

Scărișoara Ice Cave

Tags: Natural wonders, caves, by car, Scarisoara cave, Peștera Scărișoara, ice cave

Helpful information

- ◆ From Raven's Nest: 83 km, 2-hour drive
- ◆ We recommend you visit the cave in May-June because when summer begins, the ice formations are significantly bigger than the ones in late summer/autumn.
- ◆ Entrance fee to the cave is approx. 3 EUR (13 lei)
- ◆ Visiting hours: Mon-Sat: 10 am – 6 pm; Sun: 10 am – 5 pm.
- ◆ During the low season, we recommend that you contact the guide before reaching the cave. You can contact them at 0742010347 or 0740894996.
- ◆ You can visit the cave only with a guide in a group of minimum 10, but give them a call just in case.
- ◆ The duration of a visit is around 45 minutes. Warm clothes recommended - the temperature inside the cave is maximum 1 degree Celsius

Description

One of the most famous caves in Romania, Scărișoara Ice Cave houses one of the largest underground glaciers in Europe and is filled with 7500 CU meters of ice, dating back to the Ice Age. That's why this glacier cave holds a special place amongst adventurers.

Scientists from the Emil Racoviță Institute of Speleology in Cluj-Napoca, Romania and University of South Florida's School of Geosciences, found evidence in 2017, how Europe's winter weather and climate patterns fluctuated during the last 10,000 years, known as the Holocene period. During this research, they also found clues indicating that Scărișoara Cave is the oldest cave glacier in the world.

Radiocarbon dating of minute leaf and wood fragments preserved in the cave's ice indicates that its glacier is at least 10,500 years old, making it one of the oldest glaciers on Earth outside the polar regions.

The icy Scărișoara Cave is situated in Gârda de Sus, Alba County, on the premises of Apuseni Natural Park, at an altitude of 1165 m. It pertains to the Ocoale – Ghețari – Drobrești karst system.

The first written testimony of its existence was given by a document in which Maria Theresa authorized a forestry detour in Scărișoara commune to cut lumber to repair the access stairs to the glacier. But the first scientific research was conducted by Emil Racoviță, the founder of bio-speleology and the founder of the Institute of Speleology in Cluj (the first speleology institute in the world). Between 1921 and 1923 Emil Racoviță visited Scarisoara Ice Cave five times. His findings and hypotheses were then published in a scientific paper in 1927.

Scărișoara Ice Cave has a shaft entrance (vertical entrance of a cave) with a maximum diameter of 60 m by 48-meter depth. From a tourist standpoint, you can descend the area on metal and wooden staircase. At the base of the shaft, there is a 24-meter high by 17-meter wide portal. Beyond the portal, there is an ice plateau called "The Grand Hall". This actually constitutes the upper part of the glacier with an area of 3000 m². The tourist development continues on two paths along the Grand Hall, forming a loop. The Grand Hall includes an ice cliff nearly 18 m tall, which overlooks a pool called the "Pool of Ice".

After you admire the wonderful formations and greatness of the first gallery, you can go further and visit “The Church”, decorated with stalagmites and stalactites that change their dimensions according to the seasons. You can also observe “The Great Reservation”, “Coman Gallery” to the left, and “Little Reservation” to the right. But the portion of the cave open for tourists includes only “The Grand Hall” and “The Church”.

Any season you choose to explore it, you’ll be witnessing breathtaking views all around. Hikers can reach this unique wonder on the trails from Garda de Sus, a 5 km hike that is accessible no matter the season. Although rich vegetation, the fauna is lacking in diversity.

Doar pentru varianta online, adaugam: “You can read more about Scărișoara Ice Cave in this scientific paper [“Holocene winter climate variability in Central and Eastern Europe”](#).”