



Arizona Rocks 31

Text and photos by Ray Grant

We have finished the different rock types found in Arizona. There are hundreds of other special rock names, but this column has presented the rock names used for field identification without any other tests needed.

We will next look at places in Arizona that show some special geologic feature. The first one is the Lava River Cave also called the Government Cave. It is a lava tube.

Lava tubes are found in the volcanic rock basalt, because basaltic lavas are the most fluid and can flow out leaving the caves. Lava tubes form when a flow on the surface cools on the outside and the inside continues to flow out forming the cave. Subsequent flows can bury the cave.

Lava tubes are found in many volcanic areas, but there are only a couple known in Arizona. Lava River Cave is located in the Coconino National Forest about 14 miles from Flagstaff. To reach the Lava River Cave take route 180 north of Flagstaff for about 9 miles to mile marker 230, turn west on FR245 for 3 miles, turn south on FR171 for one mile and turn east on FR171B to the cave entrance. The cave is open to the public, but be very careful getting into the cave as the entrance is rough with many boulders to get around. After a short distance the cave opens up and it is easy walking. It is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long and splits and rejoins at one point. Be sure to take many good lights with you and it can be cold with some ice early in the summer.

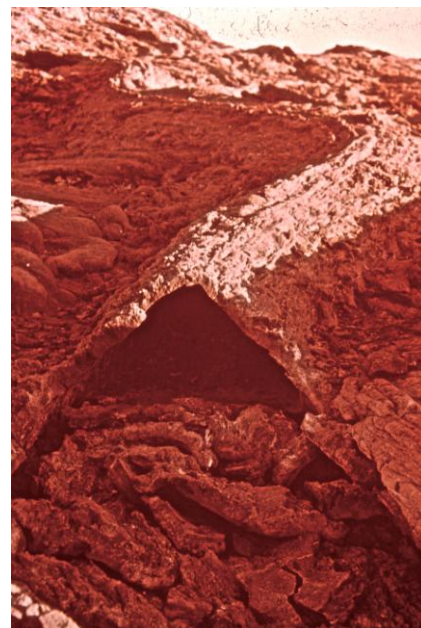
Quick Fact: The longest lava tube is Kazumura Cave in Hawaii which is over 40 miles long and at a depth of 3,614 feet.



Entrance to the Lava River Cave



Inside the Lava River Cave, note the lava flow on the floor hence the name of the cave.



Lava tube formed on the surface, Sombrero Chino Island, Ecuador
Photographer unknown

