

## Field Trip Planning Guide

A field trip to Pinnacles National Park can be an exciting way for students to experience natural phenomena in one of our nation's National Parks! Below are some guidelines and suggestions for planning a successful educational field trip to Pinnacles National Park.

Further questions? You can contact Pinnacles National Park by phone: 831-389-4486 ext 4241

Or by email: [pinn\\_visitor\\_information@nps.gov](mailto:pinn_visitor_information@nps.gov)

### Frequently Asked Questions + Answers

Question	Answer
How many students can I bring on a field trip to Pinnacles?	The size of your group must be limited to no more than <b>35 people on the trails</b> . Groups that consist of more than 35 people may cause negative impacts to the trails and park resources. Most of the trails at Pinnacles are narrow, which makes it difficult to effectively discuss educational concepts to large groups while hiking. <b>Larger class sizes may still visit the park</b> given that the class can be broken into smaller groups. In order to comply with this policy, please plan accordingly.
What is the required student to chaperone ratio?	To ensure a safe day of educational activities, schools need to provide at least a <b>1:8 adult to student ratio</b> . Please plan accordingly to ensure there are enough adults to accompany the students.
When is the best time of year to bring students on a field trip?	Pinnacles can be visited any time of the year, however, the summer and fall months tend to have extremely hot weather (can exceed 100F), which can create dangerous hiking conditions. <b>The most popular time of year is March and April</b> when average high temperatures range from mid 60s to mid 70s. The least popular time of year is December - February when the average high temperatures range from low 50s - mid 60s and rain is more prevalent.
What days are best to bring a field trip to Pinnacles NP?	<b>Tuesday- Thursday</b> are the best days to bring a field trip group to Pinnacles NP- especially if you are planning a hike from the Bear Gulch parking lot. The road to Bear Gulch is narrow and parking can be extremely limited on busy days. Planning a mid-week trip will ensure enough space will be available so that a bus can park at the Bear Gulch lot.
Which park entrance should we use? The East Side (from Hollister) or the West Side (from Soledad)?	If you are arriving via bus, you must use the <b>East Side entrance from Hwy 25</b> . The road system into the West Side of Pinnacles cannot accommodate buses.
Can I schedule a ranger- led tour or hike at Pinnacles NP?	At this time, there are no ranger-led hikes available at Pinnacles NP. There is a self-guided hiking map and lesson plan available <a href="#">HERE</a> . You can also download a Junior Ranger Book <a href="#">HERE</a> . Please contact the park for additional educational resources.
Where should I take students when visiting Pinnacles NP?	One of the most popular hikes is the Moses Spring - Rim Trail loop. This trail is ~2 miles long with ~500 ft elevation gain and can be easily accessed from the Bear Gulch Parking Area (on the east side of the park). This is a moderate hike that will allow you and your group to experience many of the natural phenomena Pinnacles NP has to offer, including the Pinnacles rock formations, the Talus caves (open seasonally), the Bear Gulch Reservoir,

	<p>condor habitat, and viewing several rock climbing routes. A self-guided hiking map and lesson plan is available <a href="#">HERE</a>. You can also download a Junior Ranger Book <a href="#">HERE</a>. Please contact the park for additional educational resources.</p> <p>The East side of the park will also provide access to other trails such as the Condor Gulch, Bear Gulch Caves, and Chalone Peak Trails.</p> <p>*Buses must enter through the East Entrance and can not be accommodated from the West Entrance.</p>
<p>Is there an entrance fee waiver for educational field trips?</p>	<p><b>YES!</b> Visits from accredited educational institutions can have park entrance fees waived. You will need to apply for a <a href="#">fee waiver</a> and submit your application to:</p> <p>Pinnacles National Park  Attn: Education Programs  5000 Hwy 146  Paicines, CA 95043  Office Phone: (831) 389-4486 ext. 4241</p> <p><b>*Please allow a minimum of 60 days for application processing*</b></p>
<p>Is there funding available for the transportation/ buses required for an educational field trip?</p>	<p><b>YES!</b> The National Park Trust will provide transportation grants for Title 1 Schools. You can find more information about the Grant program <a href="#">HERE</a>. Note that the Grant applications are time-sensitive, so please plan accordingly.</p>
<p>How far in advance do I need to plan a field trip to Pinnacles NP?</p>	<p>If you are planning to apply for an entrance <a href="#">fee waiver</a>, then you must submit the application <b>at least 60 days in advance</b> of the date you wish to enter the park.</p> <p>You can still visit the park without a fee waiver, entrance fee information can be found <a href="#">HERE</a>.</p>
<p>Will my school group be able to enter and go through the caves?</p>	<p>The Bear Gulch talus cave on the east side of the park is only open seasonally, depending on the population and behavior of a protected colony of Townsend Big-eared bats. If you would like to visit the Bear Gulch Cave when it is fully open, you should plan your visit at the <b>end of March or October</b>. However, there is no guarantee that these times will coincide with the tenancies of the Townsend Big-eared bats. You can check the schedule of cave openings and closings <a href="#">HERE</a>.</p> <p>If interested in bringing your group into this cave, <b>flashlights or headlamps are required!</b></p>
<p>What should I suggest to parents and students to bring on their field trip to Pinnacles NP?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Each student, teacher and chaperone should each have at least <b>1-liter of water</b> for a typical 2-mile round trip hike. For a longer hike, each individual should have 1-liter of water for each additional mile.</li> <li>-Each student, teacher, and chaperone should have <b>closed-toe hiking shoes</b>, such as sneakers or boots; Sandals are not proper hiking shoes.</li> <li>-Everyone attending the trip should also be prepared with the <b>proper clothing given the season</b> (always bring layers, no matter the season). The weather at Pinnacles is unpredictable and can change frequently throughout the day. Teachers may call 831-389-4485 to receive a weather update for the week or check the NOAA website <a href="#">HERE</a>.</li> <li>-If going through the cave, teachers, students and chaperones must bring <b>flashlights or headlamps</b>.</li> </ul>

<p>What amenities are available during our visit inside the park?</p>	<p>-There is a visitor center and campground past the east entrance gate. The <b>Pinnacles Visitor Center</b> is open daily from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Here, you can find a camp-store (open from 9:30am to 6pm) with snacks and drinks, a gift shop, and a bookstore. Parking, restrooms, water, and visitor information are also available in this area. Some cellular service providers get a cellular signal in this area.</p> <p>-The <b>Bear Gulch Day Use Area</b> area is about three miles up the road. Here you can find parking for several trailheads, restrooms, drinking water, and picnic tables. There is a seasonal Nature Center here that includes cultural and natural history exhibits. Maps and information are also available here. You will likely not have a cellular signal here, so plan accordingly.</p>
<p>What if I have more questions or would like to speak to someone at the park?</p>	<p>If you have further questions or concerns, you can contact Pinnacles National Park by phone: 831-389-4486 ext 4241. Or by email: <a href="mailto:pinn_visitor_information@nps.gov">pinn_visitor_information@nps.gov</a> please allow one week time for email response.</p>

Adapted from: <https://www.nps.gov/pinn/learn/education/classrooms/fieldtrips.htm>