Ape Cave, WA

Directions:
From Seattle take I-5 south and exit I-5 to State Route 503 at Woodland, WA. Drive through Cougar, Washington, to Forest Road 90 and then to Forest Road 83, then to Forest Road 83/8303. In the summer you need a parking permit for the trailhead. In the winter you need a SnoPark permit and park where you can.

From Portland, OR, take I-205 north to exit 30b to Battle Ground. Move over to the middle or left lane and proceed north on SR503 for about 10 miles to Battle Ground. Continue north on SR503 past Chelatchie Prairie and Amboy. At the junction of Lewis River Road and SR503, turn right and continue on SR503 past Cougar. Make a left turn on to FR 83 then to Forest Road 83/8303, In the summer you need a parking permit for the trailhead. In the winter you need a SnoPark permit and park where you can.

You must have a Snow Park permit for winter parking and a Northwest Forest Pass or day use pass in the summer.

Lantern rentals and book sales are available from late June to early-September at the Ape's Headquarters near the trailhead.

There are outhouses available at the trailhead.

Trail:
Ape Cave Lower Cave and Upper Cave with connections to trail 239.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, Forest Service Map Cave Route Map

There is at least one geocache along this trail at: N 46° 06.565 W 122° 12.658 Info at Geocaching.com

Length and Elevation:
1.5 Miles Roundtrip for the lower cave, 3 miles roundtrip for the upper cave. Elevation at trailhead – 2,100 Ft, Elevation at upper entrance – 2,450

History:
People are usually curious about the naming of Ape Cave. The cave was named after the Mt. St. Helens Apes, a Boy Scout troop from Amboy. It was discovered in 1947 during loggin of the area. A local logger, Lawrence Johnson later told the Scoutmaster of the Apes. In the early 1950's the Scoutmaster and Scouts explored the cave by climbing down ropes into the cave.

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First, make sure you have the proper equipment to explore the cave. You need good flashlights and/or lanterns, clothing for standing in 42 degree farenheit weather, and a hat would be good. For hiking the upper cave, gloves and a helmet are advisable.

From the parking lot follow the well-worn trail to the entrance. Stop at the visitors kiosk and read more about Ape Cave. Descend the stairs into the mouth of the cave and explore. Once down the metal stairs you can choose the upper or lower cave. The lower cave is the easy lava tube to explore. The floor is fairly free of obstacles and there is plenty of headroom. Marvel how the lava tube snakes

downhill. The sand on the floor has been washed in over the centuries from water flooding into the cave. Be cautious of downpours which can cause a lot of water to enter the cave. The size of the lave tube goes from big to huge to small again. As the lava flowed in the tube, ledges were made where the lava flowed in the cave at the same level. In a couple of places the ledges came together. Be sure to look for the “meatball”, a boulder carried along on the lava which then got stuck where the gap between the ledges narrowed. Listen to the sounds of dripping water echoing in the dark. This part of the cave is suitable for children 6 and above. The cave eventually becomes filled with sand. Who knows how far the lava tube actually continues for. Maybe all the way to the lake far below.

The upper cave is more challenging. There are some rockfalls to contend with and the floor is jagged in some areas. A misstep at the wrong time could result in a sprained ankle, a nasty abrasion, or a broken leg. There is also the frozen waterfall to negotiate. Some people have not been able to climb over this and they had to turn around and go back. Look for insect life in the cave. At the end, climb back up to the surface and take trail 239 back to the trailhead.

Enjoy the photos!!

Gallery Pics

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