



Crystal Cave Tours at Sequoia National Park Begin Saturday

Submitted by Kurt Repanshek on May 13, 2011



Time spent underground in Crystal Cave is a great addition to any trip to Sequoia National Park. NPS photo

Though best known for its big trees, [Sequoia National Park](#) has a fascinating underworld, one you can explore during a tour through Crystal Cave.

Perhaps not as grand and as expansive as that cave system protected by [Mammoth Cave National Park](#), Crystal Cave is a great way to take a break from the forests and head underground to see Sequoia's basement. "Beautiful formations, impressively large rooms and ornate marble polished by a subterranean stream make a tour of Crystal Cave an unforgettable experience," notes the [Sequoia Natural History Association](#). "After passing

through the spider web gate, your guide will give you a brief history of the cave and point out unique features and formations. During the 45-minute tour, you will be led from room to room on paved, lighted pathways, pausing to listen to the water and echoes in the cave in total darkness."

There are a variety of ways to explore Crystal Cave:

Historic Candle-Light Tour

Experience Crystal Cave in a different light using candle lanterns. Each visitor will be provided their own lantern as they tour this unique, marble cave. Crystal Cave was first discovered by park employees in 1918 and opened to the public 70 years ago for tours. Step back in time to view the cave in much the same way that it looked to the first explorers with flickering candles and listen to the stories of discovery, exploration, development and restoration in this beautiful national park treasure. Tours begin Saturday, June 23, 2011 through Sunday, September 4, 2011. Tour times are Saturday and Sunday at 4:30 pm. Tour length is 1.5 hours.

Limited to 15 persons. Ages 13 and up. No flash photography. Not recommended for those who have trouble seeing in low light situations, or with mobility problems.

Cave tours run from May 14, 2011, to October 23.

In 2009, the Sequoia Natural History Association and the National Park Service joined forces to install a solar-power generation system at Crystal Cave to make tours and operations available by power from the sun. With funding provided by grants from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Bank of the Sierra, funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and SNHA, the cave went fully solar-powered in 2010. In addition to the solar panels and system, the cave was equipped with new lighting inside to assist in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. These lights lessen the growth of algae, which disrupt the natural life cycle inside the cave. Crystal Cave is home to specific life forms that are not known to live anywhere else in the world. With more than 200 caves in Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks, it is essential to protect the Sierra caves while teaching visitors about the underground world of our national parks.