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AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE SEES RECORD VISITATION FOR 2020
Lodging reservation system now open for 2021

American Prairie Reserve experienced a surge of visitation in 2020, recording more people staying overnight at its facilities than any previous year.

Overnight reservations last year were up nearly 200 percent compared to 2019. The uptick in visitation was driven in part by people seeking respite outdoors from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, and came despite having only 40 percent of the Reserve's camping and lodging inventory available due to COVID-19 precautions.

According to American Prairie's Director of Recreation and Public Access Mike Kautz, 665 reservations were recorded in 2020 from the Reserve's three huts, and two campgrounds. In comparison, there were 232 reservations recorded in 2019. A reservation is defined as a group reserving one unit of lodging (campsite, hut or cabin), and not a count of individual visitors. Kautz says each reservation had an average group size of 4 people.

In addition, the majority of people visiting the Reserve are Montanans. In 2020, more than 88% of the reservations for American Prairie's hut system and more than 50% of reservations for the campgrounds came from state residents.

Kautz says this growing interest suggests visitors should consider making reservations earlier this year.

"Word of this pretty unique prairie experience we offer is quickly spreading," said Kautz. "We fully expect our reservation inventory to fill up quickly this year so anyone who is curious about the lodging options shouldn't wait too long."

Reservations for American Prairie's 2021 visitation season are now being accepted, as of February 1. Interested members of the public are invited to begin planning their upcoming trips to the prairie by visiting www.americanprairie.org/visit.

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Supporters of the Montana-based nonprofit received an early booking access benefit starting on January 15, 2021 and Kautz says reservations made during that two-week period were also up more than 200 percent. Every supporter who donated at any level in the past year gained access to that early booking window and received a 20 percent discount on lodging.

“As interest grows in visiting the Reserve, giving supporters early access to making reservations is an easy way for us to say thank you,” said Kautz.

Kautz points out that online reservations are by no means a requirement to explore American Prairie Reserve.

“Dispersed tent camping on public lands and on the Reserve’s deeded lands is free of charge and anyone is welcome to enjoy it,” said Kautz. “However, we encourage all visitors to read the safety considerations on our website and prepare adequately whether they make reservations or rough it with dispersed camping.”

Lodging Amenities

This year, visitors have the option of reserving a variety of accommodations for families and groups to stage adventures into the prairie grasslands.

That includes a growing hut system intended to provide affordable lodging options for larger families or groups of friends. There are now three huts available on American Prairie’s PN unit, located in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. Each hut costs \$128 per night, can host up to 8-9 people and offer kitchens, bedrooms and a bathroom.

American Prairie also has two campgrounds, Buffalo Camp and Antelope Creek Campground, featuring RV sites with full hookups, rental cabins, tent platforms, and potable water. At Antelope Creek Campground, cabins can be reserved for \$61 per night, tent sites for \$15 per night, and RV sites for \$32 per night. At Buffalo Camp, tent sites are \$10 per night and RV sites are \$15 per night.

Each year, the Montana-based non-profit organization hosts thousands of resident and nonresident visitors who travel to hunt, hike, paddle, view wildlife, and experience the unique prairie grasslands found in North Central Montana.

“Montana’s northern plains are one of the few remaining places where it is still possible to save one of the least protected ecosystems on the planet – our grasslands,” said Alison Fox, CEO of American Prairie Reserve. “We invite you and your family to visit us in 2021 and learn more about the work we are doing to restore Montana’s wildlife and prairie habitat.”

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About American Prairie Reserve

American Prairie Reserve's vision is to create a vast and collaboratively-managed prairie destination that serves as a fully functioning ecosystem for wildlife, and offers visitors permanent access to the landscape that shaped our nation's character. When complete, the Reserve will be larger than Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks combined, and will support wildlife species that historically called the Great Plains home. Already open to the public for recreation including camping and hunting, the Reserve offers visitors an opportunity to connect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at americanprairie.org.