

MUSHROOM ROCK

In Dakota Sandstone Country are five acres of curious sandstone formations that have an Alice in Wonderland effect on visitors. Located one mile south of Carneiro in Ellsworth County, Mushroom Rock State Park is one of the truly amazing wonders of Kansas.



History

Part of the Smoky Hill region in northcentral Kansas, the Dakota formations are the remains of beach sands and sediments of the Cretaceous Period, the interval of geologic time from about 144 to 66 million years ago. Sandstone, a sedimentary rock, is held together by natural cement. The Mushroom Rocks are cemented by calcium carbonate. These “concretions” are formed when minerals in water are deposited around a nucleus, creating a rounded mass. They are generally harder than other rocks around them at Mushroom Rock State Park.

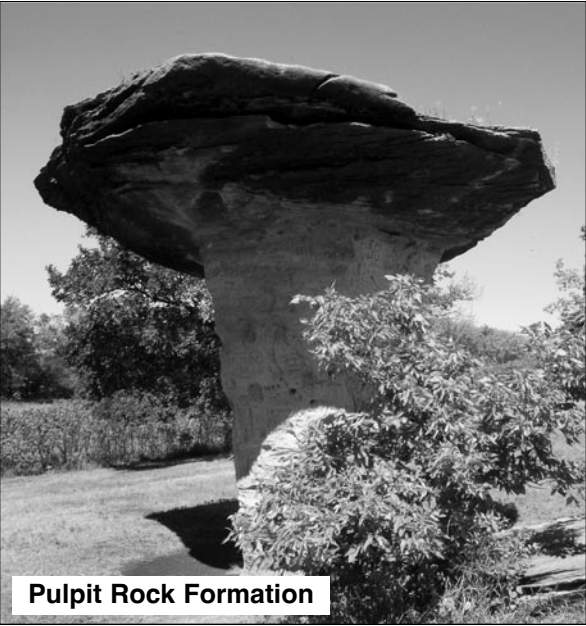
The formations that are the Mushroom Rocks are all that is left of a very deep layer of Dakota Sandstone covering the entire area. Circulating ground water activated calcite crystals or limy fossil fragments scattered throughout the sandstone. This formed a limy cement that grew outward in all directions. The uncemented sandstone around these spheres eroded away, leaving huge concretions (the largest of which have diameters of 27 feet.) balanced on the natural sandstone of the stem that eroded away more rapidly.

In Kansas, layers are not uplifted or folded as in the mountains. Material was laid down in almost horizontal layers. Spheres that are not positioned with the material running horizontally have probably fallen from their original positions.

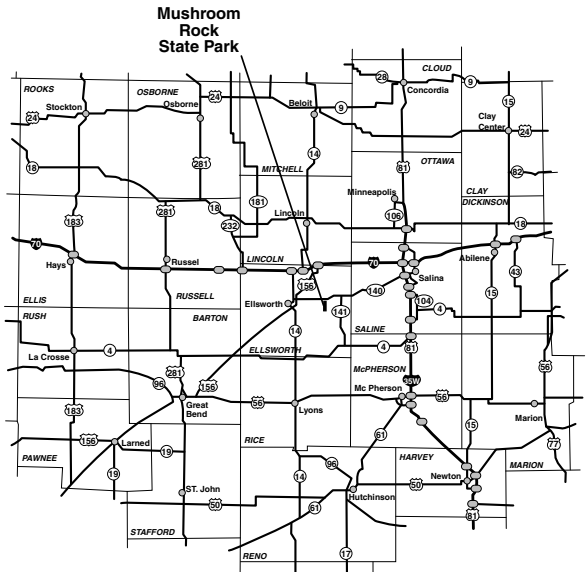
This unique geological oddity has drawn people including Indians, mountain men, soldiers, and present day visitors. Kit Carson was to have said that the area was his “favorite little place.” Until 1963, the only way to see these spheres was by traveling a rough trail on privately-owned land. Ellsworth County constructed a road that year through the heart of the area, allowing access by automobile. The Ellsworth County Historical Society secured these 5 acres, owned by two different parties, to be deeded to the Kansas Park and Resources Authority, now Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

On April 25, 1965, with over 300 people in attendance, Mushroom Rock State Park was officially presented to the state and dedicated as a state park. Mushroom Rock State Park, a satellite park of Kanopolis State Park, is designated as a day-use area only. There is no camping allowed, and no permits are required.

Devil’s Oven Formation

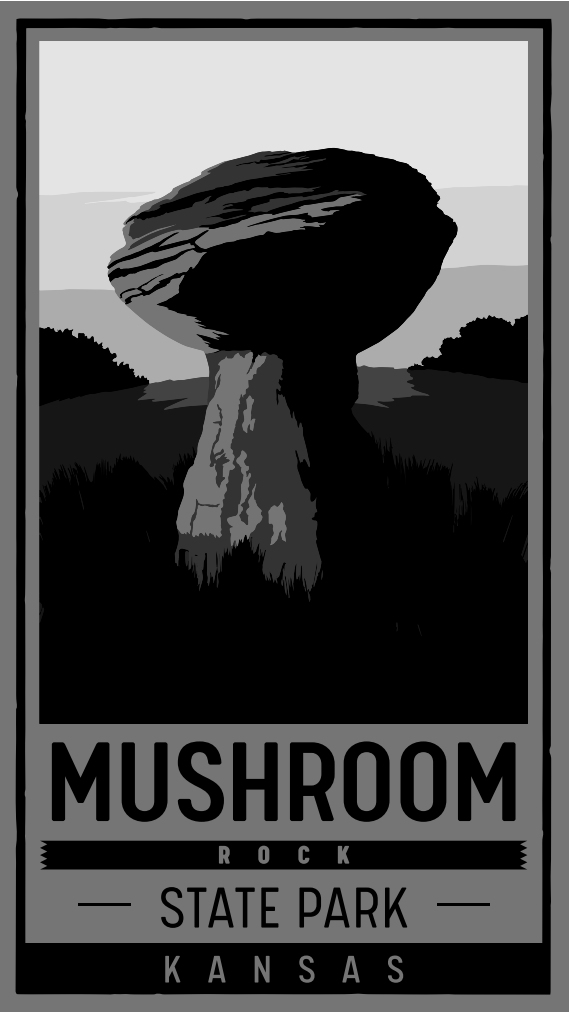


Pulpit Rock Formation



General Area Map

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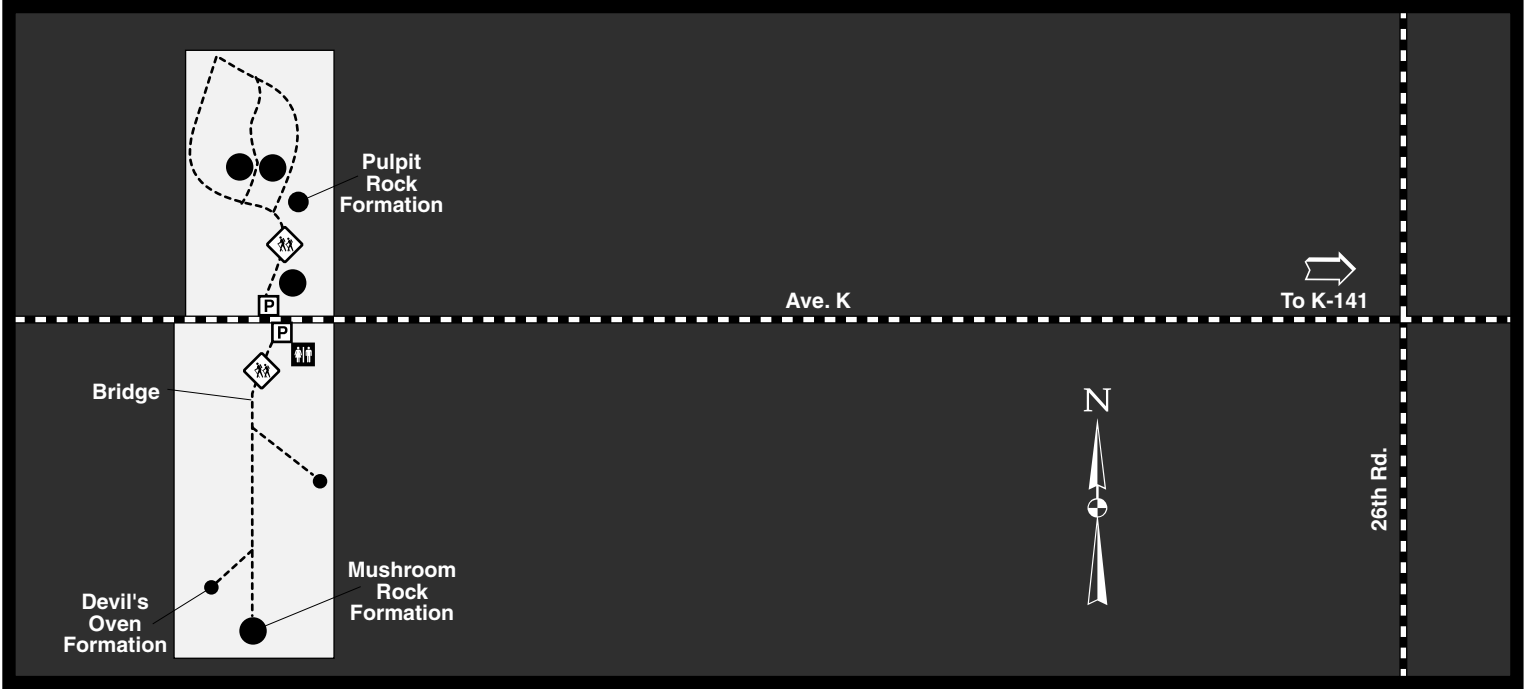
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MUSHROOM ROCK STATE PARK



LEGEND	
Park Area	
Private Lands	
Paved Roads	
Gravel Roads	
Unimproved Roads	
Parking Area	
Vault Toilet	
Trail/Trailhead Hike	
Natural Formations	