

Wade's Walkabout

The Depths of the Earth

CAVES OF THE





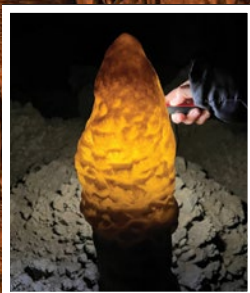
By Mark Wade

They call it the Grand Palace. However, it's not a gathering place for aristocrats but rather a vast section of an underground cavern. This magnificent space within eastern Nevada's Lehman Caves is filled with naturally carved decorations that are indeed befitting a palace. In January, my travel associate Bob Grove and I invited our friends at KSL Outdoor TV to join us on a tour of Lehman Caves along with Utah's nearby Crystal Ball Cave, and our entire crew was absolutely impressed.

Descending into the Darkness

The old saying "you can't see your hand in front of your face" turned out to be true when our guide turned off the lights. However, the magic of caves is only revealed when the lights are on and the stalactites, stalagmites, helictites, flowstone, popcorn, and other formations are clearly visible. Our guided group conversed primarily in whispers as we visually encountered the cave's diverse water and acid formed creations. Within Lehman Caves, we were especially impressed with two formations; one was an organ-pipe-style formation that would put any similar man-made structure to shame, and the other was a group of formations called cave shields. Lehman Caves is said to be the home of at least 500 shields. We're not sure there is anything in nature that surpasses the artistry of these designs.

GREAT BASIN



History and Information

In the early 1880s, Lehman Caves were discovered by Absalom S. Lehman, a homesteader from Baker, Nevada, and the caves are now part of the Great Basin National Park. Situated at the base of Nevada's tallest mountain, Wheeler Peak (elevation 13,061 feet) provides the perfect backdrop for Nevada's only national park.

Crystal Ball Cave

If you've ever seen the insides of a geode that has been cracked or cut to reveal the crystals inside, you've got some idea of what you'll experience at Crystal Ball Cave. This cavern is filled with crystals literally growing across the rock formations that encase the structure of the cave. Kirstin, our guide, regaled us with stories of the discovery and exploration of the cave and skillfully educated our group on the cave's geology and history. While vastly different from Lehman Caves, this cave tour was no less impressive.

History and Information

Crystal Ball Cave is located in a very rural area of western Utah off of Highway 50. Once you leave the pavement, you'll travel north for thirty miles on a dirt road until you reach the quiet outpost of Gandy, Utah, very close to the Nevada border. The cave was discovered by George Simms when he was searching for lost sheep in 1956, and although the cave is under the control of the Bureau of Land Management, a local family offers tours through the cave.

Important Note: Reservations are required for both Lehman Caves and Crystal Ball Cave.

Visit our website to learn more about these caves and to view a recent video segment aired on KSL Outdoors TV: www.RoadTrippinWithBobAndMark.com



About the Author

Mark Wade is active in hiking, writing, photography, and videography. He works as a tourism marketing consultant, for which he has won numerous awards. He is a weekly guest on the KSL Outdoors radio show. Mark is the former Director of Tourism for southwestern Utah and has served on the board of directors for various tourism associations.

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