Maquoketa Caves State Park

Camping Guide

10970 98th Street, Maquoketa, IA 52060 | 563/652-5833 | Maquoketa@dnr.iowa.gov

Quick Reference

Detail	Information
Season	March 1 – November 30 (campground closed Dec 1 – Feb 28)
Cave Season	Caves open April 1 – November 15 (closed winter for bat hibernation)
Park Hours	Daily 4:00am – 10:30pm year-round
Entrance Fee	None — no fee to enter the park
Reservations	100% reservable; book up to 3 months in advance at Iowa State Parks online
Phone	563/652-5833
Email	Maquoketa@dnr.iowa.gov
Address	10970 98th Street, Maquoketa, IA 52060

The Campground

The campground sits among beautiful pine trees and offers both standard drive-in sites and primitive hike-in sites. There are around 30 sites total — approximately 25 with electric hookups (20/30/50-amp) and the remainder designated as non-electric walk-in tent sites. Walk-in tent sites sit between 25 and 90 yards from the parking area. All sites include a level gravel pad, picnic table, and fire ring, with good tree shade throughout.

Facilities

The campground includes modern restrooms with flush toilets and hot showers, potable water, a dump station, picnic tables, and a children's play structure located between the campground and picnic area.

> *Note: As of late 2025, modern restrooms and showers are closed for the season and are due to reopen in May 2026. Frost-free hydrants remain active throughout the campground in the meantime.*

Two historic CCC-built picnic shelters from the 1930s are available on a first-come, first-served basis and often host the park's summer nature programs. These stone shelters are perched high on the bluff above Balanced Rock, with stunning views of the valley below.

Reservations

All sites are reservable — the campground is 100% reservable with no walk-up sites. Reservations open on March 1st for the upcoming season and can be made up to 3 months in advance, with same-day bookings accepted until 9:00pm CST.

Peak months (May through September) fill up quickly. Booking at least 2 to 4 weeks ahead is strongly advised for summer weekends and holiday periods. Reservations are made through the Iowa State Parks online reservation system.

Seasons & Cave Access

The campground is open from March 1st through November 30th. The caves are open from April 1st through November 15th. The caves close each winter to protect the bat colonies that hibernate inside — as many as 3,000 bats swarm into certain passages in mid-November to sleep through the cold months, and typically make their grand exodus in March.

Winter camping is not available. The park itself (trails, picnic areas, Natural Bridge, Balanced Rock) remains open year-round even when the campground and caves are closed.

> *Stargazing tip: The nearest town is seven miles away, making for genuinely dark skies. Fall camping in particular offers excellent stargazing conditions once the bats have settled in for winter.*

RV Information

Electric sites offer 20/30/50-amp hookups. All RV sites are back-in style, with driveway lengths ranging from 31 to 68 feet. The park roads are manageable for most RVs, though the access roads are narrow in places — very large rigs (40ft+) may find maneuvering tight. A dump station is available on site.

Group Camping

There are three large youth group campsites, each with its own basic restroom, fire pit, and picnic tables. They are accessed by taking the second left after entering the park off 98th Street, past the Visitor Center. Each site is surrounded by tall grasses giving good privacy and open skies for stargazing. Group sites are ideal for Scout troops, school groups, and youth organizations.

Accessibility

The shower and restroom building is fully accessible. Site #25 has some accessible features. Note that the trail system throughout the park is not fully accessible due to steep inclines, rocky terrain, and staircases — many trails require significant climbing and some cave access involves crawling.

Rules & Good to Know

Topic	Rule / Note
Pets	Welcome, but must be kept on a leash at all times throughout the park.
Firewood	Do not bring firewood across county or state lines — this is to prevent the spread of emerald ash borer. Purchase firewood locally in Maquoketa.
Alcohol	Prohibited in all Iowa State Parks.

Cave conduct	Take nothing but pictures, kill nothing but time, leave nothing but footprints. Never touch cave formations — even clean hands leave oils that halt speleothem growth permanently.
Fires	Fires permitted in designated fire rings only. Never leave a fire unattended.
Quiet hours	Observe quiet hours in the campground — typically 10:30pm in line with park closing.
Wildlife	Do not feed wildlife. The park is home to white-tailed deer, foxes, raccoons, woodchucks, chipmunks, and numerous bat species.

Getting There & Nearby Supplies

From Maquoketa: go north about one mile on Highway 61, turn west onto County Road Y-31, go six miles, then turn west onto 98th Street. The park entrance is on the right.

The town of Maquoketa (7 miles southeast) has grocery stores, gas stations, and restaurants. Dubuque (approximately 35 minutes east) offers larger retail options. The Maquoketa River is within one mile of the park — local vendors rent inner tubes and canoes for floating the river, making a great half-day add-on.

Maquoketa Chamber of Commerce: 563/652-4602 — www.maquoketaia.com — for local lodging, dining, and activity recommendations.

Information sourced from Iowa DNR, Iowa State Parks reservation system, and the Maquoketa Caves State Park History Guide. Verify current rates and availability at iowastateparks.reserveamerica.com.