

Timpanogos Cave

Timpanogos Cave National Monument
Utah

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Hidden high on a canyon wall three extraordinary caves conceal in their darkness a vast treasure of stunning geological secrets.

Mt. Timpanogos
Elevation 11,750 feet

Plan Your Trip

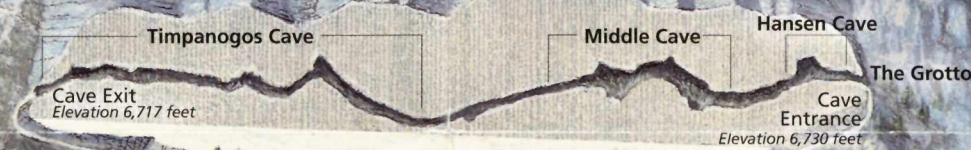
Timpanogos Cave National Monument shows how explorers, scientists, and conservationists have fought to preserve three caves and their unique fragile formations for you to enjoy today and in the years to come.

You may tour the caves daily mid-May through mid-October, weather and safety permitting. Tickets for cave tours are limited. Starting 30 days prior to your tour date, you may buy tickets online only at www.recreation.gov.

The cave tour time you select is when your self-guiding hike to the caves begins. Do not begin your hike to the caves before the tour time designated on your ticket. You have 90 minutes after

your tour's start time to complete your hike. This gives you ample time to explore the trail before your cave tour.

Utah weather changes quickly. Summer temperatures reach the high 90s°F while spring and fall are much cooler. Check conditions before you arrive.



Tour the Caves

The amazing formations for which these caves are renowned—stalactites, stalagmites, draperies, flowstone, helictites, and more—pack the passageways. Plan to spend about an hour exploring the bounty of the caves.

Your professionally guided cave tour is on a surfaced, lighted route. Parts of the cool, wet cave system can be slippery, and touring the caves requires bending and crouching through narrow passages.

Tripods, monopods, and hiking sticks are not allowed in the caves.

While cave animals are rare, you may see crickets, bats, or other subterranean creatures.

While in the caves, look at—but do not touch—the delicate cave formations; skin oils

discolor them, and many break very easily. *One touch can result in damage that lasts thousands of years.* By choosing to respect the caves today, you are preserving their integrity for future generations to enjoy.

Hike the Trail

A striking cache of geological wonders awaits you at Timpanogos Cave. To reach the caves you must be willing and able to hike the physically demanding 1.5-mile trail that ascends 1,092 vertical feet up a steep mountain slope.

Begin your hike from the visitor center at your designated tour time. While you hike to the cave entrance at your own pace, enjoy spectacular views of the canyon and valley below. Trail benches and wayside exhibits let you catch your breath, discover the park, and take in the natural beauty that surrounds you.

Wear comfortable walking shoes. • Bring drinking water with you. • The trail's only restroom is near the cave

entrance. • Rockfall happens. Avoid areas with stripes indicating a high-risk area. If you hear or see rockfall, move into the side of the mountain, duck down low, and cover your head. • Pets are not allowed on the trail. In other parts of the park pets must be leashed. • Always stay on the paved trail. Going off-trail or shortcutting can cause rockfall or harm vegetation. • Do not throw, push or shove anything over the cliff edge. • Running is prohibited.



ARTIST'S REVISION OF THE PARK LANDSCAPE
NPS / L. KENNETH TOWNSEND

Explore the Park Inside and Out

Visitor Center Stop here first to pick up your cave tour ticket and get more information on the caves, American Fork Canyon's human and natural history, and things to see and do in the park.

Park staff will answer questions and help you plan your visit. The visitor center is open during the cave tour season.

Picnic Areas Canyon View Picnic Area is directly across from the visitor center.

Swinging Bridge Picnic Area is 0.25 miles down canyon (see above). Both have tables and drinking water. Swinging Bridge has fire grills and restrooms.

Canyon Nature Trail Enjoy wayside exhibits and canyon views on this gradually descending trail that winds 0.25 miles along the floor of American Fork Canyon and ends at the Swinging Bridge Picnic Area.

Local Services Nearby communities have fuel, restaurants, lodging, and groceries. Public campgrounds are in the surrounding national forest and state parks.

Places to Visit Within a short drive four state parks and a national forest offer opportunities for camping, picnicking, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, boating, and sailing.

The 20-mile Alpine Scenic Drive winds through the rugged canyons of the Wasatch Range and offers breathtaking views of Mount Timpanogos and other glacier-carved peaks. The route follows UT 92 up American Fork Canyon and continues through the national forest into Provo Canyon on US 189. The drive is not recommended for vehicles over 30 feet.

For a Safe Visit Collecting and gathering anything within the park is prohibited—this is a protected place.

- Dispose of trash properly. Garbage cans are not found on the cave trail.
- Do not disturb plant or animal life.
- Hunting is illegal. For firearms regulations check the park website.
- UT 92, the main road through the park, is narrow with sharp curves. Watch for pedestrians alongside and crossing the road.
- Do not feed or approach animals.
- Anyone under 16 must be with a responsible adult at all times.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. The steepness of the cave trail, cliff edges, and narrow cave passages make access for wheelchairs, strollers, and other wheeled objects impossible. The visitor center is fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Canyon Nature Trail is wheelchair- and stroller-accessible. For more information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Emergencies call 911

More Information
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American Fork, UT 84003-9800
801-756-5239
www.nps.gov/tica

Timpanogos Cave is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more, visit www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation.
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www.nationalparks.org

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Wonders Worth the Hike

Long ago, three caves in American Fork Canyon lay dark and largely silent—unknown to all but the small creatures that dwelled within—until a fall day in 1887 when the light of human discovery began to reveal these caves' breathtaking geological secrets to the world.

Drop by drop, over millions of years, water has created—and continues to create—the stunning wonders of Timpanogos Cave.

The powerful and persistent force of water has dissolved layers of sediment in the cave system. Acidic hydrothermal water has hollowed out the rock into large caverns. Snowmelt, summer storms, or capillary action may fill

mirror-like pools called cave lakes. Water has formed all types of cave formations here—including dripstone, like stalactites and stalagmites, and more—which geologists call speleothems.

Millennia of transformation by water have led to the caves' renown for an abundant variety of delicate formations in an impressive array of colors: white, yellow, green, purple, and orange.

Today scientists research how water and other factors develop this subterranean world so that all who visit can better understand the enduring secrets of the caves.

Stalactites Stalactites hang like icicles from above. They form as water slowly trickles down through the cave ceiling. The smallest stalactites (soda straws) are hollow, thin, and straight, but other stalactites are massive. At 5.5-feet long, 3 feet wide, and 4,000 pounds, the Great Heart of Timpanogos (see below) in Timpanogos Cave is composed of at least three tremendous stalactites that have grown together.

Stalagmites Stalagmites seem to grow from below. They are formed when mineral-laden water repeatedly strikes the floor. The tallest stalagmite, about 6 feet high, is found in Timpanogos Cave.

Columns Occasionally stalactites and stalagmites merge to form a floor-to-ceiling column. You can find the largest column—at a height of 13 feet—in Hansen Cave.

Draperies Draperies form when water trickles down an inclined ceiling. A spectacular drapery in Timpanogos Cave is the Frozen Sunbeam, a thin translucent sheet of orange-colored calcite.

Flowstone The smooth coatings or sculpted terraces of flowstones are created when water flows down a wall or across a floor. Impressive examples are the Cascade of Energy and Chocolate Fountain in Timpanogos Cave and one in the Big Room of Middle Cave.

Cave Lake Formations Cave lakes feature formations, including rafts that float on the surface, shelfstone, and rimstone dams.

Popcorn The knobby lumps of popcorn formations occur where water seeps slowly through pores in the rock or in thin films down rock walls. These formations abound in Timpanogos Cave, where they mix with twisting helictites.

Helictites Timpanogos Cave is home to thousands of curly, gravity-defying, and extremely delicate formations called helictites. These tubes twist and turn from cave ceilings and walls. How exactly they form is up for debate—even hundreds of years after their discovery.

One explanation is that capillary action pushes water to flow through rock fractures under varying pressure, which overrides gravity and allows a helictite to grow in any direction.

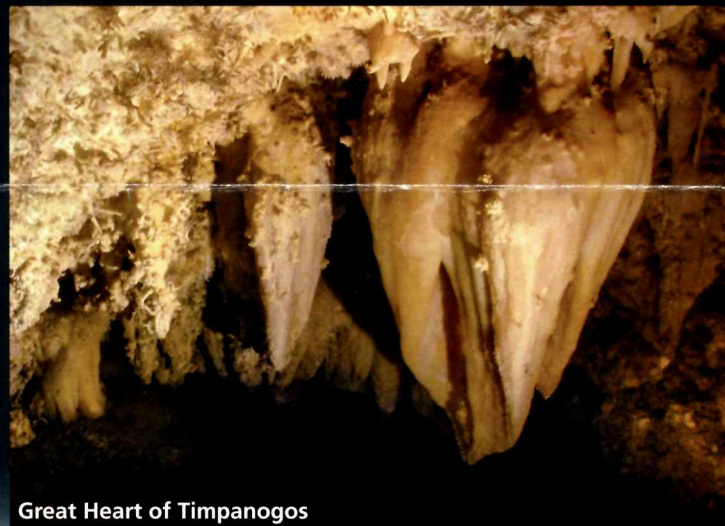
Water and other forces then form a crystal. Crystals arrange haphazardly one on top of another and can take different shapes, giving helictites varying looks.

Smooth but spiraling helictites are usually formed of calcite while needle-like crystals are made of aragonite—they are as delicate and as fragile as hand-blown glass.

Helictites are usually less than ¼ inch in diameter and are only a few inches long.

To see such quantities of helictites in one place is unusual. In fact, at Timpanogos Cave you are looking at one of the largest—and most beautiful—collections of helictites in the world.

Their beauty, rarity, frailty, abundance, and potential for future study are all reasons we continue to protect these fragile stars of the underground.



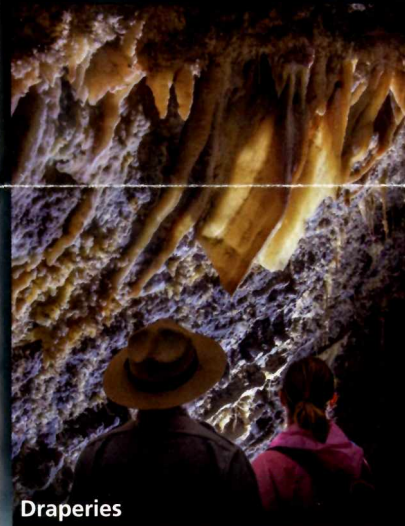
Great Heart of Timpanogos



Stalactites and stalagmites



Columns



Draperies

Father Time's Jewel Box

Protecting the Caves

1887 Martin Hansen discovers Hansen Cave. He roughs out a steep, hazardous mountain trail for cave tours, soon abandoned. Souvenir hunters and miners remove natural sculptures for personal collections and profit.

1915 Teenagers James W. Gough and Frank Johnson discover Timpanogos Cave. Despite further exploration, Timpanogos Cave is nearly lost to history.

1921 An outdoor club rediscovers Timpanogos Cave and vows to protect it. Weeks later, George Heber Hansen and Wayne Hansen, the son and grandson of Martin Hansen, discover Middle Cave.

Soon, explorers and clubs seek to protect these remarkable caves. Local citizens urge the US Forest Service and others to preserve the caves and their incredible natural wonders.

1922 President Harding establishes Timpanogos Cave National Monument. The caves have been protected to preserve their "unusual scientific interest and importance."

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