
- Tipi
- Water
- Toilets
- Shelter
- Parking





# BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK

*FOR MORE INFORMATION*  
Blue Mounds State Park  
1410 161st Street  
Luverne, MN 56156-9610  
(507) 283-6050

Department of Natural Resources  
Information Center  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

**(651) 296-6157 (Metro Area)**  
1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free)

[mndnr.gov/parks](http://mndnr.gov/parks)

**BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK** is located in extreme southwestern Minnesota, six miles north of I-90 and Luverne, and 16 miles south of Pipestone in Rock County. The park entrance is off U.S. Highway 75. State highway map index: C-21.

Blue Mounds State Park is one of the largest prairie parks in Minnesota. The park’s approximately 1,500 acres of prairie and grassland preserves a wide array of rare and common plants and wildlife. A small bison herd grazes peacefully on a portion of this prairie. Most of the park’s prairie sits atop a massive outcrop of rock known as Sioux quartzite.

The rock outcrop slopes gently up from the surrounding countryside but terminates abruptly in a spectacular cliff line. The cliff, 1 1/2 miles long and at some points 90 feet high, provides a panoramic view of the countryside.

Miles of hiking and biking trails take you along the cliffs, into the oak woods, and through the prairie.

Blue Mounds offers you the opportunity to see, hear and feel Minnesota’s prairie environment first hand. Here you can experience tall grasses and colorful wildflowers swaying in the wind or witness the power and color of a summer prairie thunderstorm rolling in from the west.

**HISTORY:** Buffalo (American bison) meant life to the Plains Indian. In spring and summer, they ventured onto the prairie from their winter camps to hunt the bison. Many different methods and weapons were used to kill the bison; lance, bow and arrow, or stampede them off a cliff. It is not known if the park’s quartzite cliffs were utilized in such a manner by the early Plains Indians. Local rumor and folklore have persisted for years on the existence of large quantities of bison bones piled at the base of the cliff. No evidence exists today to substantiate these claims and stories.

The mystery of the Blue Mounds is not restricted to the cliffs. At the Blue Mound’s southern end is a 1,250 foot long line of rocks aligned in an east-west direction. Who built it and why is unknown. It is known that on the first day of spring and fall the sunrise and sunset are lined up on this stone alignment. Modern visitors can hike to the alignment to ponder the well-marked sunrises of spring and fall.

The large Sioux quartzite rock outcrop, first known as The Rock, has provided the park area with an exciting past. The cliff appeared blue to settlers going west in the 1860s and ’70s. They named the prominent landmark The Blue Mound.

In the past, Sioux quartzite was highly prized as a building stone. Several quarries dating back to the last century can be found in the park. At the park’s Visitor Center and nearby Luverne, visitors can see this material used in buildings.

In 1934, Rock County citizens asked the federal government for a WPA project in the Blue Mound area. The first phase of the project, two dams on Mound Creek forming the two lakes in the park, was completed in 1937. Record flooding in 2014 washed out the lower dam.

In 1951, the first park caretaker was hired and the park was known as Mound Springs Recreation Area. During that decade, thousands of trees were planted around the two lakes and in the campground.

The name of the park was changed to Blue Mounds State Park in 1961. That year also brought on a new look in the park with the addition of three bison from the Fort Niobrara Wildlife Refuge near Valentine, Nebraska.

Today, the Blue Mound’s bison herd is managed to reflect the sex and age ratios of a natural herd. An auction is held in the fall when the herd population exceeds the bison herd management plan.

**GEOLOGY:** The building of the Sioux quartzite rock in Blue Mounds State Park began many thousands of years ago on the bottom of an ancient sea.

Vast quantities of sand were deposited on this ancient sea floor. Ripple marks from this sandy, watery origin have been preserved and can be observed along many of the park’s rock outcrops. Sandstones were formed from the further accumulation and weight of sand and water. Through time, the increasing pressure from weight, heat and a chemical reaction transformed the sandstone into a very hard quartzite. The pink to purplish color in the quartzite is due to the presence of iron oxide.

The Blue Mounds quartzite outcrop with its cliff line is one of the most dramatic of several large quartzite outcrops in Minnesota and South Dakota.

Glaciers have been the most recent geological event to shape the landscape. They advanced and retreated over this part of Minnesota. The last glacial advance, known as the Wisconsin Ice Age, did not cover the southwest corner of Minnesota. Evidence of glacial activity is still visible today.

Glacial striations, scratches gouged into rock when loose rocks were dragged across the bedrock, can be observed along rock outcrops near the cliff line. Retreating glaciers buried the surrounding bedrock with a “glacial drift” of rock, sand, and gravel 200-300 feet deep.

**THE PRAIRIE AND WILDLIFE:** Blue Mounds State Park is but a small remaining fragment of the once vast tallgrass prairie which covered much of North America’s center. The abundant rock outcrops and shallow soil prevented much of the land within the park from being plowed. Though this land has never been cultivated, other forces have been at work which altered the park’s natural character.

Heavy grazing by domestic livestock diminished the native grasses and wildflowers while introducing foreign and exotic, weedy plants. Special management programs are now underway to restore the vigor and diversity to the park’s native grasses and wildflowers.

Transplanting and seeding of native plants are used in areas of extremely degraded or destroyed prairie. Fire, under controlled situations, is the most important and effective tool for prairie management. Fire helps to stimulate native plants and selects against the non-native weedy species.

The growing season is a colorful parade of Blue Mound’s hundreds of different wildflowers and grasses. By summer’s end, the spectacle of color and growth culminates when the big bluestem grasses have grown to seven feet tall. . .at a rate of almost an inch a day.

Blue Mounds is one of several places where cacti are found in Minnesota. Patches of prickly pear and brittle cacti can be found growing in the shallow soils atop the quartzite outcrops. In late June and early July, the cacti blossoms color Blue Mounds with dots of yellow.

A century ago, bison, elk, antelope, wolves and prairie chickens inhabited this part of Minnesota’s prairie. A

small herd of bison are kept in the park so visitors can view the bison in its native habitat.

The park has a small population of coyotes. The singing howl of this shy animal can be heard over the Blue Mounds at any time of the year. The white-tailed deer is one of several animals that have benefited from the conversion of prairie to plowed agricultural land. Though it is not considered a native to the prairie region a century ago, the park now has a stable population of deer.

Bird watchers can catch glimpses of several western species as well as see and hear the birds of the tallgrass prairie. Summer mornings, and just before dusk, are the best times to hear the grassland’s sparrows, meadowlarks and nighthawks.

Please help us keep Blue Mound’s prairie blooming and colorful for all visitors by not picking the flowers. *Also, for your protection, DO NOT touch or tease the bison and DO NOT enter the bison pasture.*

- SO EVERYONE CAN ENJOY THE PARK. . .**
- The park belongs to all Minnesotans. Please treat it with respect and help us to protect it by following the rules.
  - The park is open year-round. On a daily basis, the park is closed from 10:00 P.M. to 8 A.M. the following morning except to registered campers.
  - Camp only in designated locations.
  - The use of firearms, explosives, air guns, slingshots, traps, seines, nets, bows and arrows, and all other weapons is prohibited in state parks.
  - Pets must be restrained on a leash no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed in park buildings.
  - Park in designated areas only.
  - Motor bikes and other licensed vehicles are allowed only on park roads, not on trails.
  - Enjoy the park wildlife and plants but please respect them. Do not pick or dig up plants, disturb or feed animals, or scavenge dead wood.
  - Build fires only in designated locations—fire rings or fireplaces. Wood is available for purchase from park staff. Portable stoves or grills are permitted.
  - Daily or annual permits are required for all vehicles entering a state park. They may be purchased at the park headquarters or the Information Center in St. Paul (see “FOR MORE INFORMATION” to left).

- **WARNING: The park’s bison are wild animals and unpredictable. For your own safety, please do not enter the bison range.**

*This information is available in alternative format upon request.*

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