

# Wells Gray Cave Frequently Asked Questions

**In response to media and public interest in the 2018 discovery of a large cave in Wells Gray Provincial Park, BC Parks is providing the following information as responses to Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Q: What is the significance of the cave in Wells Gray Provincial Park? Is it mostly the size that is noteworthy, or are there other qualities that make it an important find?**

**A:** The cave is the largest known example of a cave entrance in stripe karst (a type of landform containing caves) in Canada. It is also the largest and most dramatic known alpine cave shaft.

**Q: Since the cave has such a large, prominent entrance, why did it remain undetected for so long by provincial staff and the public?**

**A:** The cave is in a remote location that receives a considerable amount of snow that persists well into the summer. In the past it may have been overlooked during aerial wildlife surveys because of snow or ice cover, or not reported.

**Q: What was the extent of the subsequent investigation of the cave site?**

**A:** A geologist and two experienced cavers visited the cave in September 2018. The entrance to the cave was explored to a depth of approximately 80 metres.

**Q: What are the estimated dimensions of the cave entrance at this point? How much uncertainty is there about the size?**

**A:** Dimensions of the cave entrance pit are 100 metres by 60 metres. While its depth at the entrance was hard to measure because of the mist from a waterfall, initial examinations show it extends at least 135 metres slope distance. The cave ends in a spring 2.1 kilometres away, 500 metres lower than the entrance.

**Q: How has the cave been surveyed to date?**

**A:** The visible part of the entrance shaft was mapped with a reflectorless laser surveying instrument and photographic rendering to create a three dimensional spatially accurate model.

**Q: What will be the process or strategy for exploring the cave? What will be the next steps? Is it feasible for a team of explorers to venture inside? If so, who will do that?**

**A:** BC Parks will work with local First Nations to determine next steps. The cave and surrounding area will remain closed until risks to public safety, cultural heritage and ecological values have been assessed. When the above assessments have concluded, BC Parks will work with First Nations, geologists, and expert cavers to consider further exploration.

Q: Even though the exact location hasn't been revealed publicly, will the BC government be taking other steps to prevent people from finding it and attempting to enter?

A Director's Order has been issued closing the cave and surrounding area.

Until risks to public safety have been assessed the Director's Order will remain in effect.

Any member of the public in contravention of the Director's Order is subject to the following:

Park Act (Section 28):

1. A person who contravenes any provision of this Act commits an offence and is liable to a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or a term of imprisonment of not more than one year or both.
2. When a contravention of the Act or regulations continues for more than one day, the person is guilty of a separate offence for each day on which the contravention continues.

Q: Why has BC Parks closed the cave and surrounding area?

A: BC Parks has issued a Director's Order for the primary purpose of ensuring public safety. The closure will also provide BC Parks with the required time to engage with First Nations, assess cultural, conservation and ecological values, and to consider appropriate measures to preserve the integrity of the cave and surrounding area.