



An American Tour: 106



Arizona's Great Meteor Crater

Meteor Crater is a meteorite impact crater approximately 37 miles east of Flagstaff and 18 miles west of Winslow in the northern Arizona desert. Because the United States Board on Geographic Names commonly recognizes names of natural features derived from the nearest post office, the feature acquired the name of "Meteor Crater" from the nearby post office named Meteor. The site was formerly known as the Canyon Diablo Crater and fragments of the meteorite are officially called the Canyon Diablo Meteorite. Scientists refer to the crater as Barringer Crater in honor of Daniel Barringer, who was first to suggest that it was produced by meteorite impact. The crater is privately owned by the Barringer family through their Barringer Crater Company, which proclaims it to be the "best preserved meteorite crater on Earth".

Despite its importance as a geological site, the crater is not protected as a national monument, a status that would require federal ownership. It was designated a National Natural Landmark in November 1967. Meteor Crater lies at an elevation of about 5,710 ft above sea level. It is about 3,900 ft in diameter, some 560 ft deep, and is surrounded by a rim that rises 148 ft above the surrounding plains. The center of the crater is filled with 690–790 ft of rubble lying above crater bedrock. One of the interesting features of the crater is its squared-off outline, believed to be caused by existing regional jointing (cracks) in the strata at the impact site.

Meteor Crater is a popular tourist attraction, with an admission fee charged to see the crater. The Meteor Crater Visitor Center on the north rim features interactive exhibits and displays about meteorites and asteroids, space, the solar system and comets. It features the American Astronaut Wall of Fame and such artifacts on display as an Apollo boilerplate command module, a 1,406 lb. meteorite found in the area, and meteorite specimens from Meteor Crater. Formerly known as the Museum of Astrogeology, the Visitor Center includes a movie theater, a gift shop, and observation areas with views inside the rim of the crater. Guided tours of the rim are offered daily. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meteor_Crater]

