



Cavern Trails and Tours



Big Room Trail

NPS / DAN PAWLAK

Visitors to Carlsbad Caverns National Park have a large variety of options to explore the cavern. The Big Room and Natural Entrance trails, as well as several ranger-guided tours, are available year round. All tours begin at the visitor center, except the King's Palace Tour and Slaughter Canyon Cave Tour.

Enjoy the Cavern on Your Own

Natural Entrance Trail

Distance:	1.25 miles (2.0 km)
Elevation Change:	800 feet (243.8 m)
Difficulty:	Strenuous
Hike Time:	1 hour
Accessibility:	Wheelchairs and walkers prohibited
Entrance Fee:	\$15/adult Free 15 and under

The Natural Entrance Trail begins at the cavern entrance and leads visitors below the surface to the start of the Big Room Trail. Visitors who choose to hike into the cavern will experience the immense size of the descending passageways and get tantalizing glimpses of the beautiful formations Carlsbad Cavern is famous for.

The steep descent makes the hike difficult on knees, ankles, and the lower back.

It is also permissible to hike up the Natural Entrance Trail from the Big Room. Hiking up the steep trail is easier on the joints, but more exercise for the heart and lungs. Visitors should allow one hour to hike the Natural Entrance Trail. Check with rangers at the information desk for the trail closure times for hiking in and out of the cavern.

Big Room Trail

Distance:	1.25 miles (2.0 km)
Elevation Change:	24 feet (7.3 m)
Difficulty:	Easy to moderate
Hike Time:	1.5 hours
Accessibility:	Wheelchairs and walkers allowed on a portion of the trail
Entrance Fee:	\$15/adult Free 15 and under

Visitors walking this trail stroll around the outer edge of the largest cave chamber in the United States. Not only does the Big Room have a large footprint, covering the surface area of six football fields, but it is also densely decorated with cave formations large and small. At its highest, the ceiling is nearly 225 feet (68.6 m) tall near the Top of the Cross.

This trail is mostly wheelchair and walker accessible, with the exception of three steep areas. Maps of the accessible route are available at the visitor center.

The Big Room Trail is accessed via the hike down the Natural Entrance Trail and by elevator from the visitor center.



Natural Entrance Trail

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Ranger-Guided Tours

Ranger-guided tours vary in duration, length, and difficulty. Guided tours are offered throughout the year and require a tour fee. Entrance fees are also required except for Slaughter Canyon Cave Tour and Spider Cave Tour. The Senior Pass and Access Pass will provide a half-price ticket for the cardholder only. None of the ranger-guided tours are accessible to wheelchairs or walkers. Reservations are recommended for all ranger-guided tours because they fill quickly and space is limited.

To make reservations for ranger-guided tours, call the National Park Reservation System at 877-444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov.



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King's Palace Tour

Distance: 1 mile (1.6 km)
Elevation Change: 82 feet (25.0 m)
Difficulty: Moderate
Tour Time: 1.5 hours
Age Limit: 4 years
Cost: \$8/adult
\$4/child (4–15)

On the King's Palace Tour, descend into ornately decorated chambers known as the Scenic Rooms, and find yourself up close and personal with impressive cave formations. This is the only ranger-guided tour that travels a lit, paved trail. Handrails are only on the steep sections of the trail.



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Left Hand Tunnel Tour

Distance: 1 mile (1.6 km)
Elevation Change: 15 feet (4.6 m)
Difficulty: Moderate
Tour Time: 2 hours
Age Limit: 6 years
Cost: \$7/adult
\$3.50/child (6–15)

Travel back in time through Left Hand Tunnel, lit by candle lanterns carried by each member of the tour. Participants must walk on the natural cave surface that can be slick, uneven, and includes large steps. This tour is not recommended for those with difficulty seeing in low light or those with balance issues.



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Lower Cave Tour

Distance: 0.5 mile (0.8 km)
Elevation Change: 79 ft (24.1 m)
Difficulty: Strenuous
Tour Time: 3 hours
Age Limit: 12 years
Cost: \$20/adult
\$10/child (12–15)

Explore the scenic beauty beneath the Big Room as you experience Lower Cave. Participants must descend a handline on a slick flowstone slope, followed by three ladders, descending a total of 79 feet (24.1 m). Travel in Lower Cave is by headlamp on slippery and uneven terrain.



NPS / DAN LEIFHEIT

Slaughter Canyon Cave Tour

Distance: 2 miles (3.2 km)
Elevation Change: 611 feet (0.6 m)
Difficulty: Strenuous
Tour Time: 5.5 hours
Age Limit: 8 years
Cost: \$15/adult
\$7.50/child (8–15)

Spend the day in desert and cave on the Slaughter Canyon Cave Tour. Participants caravan to the trailhead and hike up 450 feet (137 m) for over 0.5 miles (0.8 km) to the cave entrance. About 2.5 hours are spent walking through this undeveloped cave by the light of headlamps on slippery and uneven terrain.



NPS / ANDY RANKIN

Spider Cave Tour

Distance: 1 mile (1.6 km)
Elevation Change: 286 feet (87.2 m)
Difficulty: Strenuous
Tour Time: 4 hours
Age Limit: 12 years
Cost: \$20/adult
\$10/child (12–15)

Venture through a labyrinth of tunnels and passages on the Spider Cave Tour. Visitors spend a portion of the four-hour tour hiking to and from the cave on a steep trail. However, the majority of the tour is spent crawling, crab-walking, and crouching in small tunnels and spaces.



NPS / DAN PAWLAK

Hall of the White Giant Tour

Distance: 1.7 miles (2.7 km)
Elevation Change: 944 feet (287.7 m)
Difficulty: Strenuous
Tour Time: 4 hours
Age Limit: 12 years
Cost: \$20/adult
\$10/child (12–15)

Challenging and adventurous, the Hall of the White Giant Tour leads participants into a fissure that travels slowly upwards within Carlsbad Cavern. This is the most technical of the guided tours, requiring participants to crawl, belly-crawl, use a handline in a vertical crevice, and climb a narrow ladder.