

Pluto's Cave



Total Length: 1 mile (above ground loop), 1.5-2 Miles with 1,200 ft walk into Pluto's Cave

Elevation Gain: Negligible

Season: All Year

Dogs Allowed: No

The below information is sourced from the USDA Forest Service Klamath National Forest.

For more information visit:

www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/klamath/recarea/?recid=3176

Pluto's Cave is a lava tube that was formed by an eruption of basaltic lava which originated from a vent about 8 miles to the northeast, between Deer Mountain and The Whaleback. Visitors can safely hike approx. 1200' feet into the cave.

Pluto's Cave is one of the main feeder tubes which carried most of the lava into the Shasta Valley. The small domes of lava in the vicinity of the main entrance are called schollendomes and were formed when the tube was filled with lava to the point where fluid pressure caused an actual inflation of the flow, causing it to rise up, bulge and form the small domes.

The diameter of this cave is exceptionally large; larger than many of the major caves in the Hawaiian Islands. Multiple lava flows are visible in the walls of Pluto's Cave and can be identified by seeing the layered basalt which is fine grained at the base, and coarse textured and full of gas bubbles (vesicles) near the top. The skylights along the length of the cave were formed as the lava cooled and collapsed.

Directions:

From I-5 in Weed, CA travel northeast on US Hwy 97 approx. 7 miles to County Road A-12. Turn left and go approx. 3.3 miles to Forest Road 43N30. Turn left go approx. .2 mile to the parking area. Park in designated area only. Do not drive beyond the parking area or off road. Once there, follow the trail to reach the cave.

No fee is charged, and no permit is required for entrance to the cave. Please adhere to the following rules and regulations:

- Stay on established trails.
- No food or drink in the cave including gum, tobacco, candy and bottles or canteens.
- No pets or animals in the cave. Do not leave your pets unattended in your vehicle.
- No human waste in the cave. Please plan ahead!
- No fires, torches or smoking in the cave.
- No camping in or around Pluto's Cave.
- Enjoy rocks, animals, flowers and vegetation but collect only litter.
- Treat the cave with respect; refrain from vandalism.

The following tips will keep you safe in Pluto's Cave:

- Always go caving with at least one other person.
- Each explorer should carry at least two flashlights. Cavers often carry a third emergency light source.
- Wear sturdy non-skid shoes.
- Bring warm clothing even in summer. Parts of the cave can reach as low as 40 degrees.

General Notes:

Caves have special, sensitive ecosystems. A variety of rare or endangered plants and animals are some of the more significant resources in caves. Caves are delicate and must be used wisely to avoid damage. Unlike the surface environment, which, in time, can heal its wounds, a cave, once damaged, remains that way forever.

PLUTO'S CAVE TRAIL MAP

