Giant Ice Cave

Seasonal ice columns form in mid-winter and early spring.

Giant Ice is a pleasure to visit on a warm summer day, with its cool ice room and small perennial ice floor found at the cave's back rim. In winter and spring, temporary columns of translucent ice can grow to several feet high near the center of the cave.

Drive to Cave – Moderate to Difficult/Impassible
From Hwy 53, the 8 miles of roads to the Big Tubes Area are unpaved and can be impassible after rain or snow.

Hike to Cave – Difficult
The route is marked by cairns (rock piles) and is approximately a 1.2-mile round-trip over rugged lava flows. A short hike north along the east side of the same trench from Big Skylight Cave will get you to Giant Ice Cave.
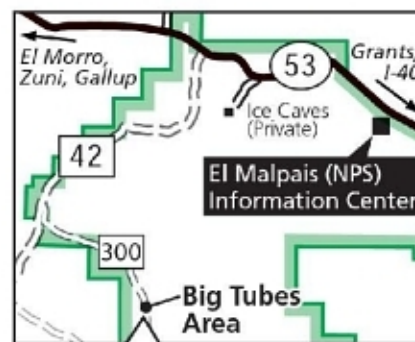
Caving Difficulty – Difficult
There is no established trail through the cave. The climb down to the cave is moderately difficult, but the route from there to the cave is over large, unstable boulders and is very challenging. This is not a cave for the inexperienced or poorly equipped, as the cave floor consists almost entirely of unstable "breakdown."
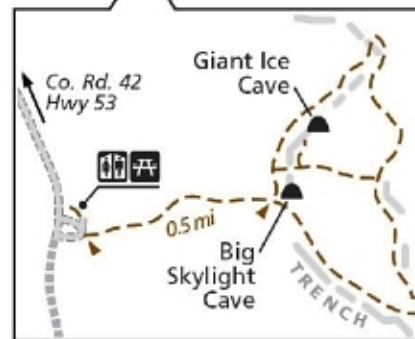
Cave Map

Directions

From Highway 53, take Cibola County Road 42 (unpaved) south to NPS Road 300 and follow the road to the Big Tubes parking area. High clearance vehicles are recommended.

Hike the cairn trail across the lava bridge in front of Big Skylight's entrance and turn left (north) on the east side of the trench. Follow a set of small cairns along the trench and look for a place to climb down after 150 feet.

Caution
Caving and hiking in remote areas are inherently dangerous. Loose footing, difficult terrain, disorientation, extreme heat and cold, and falls are common risks. Cave ceilings can be low and cause serious head injury. See a park ranger for a caving permit and more information.

For more information, visit www.nps.gov/elma or contact:

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