



An American Tour: 96



Colorado Springs' *Kissing Camels*

The Kissing Camels is a unique rock formation in the Garden of the Gods, a public park located in Colorado Springs, CO. It was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1971. Having purchased additional surrounding land, the City of Colorado Springs' park grew to 1,364 acres. In 1995 the Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center was opened just outside of the park.

The outstanding geologic features of the park are the ancient sedimentary beds of deep-red, pink and white sandstones, conglomerates and limestone that were deposited horizontally, but have now been tilted vertically and faulted into "fins" by the immense mountain building forces caused by the uplift of the Rocky Mountains and the Pikes Peak massif. The following Pleistocene Ice Age resulted in erosion and glaciation of the rock, creating the present rock formations. Evidence of past ages can be read in the rocks: ancient seas, eroded remains of ancestral mountain ranges, alluvial fans, sandy beaches and great sand dune fields.

The resulting rocks had different shapes: toppled, overturned, stood-up, pushed around and slanted. Balanced Rock, a fountain formation, is a combination of coarse sand, gravel, silica and hematite. It is hematite that gives the large balancing rock its red hue. It toppled off of a ledge, first resting on sand that was gradually worn away at the base. Gateway Rock and Three Graces are stood-up rocks that had been pushed up vertically. The Tower of Babel is Lyons Formation, a stone made of fine sand from an ancient beach.

