

# ARIZONA

GRAND CANYON STATE

## Underground AZ Caverns and Caves in Arizona



Enchanting caves and caverns entice visitors with adventurous spirits that relish the mystery of what lies in the otherworldly landscapes that await them underground. There are several caves in Arizona of varying difficulties boasting rare formations. Some are developed, and others are untouched. These natural wonders are non-renewable resources. Make sure to move carefully to avoid damaging cave features, and make sure not to leave trash or vandalism behind.

**\*\*White-Nose Syndrome** is a disease that is decimating bat populations in North America and has killed over five million bats in the United States since the disease's discovery in January 2006. Please help stop the spread of the disease by using antibacterial/fungal wipes to decontaminate cameras, water bottles, flashlights, soles of boots, and backpacks that have been worn in another cave. Help save these important pollinators! \*\*

## Western Arizona

WILLOW BEACH: [Emerald Cave](#) — Located on the Arizona side of the Colorado River, this cave is known for its clear, emerald green water that shines in the afternoon sun. Is a popular stop on [kayaking trips](#) down the Black Canyon Water Trail (pictured), a 30-mile section of the Lower Colorado River flowing through Lake Mead National Recreation Area, designated as the first National Water Trail in the Southwest and the first to flow through a desert. Beyond stopping in Emerald Cave, visitors to the Trail may see Hoover Dam, active hot springs, numerous caves and coves, sandy beaches, historic constructions used in building the Dam, and wildlife. Vendors listed on the [Black Canyon Water Trail](#) website are permitted to operate guided tours that start at a launch site within the Hoover Dam Security Zone. Those wishing to kayak without a guide can rent them in Willow Beach.



Tel: (702) 293-8990

Willow Beach, AZ 86445

YUMA: [The Hull Mine](#) — This enchanting mine is home to incredible fluorescing mineral walls, containing as many as ten stunning colors under ultra-violet light. It was part of the Arizona Railroad Mine in the 1880s. Tours take visitors 100 feet underground to see an exposed silver galena vein, crystal formations, an underground blacksmith shop, and forgotten mining artifacts. Entering the florescent chamber is like standing in a kaleidoscope. Tours are operated by the [Castle Dome Museum](#).

Tel: (928) 920-3062

Castle Dome Mine Rd, Yuma, AZ 85365

## Northern Arizona

BEASLEY FLAT: [Mindeleff Cavates](#) — The array of caves across the Verde River from the Beasley Flat Day Use Area is known as the Mindeleff Cavate Lodge Group, named after Cosmos Mindeleff, a surveyor and architectural draftsman who recorded the site on his seminal survey of Verde River ruins. The site consists of 98 hand carved caves and 367 rooms connected by tunnels.

Beasley Flat, AZ 86322



GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK: [Cave of the Domes](#) — This is the only cave of approximately 1,000 caves in the Grand Canyon that is open to the public. It is located on Horseshoe Mesa and is accessed via the [Grandview Trail](#). Built in 1893 as a mining route, this rocky, exposed, and strenuous trail requires caution. Large steps and extreme dropoffs intensify the steepness of the trail. Upper portions can be extremely icy in winter and early spring—use over-the-shoe traction devices.

Tel: (928) 638-7817

Grand Canyon Village, AZ 86023

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK: [Redwall Cavern](#) — Located along the Colorado River in the eastern portion of the Grand Canyon, this massive cavern is accessible by taking a Grand Canyon rafting tour (pictured) provided by one of the numerous companies that are permitted to operate in the national park. The cavern, which is open to the public because it is not a cave by the National Park Service's definition, appears small from the river. However, upon entering, visitors are greeted by a cavernous amphitheater. John Wesley Powell, known for his exploration of the Grand Canyon in 1869 during the government-sponsored Powell Geographic Expedition, estimated that 50,000 people could fit in Redwall Cavern. Towards the mouth of the cavern, fossils of sea creatures are visible in the walls. Though it is open to the public, camping and building fires is prohibited.



Tel: (928) 638-7888

Mile 33 of the Colorado River, Grand Canyon National Park, AZ 86052



FLAGSTAFF: [Lava River Cave](#) — The Ponderosa pine forest houses a volcanic wonder. Lava River Cave is a lava tube near Flagstaff that was formed by a volcanic vent located in Hart Prairie. As the lava flowed from the vent, the outside hardened into a tube like formation. This newly created tunnel filled with molten lava creating a fiery faucet. Once the flow was done the cave cooled and remains a mile-long tunnel for all of those brave enough to explore it.

This 700,000 year old formation remains a cool 35°-45° even in the summer. The entrance to the cave

can be slippery, but once in the cave, it is a fairly easy walk on a rocky floor. The cave is accessed by a scenic forest service road (pictured) that is closed during the winter. In the winter, visitors need to ski or snowshoe to the cave. Year round, make sure to bring at least two flashlights.

Tel: (928) 526-0866

171B Forest Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

PEACH SPRINGS: [Grand Canyon Caverns](#) — This natural limestone cavern 210 feet underground is the largest dry cavern in the US. Tours range from 25 minutes to 2.5 hours. The short tour is wheelchair accessible. An elevator descends 21 stories to the Chapel of the Ages cavern, which is larger than two football fields. Guides tell the history of the Caverns and point out selenite and limestone crystals, unique “winter crystals,” and helecite crystals (a very rare form of selenite). Those seeking a unique dining experience should try the Cavern Grotto, a small restaurant 200 feet underground that seats 16 people. Overnight stays also available in the fully-equipped hotel room.



Sharlene Fouser

Tel: (928) 422-3223

Mm 115 Route 66, Peach Springs, AZ 86434

WINSLOW: [Mystery Cave / Apache Death Cave](#)— Two Guns, AZ was a former tourist stop on Route 66, originally known as Canyon Lodge. Harry “Two Guns” Miller started a zoo on the property, featuring animals native to Arizona. He built fake ruins in the Apache Death Cave, where 42 Apache died in battle with the Navajo after raiding and killing Navajo encampments in 1878. He started offering tours of the cave, renaming it “Mystery Cave.” Today, visitors can explore the ruins of the zoo, the cave with its fake ruins, and the mysterious ghost town that is purportedly cursed.

2 Guns, Winslow, AZ 86047

## Central Arizona

CAVE CREEK: [The Cave on Cave Creek](#) — This 100-foot rock shelter has a colorful [history](#). The namesake of Cave Creek, it has been inhabited for 11,000 years. It was likely the site of a battle between the Tonto Apaches and the US Cavalry in 1873 and was used to produce “white-lightning” during prohibition. The cave boasts numerous petroglyphs and pictographs on the walls and grinding holes in the floor. Today, the cave is part of the Preserve at the Cave run by the Desert Foothills Land Trust and is not open to the public, except on guided tours.

Guided tours of the cave are available up to six times a year.

Tel: (480) 488-6131

Desert Foothills Land Trust Office: 36800 Sidewinder Rd, Building C 26, Cave Creek, AZ 85331

FOUNTAIN HILLS: [Sami Fine Jewelry](#), a family-owned jewelry enterprise, offers a [Four Peaks Arizona Amethyst mine tour](#) to see the beautiful Four Peaks amethyst gems close up. The mine is off limits to all visitors and hikers, except on this special tour. Arizona produces some of the highest quality amethyst in the world, and it is included in the crown jewels of five countries. This exclusive trip, only offered a few times a year, allows guests to travel to the mine by helicopter and meet the owner of the mine, Kurt Cavano, along with the miners. The miners accompany guests inside the mine to show how they extract this local beauty. Those who don't mind getting a little dirty are invited to try mining on their own. Reservations are required, and seats are very limited.

Tel: (480) 568-4743 or (855) 912-8135

6704 Avenue of the Fountains #100, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268

GOLD CANYON: [Wave Cave](#) — Located in the Superstition Mountains, the name of this cave comes from the fascinating formation at its mouth. The rock has been eroded and is now shaped like a massive wave that looks as if at any moment it could break into a tube worthy of Pipeline. It is a popular photo stop for those that want a photo of themselves surfing in the desert.

Gold Canyon, AZ 85118

PHOENIX: [Hole in the Rock](#) — This naturally eroded rock formation was once used as a calendar devise



by the ancient hohokam people. The hole in the ceiling of the rockshelter creates a ray of light that changes positions on the floor throughout the year. Today, Hole in the Rock is easily accessible by a 0.1-mile hike. This place is known for its unobstructed panoramic views of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area and is a popular place to watch one of Arizona's famous sunsets.

Tel: (602) 256-3220

625 N Galvin Pkwy, Phoenix, AZ 85008

ROOSEVELT: [Tonto National Monument Lower Cliff Dwelling](#) is open all year. The 20-room, multi-story masonry and adobe pueblo was built in the cave around 1300 A.D. by the Salado people. The cave is 40 feet high, 85 feet long, and 48 feet deep. Unlike most cliff dwelling sites, this one actually lets visitors enter multiple rooms in the pueblo. The .5-mile trail to reach it is steep but paved, and the view of the lake from the mouth of the cave is breathtaking. **\*\*The cutoff time to start a hike is firm; don't be late.\*\***

Tel: (928) 467-2241  
26260 AZ-188, Roosevelt, AZ 85545



ROOSEVELT: [Tonto National Monument Upper Cliff Dwelling](#) is open November through April every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The 40-room, multi-story masonry and adobe pueblo was built in the cave around 1300 A.D. by the Salado people. The cave is 70 feet wide, 80 feet high, and 60 feet deep. The dwelling has partially intact roofs and a number of rare architectural features. Access to the Upper Cliff Dwelling is restricted to small, guided tours to reduce wear on the site. Call for reservations early, as spaces fill up quickly. **\*\*This rocky, 3-mile hike takes about 3-4 hours and is not recommended for children 8 years and younger.**

Tel: (928) 467-2241  
26260 AZ-188, Roosevelt, AZ 85545

## Southern Arizona



BENSON: [Kartchner Caverns State Park](#) — Kartchner Caverns State Park (near Benson, Arizona) is a wet, “live” cave with stunning limestone in Southeastern Arizona. Water percolates from the surface and calcium carbonate features continue to grow in the darkness. On the guided cave tours, visitors view dynamic structures such as stalactites dripping

down like icicles and giant stalagmites reaching up from the ground, sometimes meeting to form a massive column. The caverns host some of the world's most diverse minerals and formations.

Tel: (520) 586-4100  
2980 Arizona 90, Benson, AZ 85602

BISBEE: [Queen Mine Tour](#) — Ride a train into a former hard-rock copper mine and experience one of the most charming activities that Bisbee has to offer. Along with access into the mine, guests will get to dress up like miners—with headlamps and yellow slickers provided. Many of the tour guides are former miners, so guests will get the opportunity to fully engulf themselves in a truly educational experience.

Tel: (520) 432-2071

478 N Dart Rd, Bisbee, AZ 85603



HEREFORD: [Coronado Cave](#) — This large limestone cave is part of the Coronado National Memorial, which was created to commemorate the lasting legacies of the first interactions between Native Americans and Europeans in the American Southwest and northwestern Mexico. Many of these interactions proved violent and bloody at the hands of the Spanish and Aztec allies that joined the expedition. In this regard, the park serves as a site of conscience, a place where one can reflect on the past and the trials and tribulations that the Native Americans endured. However, these first interactions ushered in an era of cultural change and endurance, resulting in a unique combination of traditions, music, arts, and architecture that is distinctively representative of the people and places of the area.



Coronado Cave has likely been a shelter and hideout for the middle archaic people around 6,000 BC, and more recently by the Chiricahua Apache, other Apache peoples, Mexican and European miners, and settlers. The trail to the cave entrance is .5 mile, with an elevation gain of 500 feet. This large, undeveloped cave is 600 feet long and 70 feet wide. It houses large cave formations. Please remember not to touch the formations or the cave walls without gloves, as oils from skin can prevent the growth of new formations.

Tel: (520) 366-5515

4101 W Montezuma Canyon Rd, Hereford, AZ 85615

ORACLE: [Peppersauce Cave](#) — Located in Nugget Canyon in the Santa Catalina Mountains south of Oracle, the cave is the most heavily visited wild cave in Arizona, with an estimated 15,000 visitors per year. The cave has multiple rooms and an underground lake. In early 2018, the cave went through a massive [restoration project](#) to remove graffiti and trash.

Tel: (520) 388-8300

S Mt Lemmon Rd, Oracle, AZ 85623

SONOITA: [Onyx Cave](#) — Onyx Cave is a series of passageways and rooms that span around two miles and honeycomb an outcropping of limestone in the Santa Rita Mountains (pictured). Limestone formed from the remains of tiny sea creatures deposited in layers over a vast period of time. Eventually, geological forces deformed and cracked the limestone. Water entered these cracks and gradually enlarged them into what is now known as Onyx Cave. The cave is first mentioned in the accounts of pioneer ranchers and miners who came to the area in the 1870s and 1880s, but artifacts found in the area show that the cave was used by hunters, explorers and American Indians long before that. The cave was heavily vandalized in the 1960s, but Escabrosa Grotto, Inc. leased the cave, gated the entrance, and has restored much of the cave's former beauty. Onyx Cave is highly decorated, including dozens of rare shield formations, flowstone, columns, helictites and soda straws. It is a primarily horizontal cave on several levels with attendant verticality - often requiring vertical techniques and equipment to progress from one level to the next. A \$100 deposit is required to retrieve the gate keys from Escabrosa, and the request must be made two weeks in advance. All trips into the cave are led by experienced, independent leaders, and participants must have some prior caving experience.

Tel: (520) 772-6820

Near Apache Spring Ranch: 515 Gardner Canyon Rd, Sonoita, AZ 85637



TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION: [Ventana Cave](#) — Miles away from civilization on Tohono O'odham lands, this cave is on the [National Register of Historic Places](#). It was excavated in 1941 by Emil Haury, Julian Hayden, and Kirk Bryan. They were able to recover the remains of a Pleistocene horse, antelope, and sloth, along with other fossils. Visiting the site requires a permit, issued by [Tohono O'odham tribal authorities](#).

Tel: (520) 383-2028

[contactus@tonation-nsn.gov](mailto:contactus@tonation-nsn.gov)

TOMBSTONE: [Good Enough Mine Tour](#) — This mine, one of the first silver mines in Tombstone, went into production in 1879. It was discovered by Ed Scheffelin, the founder of Tombstone, in 1878. Behind the gates emblazoned with the words "Tombstone Consolidated Mines Company," a tour guide takes visitors on an underground walking tour of a perfectly preserved historic hard rock mine. Visitors learn how the miners worked and what silver ore looks like. The tour was closed in 2017, but it has since reopened with a new owner.

Tel: (520) 457-3333

501 E Toughnut St, Tombstone, AZ 85638

TUCSON: [Cave of the Bells](#) — Located in Sawmill Canyon in the Coronado National Forest, this subterranean gallery of rock, known for its unique and varied suite of minerals and formations, has been thousands of years in the forming. Lake Tunnel, one of the cave’s most notable and accessible passages, leads through a large room to a permanent lake far underground. This cave is extremely fragile and susceptible to immense amounts of damage. To prevent damage and vandalism, the Cave of the Bells is locked and gated. Keys are available (for a \$100 deposit) at the Forest Supervisor's Office in Tucson for those who wish to visit this unique area. The deposit is refunded when the keys are returned. Access to the cave requires four-wheel drive.

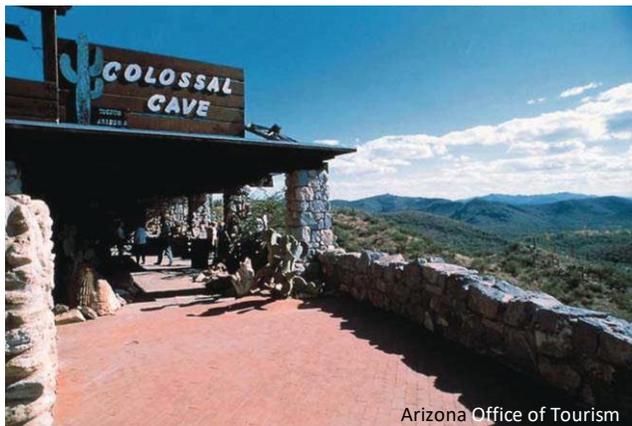
Tel: (520) 388-8300

Forest Supervisor's Office: 300 W Congress St 6th floor, Tucson, AZ 85701

TUCSON: [Earth Sciences Center at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum](#) — This realistic, artificial cave houses displays among the cave formations and side chambers. One display charts the development of a limestone cave and the formation of stalagmites and stalactites. Another teaches about the animals that frequent cave entrances, including bobcats, pack rats, ringtails, and barn owls. A side tunnel, posted with a warning for those with claustrophobic tendencies, provides a realistic caving experience in 75 feet of sinous, low-clearance maneuvering. An adjacent room houses a glistening mass of cave formations, gently floodlit from beneath the surface of a turquoise pool. The cave exhibits lead to rooms containing a NASA-funded Earth from Space: A Satellite's View of Earth exhibit and part of the Museum's breathtaking mineral collection.

Tel: (520) 883-2702

2021 N Kinney Rd, Tucson, AZ 85743



Arizona Office of Tourism

VAIL: [Colossal Cave Mountain Park](#) — On the National Historic Register, the 2,400-acre Park showcases crystal-filled Colossal Cave and historic La Posta Quemada Ranch. During the hour-long cave tour, see beautiful cave formations like boxwork, stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone, and helictites as the guide relates the Cave’s history, legends, and geology. The tour route is a half mile long and has 363 steps, taking visitors six and a half stories underground and back up again.

Tel: (520) 647-7275

16721 E Old Spanish Trail, Vail, AZ 85641