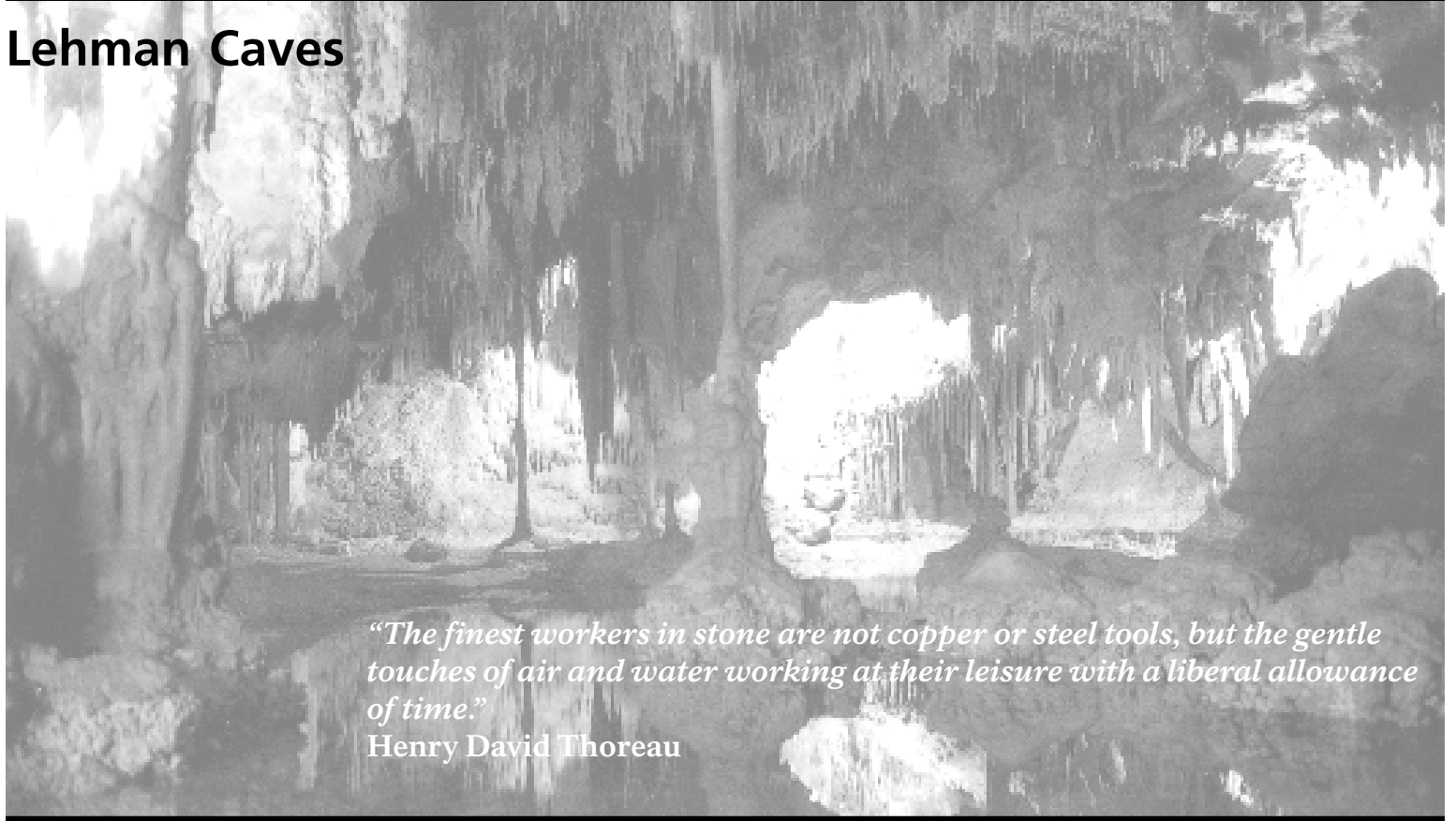




## Lehman Caves



*"The finest workers in stone are not copper or steel tools, but the gentle touches of air and water working at their leisure with a liberal allowance of time."*  
Henry David Thoreau

### History

In 1885, Absalom Lehman came across the natural entrance to what would soon be known as "Lehman Caves." His past experiences as a miner and his natural curiosity prompted his investigation into the mysterious opening near his ranch. Although American Indians had known of the cave, Lehman was the first person we know of to explore far into this underground world; thus, he is credited with its "discovery."

Lehman Caves, with its unique and spectacular features, was first set aside as a National Monument in 1922, under the management of the U.S. Forest Service. It has been protected under the stewardship of the National Park Service since 1933. In 1986, the monument was expanded to include 77,000 acres of the surrounding Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and was redesignated as Great Basin National Park.

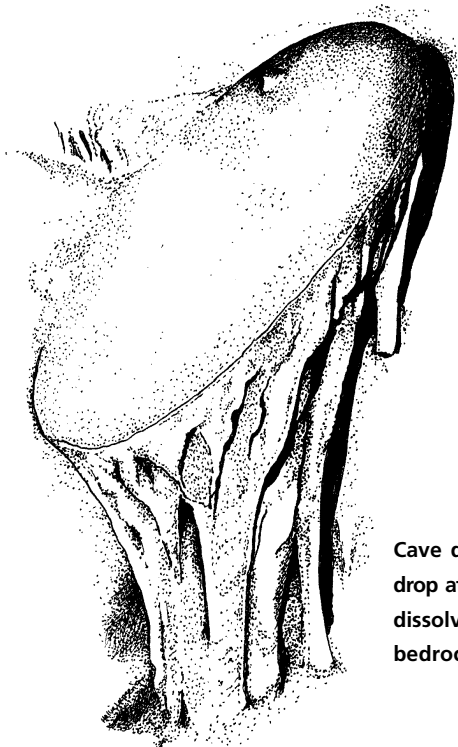
### Formation of the Cave

Lehman Caves is an excellent example of a limestone solution cavern. Its beginning can be traced back 550 to 600 million years ago when most of what is now Nevada and western Utah was covered by a warm, shallow sea. Over the next 400 million years, sea creatures lived and died, piling layers of calcium carbonate-rich sediment on the ocean floor. These sediments gradually solidified into limestone rock.

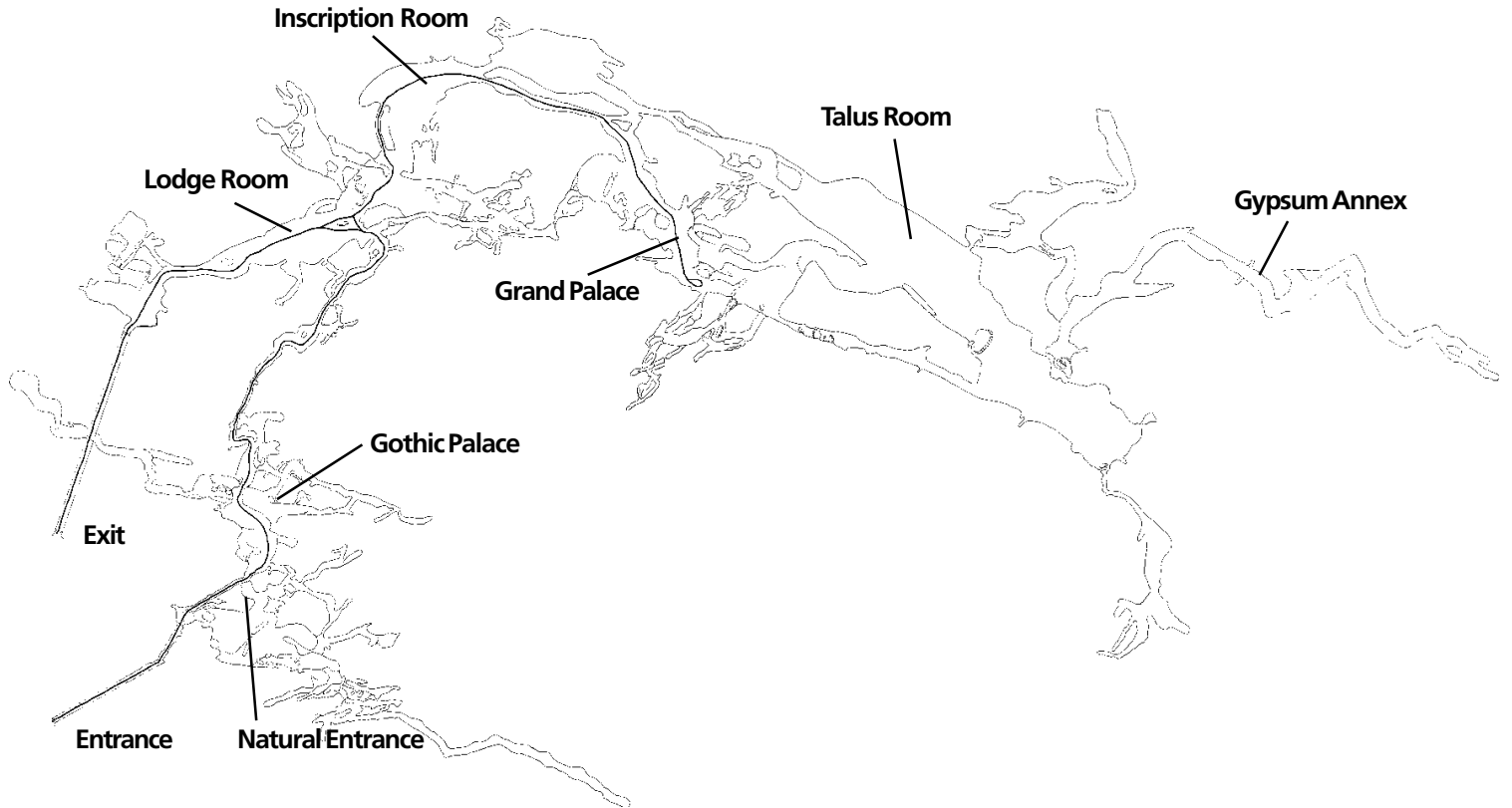
Millions of years ago, these limestone layers were uplifted, exposing them to the elements. For millennia, rain and melting snow soaked through the soil and combined with carbon dioxide gas from decaying plants and animals to form a weak solution of carbonic acid. This acidic solution trickled downward through tiny cracks until it reached the water table. The limestone around these water-filled cracks slowly dissolved. These cracks grew into the rooms and passageways that make up Lehman Caves. Over time, the water table dropped, and the water drained out of these underground chambers.

Seeping water continued to enter the air-filled chambers of the cave. Every water droplet carried with it a small amount of dissolved limestone. When the solution was exposed to the air of the open chamber, the carbon dioxide gas escaped from the solution. This allowed calcite and other minerals to be deposited along the walls, ceilings and floors. These deposits created the beautiful and mysterious formations we know as speleothems.

Today, these same processes of growth continue, slowly decorating the passages and rooms of the cave, adding to the fantastic examples of stalactites, stalagmites, columns, draperies, flowstone, helictites, and rare shield formations.



Cave decorations, or speleothems, form one drop at a time over millennia, as water brings dissolved calcite into the cave from the bedrock above.



**Cave Walk Information**

Great Basin offers three different length cave tours : 30 Minute, 60 Minute, and 90 Minute Tours. The longer cave tours take visitors deeper into the cave. Children younger than 5 are not allowed on the 90 Minute Tour. Tour size is limited to 25 people.

The cave is a constant 50° F (10° C). A light jacket, sweatshirt, or sweater is recommended for your comfort. Tours may include a brief period when the ranger turns off the lights to demonstrate complete darkness. Photography is allowed in the cave. A flash is recommended.

**Personal Safety**

- Watch your head. Low ceilings may require frequent ducking.
- Trails may be wet and slippery. Shoes should have rubber soles and good tread. Watch your step and always use handrails where provided.
- Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.
- Stay with the group.

*If you have any questions or think you may have difficulty completing the walk, talk with a ranger.*

**Ticket Sales**

Great Basin National Park offers advanced ticket sales up to one month in advance of the walk. Visitors may purchase advance tickets in person at the visitor center or by calling (775) 234-7331 ext. 242. Advance tickets may be purchased between 9am and 5pm Pacific Time. All advance tickets must be paid for at the time of purchase with a major credit card. All advance ticket sales are final so please plan your trip accordingly. There is a maximum of 12 spaces per walk available for advance sale. All advance ticket holders must check-in at the visitor center at least 15 minutes prior to their scheduled walk. Golden Age and Golden Access Passports must be presented at check-in. Unclaimed tickets cannot be refunded.

**Ticket Prices**

	30 Minutes	60 Minutes	90 Minutes
<b>Adult</b> (12 & Older)	\$2.00	\$6.00	\$8.00
<b>Child</b> (11 & Younger)	Free	\$3.00*	\$4.00**
<b>Golden Age &amp; Golden Access</b>	\$1.00	\$3.00	\$4.00

\*Children under the age of 2 being carried are free on the 60 minute tour.  
\*\*Children under 5 years of age are not permitted on the 90 minute tour.

Great Basin offers **one free cave tour with the purchase of a National Parks Pass** at Great Basin National Park. Ask at the front desk for more information.

**Cave Ethics**

Caves are fragile environments; every time we enter a cave, we affect the cave’s ecosystem. To keep our impacts minimal, please follow these guidelines while in the cave:

Touching or collecting anything in the cave is strictly forbidden.

Food, gum, tobacco products, or beverages (including water) are not permitted in the cave.

All bags (including fanny packs, purses, and backpacks), strollers, tripods, etc. must be secured in your vehicle due to narrow passageways.

Pets are not allowed in the cave with the exception of guide dogs.

Stay on the trail.