



Visit Natural Tunnel State Park and Scott County

Natural Tunnel State Park, centered around the Natural Tunnel, a massive naturally-formed cave that is used as a railroad tunnel. It is located in the Appalachian Mountains near Duffield in Scott County.

The Natural Tunnel, which spans to 200 feet (61 meters) wide and 80 feet (24 meters) high, began to form more than a million years ago when groundwater bearing carbonic acid percolated through crevices and slowly dissolved limestone and dolomite bedrock. A small river, which is now called Stock Creek, was diverted underground and it continued to erode the tunnel over many millennia.

The walls of the tunnel show evidence of prehistoric life. Many fossils have been found in the creek bed and in the tunnel walls.

Although Natural Tunnel State Park was established in 1967 and opened to the public in 1971, Natural Tunnel has been a tourist attraction for more than a century; Daniel Boone is believed to have been the first European to see it in the 18th century. The 41st U.S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan dubbed it the "Eighth Wonder of the World."

A railroad was constructed through the natural tunnel in 1893. The first train, operated by the Virginia & Southwestern Railway Company, passed through the following year. In 1899, the Natural tunnel was purchased by the Tennessee & Carolina & Iron and Steel Company. The railway originally carried passenger trains; today, the line is still open but is only used to transport coal.

There is a 1,600 foot (500 metres) boardwalk that allows disabled visitors to gain access to the natural tunnel.

Park visitors can also camp, swim, picnic and hike. There is a visitors center and naturally-formed amphitheaters that are up to 600 feet (180 meters) high.

Photos and information from Wikipedia and www.virginia.org.

