



MONUMENTO NATURAL CUEVA DEL MILODÓN

SIMBOLOGÍA

■ ■ ■ ■ Cueva del Milodón trail (1 hour)

■ ■ ■ ■ Viewpoint trail (45 minutes)

■ ■ ■ ■ Cave and Eaves trail (3 a 4 hours)

— Vehicular Road



Viewpoint



Trail



Cave



Picnic zone



Cycling



Audio guide



Flora and fauna



Archeological formation



Vehicle access



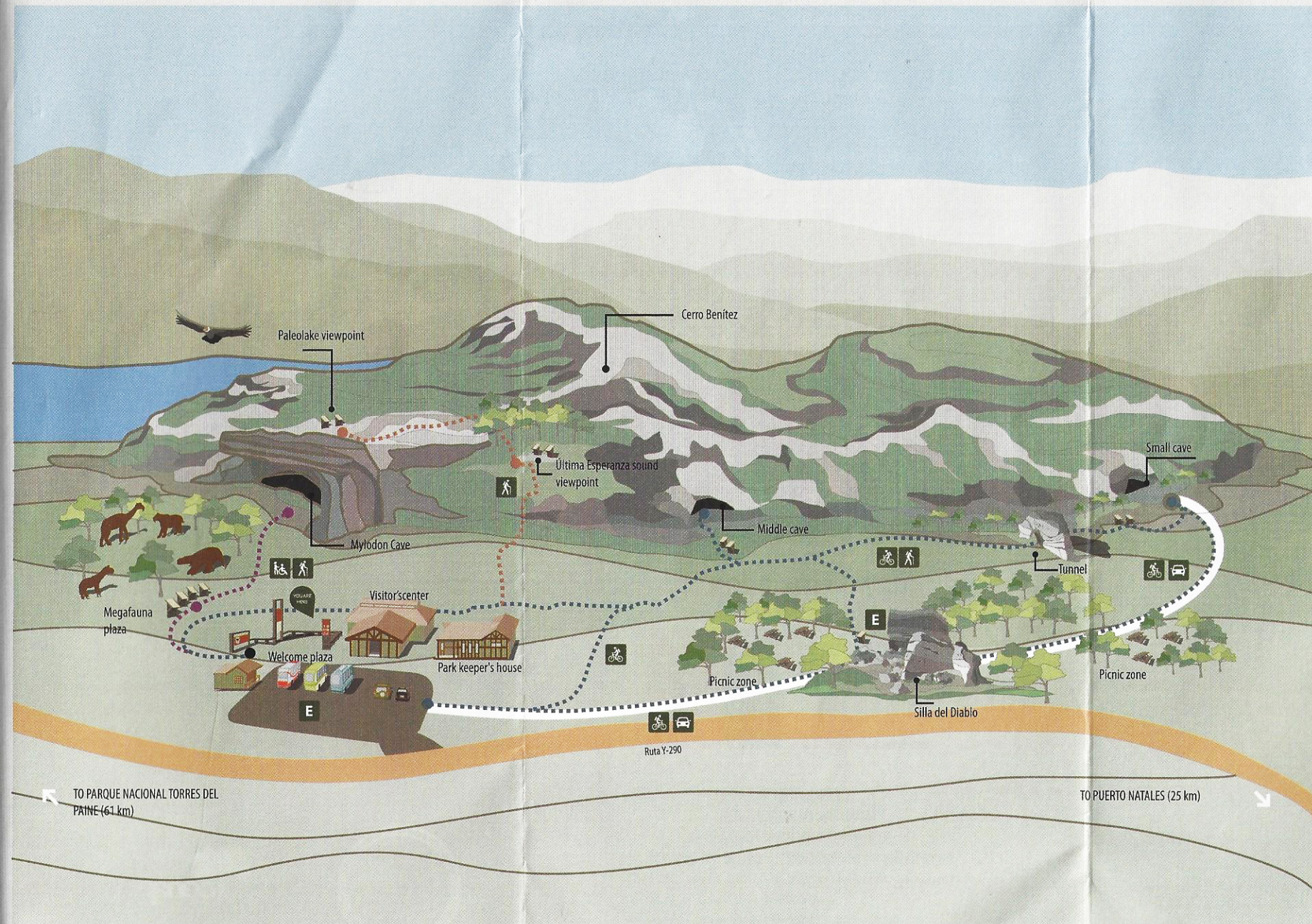
Information center



Restrooms



Handicap accessible path



TO PARQUE NACIONAL TORRES DEL PAINE (61 km)

TO PUERTO NATALES (25 km)

Ruta Y-290

Cerro Benítez

Paleolake viewpoint

Ultima Esperanza sound viewpoint

Middle cave

Small cave

Tunnel

Mylodon Cave

Visitor's center

Welcome plaza

Park keeper's house

Picnic zone

Silla del Diablo

Picnic zone

Mega fauna plaza



The Mylodon Cave Natural Monument is a protected wildlife area that guard the caves and eaves of Benitez hill. Its 189.5 heactares contain traces of natural and cultural importance. It is located on Route Y-290,25 km from Puerto Natales.

History

In 1895, the settler, Hermann Eberhard, visited the cave and found inside it a strange skin with thick hair; it was the fur of an extinct animal called mylodon. Starting with this finding, the Mylodon Cave and its surroundings became a rich source of evidence for knowing the past of Patagonia and humanity.

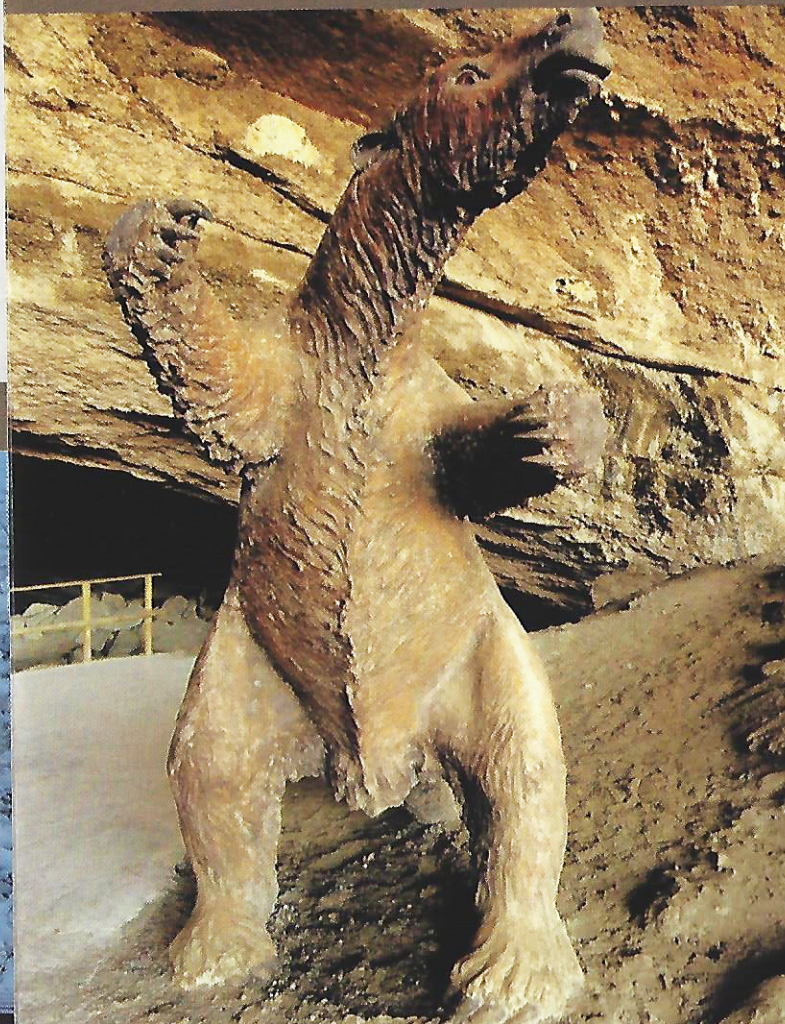
In 1968, the area was declared a Historical Monument by the Ministry of Education, and in 1993 joined the State Protected Areas System as a Natural Monument. It is currently administered by CONAF.

The Mylodon

The *Mylodon darwini* was a large mammal that lived in this area between 14,500 and 10,000 years ago. Ancient relative of the modern-day sloth, it moved on all fours, measured about 2 m from head to tail, weighed about a ton, and was covered with long thick fur.

The Mylodon was an herbivore of slow habits, but could be a formidable opponent for predators such as big cats, because of its size, powerful claws, and tiny bones that it had embedded in its skin, which were remnants of an ancient protective shell similar to that of an armadillo.

It is the extinct animal that is present in the most amount of sites excavated in the area.



Scientific Importance

The caves and eaves of Benítez hill have been a rich source of study for various sciences, and the findings made here have helped us to know the history of the last 18,000 years in Patagonia.

Geology has established that massive submarine avalanches gave start to the rocks of Benítez hill and that later a glacial lake formed the caves and eaves.

Paleontology has characterized the extinct megafauna that lived here 14,500 years ago: among them, the Mylodon, a giant sloth; the *Macrauchenia*, similar to an enormous guanaco; and the horse. These herbivores were preyed on by the saber-toothed tiger, the Patagonian panther and the bear. These large animals disappeared about 10,000 years ago, with the most widely accepted explanation being that climate change, together with phenomena such as volcanic eruptions and the arrival of the first hunters, led to their extinction.

According to archaeologists, the first inhabitants arrived in the area about 11,000 years ago. Since then, man has inhabited this land through cultural groups that changed over time.

Upon arrival of the first European settlers, this was Aónikenk territory and belonged to this nomadic group who were perfectly adapted to the climate of Patagonia.



Milodón



Macrauchenia



Caballo enano



Tigre dientes de sable

