

## Cave Ridge Hike

The Pryors Coalition: [www.PryorMountains.org](http://www.PryorMountains.org)

This is a good hike anytime the weather and road conditions allow vehicle access to Big Ice Cave. It is also a good hike for families and small children, or for anyone who wants a leisurely walk. The Cave Ridge Loop is particularly good in June and early July when the wildflowers can be spectacular. We have identified as many as 30 or 40 species of flowers on a single June day.

The full loop is about three miles and includes about 600 feet elevation gain on the return trip. Shorter variations are easily possible (See below). Just over half the hike is off-trail. However it is not hard to find your way without a marked trail. The Hiking Directions below should be adequate. We hope there will be a trail in the future – maybe with interpretive signs about wildflowers, other vegetation, geology, birds, etc. (Tell the USFS you would like such a trail.)

Take Pryor Mountain Road east from Highway #310 south of Bridger to Big Ice Cave. Park in the small Big Ice Cave parking area. There are picnic tables and a pit toilet, but no water.

### Cave Ridge Hiking Loop directions:

1. Start from the Big Ice Cave parking lot and picnic tables.
2. Walk southwest (no trail) down the gentle slope through open forest and meadows. Take your time and look for flowers and birds.
3. After about 1/3 mile you will intersect an old two track logging road. It is impossible to miss this road since it runs perpendicular to your generally southwest path.
4. Turn left (south) and follow this two track about a mile to its end. This “road” is not legal for motorized use. If you see anyone driving on it, please report the violation to Custer National Forest.\* Provide license plate numbers, descriptions, and photos if possible.
5. Bushwhack south about 500 feet to a rocky point where two canyons join. This is the roughest part of the hike because of the trees and some brush. But it would be hard to miss the point since there are deep canyons on both your left and right funneling you toward the point. The point is a good lunch stop. You can look on south down Cave Canyon toward its junction with Lost Water Canyon. You can look west across Island and Commissary Ridges to the high ridge of Big Pryor and Red Pryor Mountain. The results of the Red Waffle Fire of 2002 are visible.
6. When you are ready to return from the view point, turn left (east) and follow the west rim of Cave Canyon back north to Big Ice Cave picnic area. Again there is no trail. Keep the canyon in sight to your right and follow the ridge north. Big Ice Cave picnic area is right on the canyon edge so you can't miss it. There are several rocky points overlooking the canyon for viewpoints. Some of them have coral and brachiopod (clam-like shells) fossils from when this limestone was an inland sea some 350 million years ago.

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