

**WELCOME TO
LURGROTTE PEGGAU
AUSTRIA'S BIGGEST WATERFLOWING CAVE**

Discovery of the cave, 1st of April 1894

Max Brunello, an Italian Speleologist, discovered this cave. The exploration started in Semriach, as the Peggau entrance was blocked by water, but the water level was then lowered by 7 meters in 1913 by the construction of a drainage canal. On April 29th 1894 seven cave explorers got trapped in the cave as a result of heavy rainfalls. They were not able to be rescued until nine days later, which involved over 1000 rescue workers.

Excavation work on the cave

The cave has two entrances: Lurgrotte Peggau and Semriach (they are separated by these two businesses: Lurgrotte Peggau is a club, Semriach is a private company). On February 13th 1935 the cave was crossed for the first time. It took a total of 18 hours to get through the 6 km passage. In 1957, after 20 years of construction work, the Lurgrotte entrance was ready for guided tours to cross over to Semriach. This adventure lasts 3-4 hours. In 1975, the passage way was destroyed once again by the worst flooding of the century.

Origin of the Lurgrotte

The folding open of mountains caused tears, gaps and holes. Through these openings water, following the law of gravity, entered the stone complex. Following the path with least resistance, the water found a curvy and zig zag path. Over millions of years these underground waterways grew, through the eroding power of the water containing particles of sand and stones, into maze like cave system. There are approximately 10,000 caves in Austria, 4,500 in Styria, and only 25 caves are open to visitors.

Development of Stalagmites and Stalactites

Through the gaps and tears, water enters into the mountain and takes tiny particles of the stone. On reaching the cave ceiling it starts, with gravity increasing, to droop down. The tiny particles of stone build up on the ceiling.

Guided tours through Lurgrotte Peggau

A short one hour tour will show you about 1 km of the cave. The passage ways are fitted with electrical lights. It is recommended to bring a jacket, as the cave has a temperature of +10°C and a humidity of 95%. There are also tour which last 5-6 hours, these tours are available during the winter months.

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1. The temperature inside the cave is +10°C throughout the year, but the humidity can get up to 97%. The water temperature is 8-10°C. The water flowing along the guided tour of Peggau has its origin in a spring 1,8 km deep inside the cave, which is only a crevice in the rock. There are small crayfish in the water and you will also find woodlouses, cave spiders and other insects. Bats also live in the caves. Up to 600 bats can be seen, which include nine different species. They mainly stay inside to sleep during the winter months.
2. We enter the cave through a wide opening in the rock portal. The exploration from the direction of Peggau in the 18th century had been difficult, because the stream was originally flowing through the current entrance. The water from the small river has been used for a silver melting in the past and later for a sawmill.
3. As you pass the entrance of the cave, you can see the fossilized skeleton of a cave bear. This species died out 20.000 years ago. The bones were found in Lurgrotte and also in other caves in the surrounding area. It is believed that the bear had been about 2m tall and weighed 400 kg. Large bears can reach up to 3m and 1000 kg in weight.
4. The first big stalactite you can see was created by sand and rubble that has formed part of the rock and washed out of the cave-system. This process took about 10 Million years to form. The rock is limestone, 350-400 Million years old and has its origin in the era called Devon.
5. The stalagmite Baldachin is colored by different minerals like iron (orange-brown), silver, lead and manganese (blue-grey), pure sinter looks white. Upstairs you will walk through the Marble Tunnel and pass the metal-hands made by an German artist, Timm Ulrichs. He thought that these hands would grow like a stalactite and a stalagmite, and at least touch each other like in Michelangelo's famous picture Creation of Adam.
6. Through two tunnels we enter a large cavernous room where in 1924 the explorers from Peggau and Semriach met for the first time. This event was to be celebrated and from then on the room has been called "Hall of Victory".
7. Under the sky of countless thin, young stalactites, which are hollow and grow about 1cm in 1 century, you can see the biggest stalagmite called "Drei Zinnen" (Three Pinnacles) named like the famous mountain range in the Dolomites of South-Tyrol.
8. We pass the stalactite called "Bell".
9. On the right hand side you can see the stalagmite "Tyrolean Hat".
10. In the "Rain Cave" the water drops from the ceiling the whole year. The rain on the surface of the mountain is collected in a crater and reaches the cave through a gap called "Angerleitenschwinde".
11. The "Prince" is the biggest free-hanging stalactite in the first kilometer with the length of 3.7m and a weight of 3 tons. It got its name from several stalactites, which looked like a crown before they had been broken away by people, which is of course absolutely forbidden!
12. After exactly 1 km, the electrical-lighted part of the guided tour ends. With the 1-Hour Guided Tour we return through a narrow gorge, partial 20m high where the surface of the rock nearly look like the skin of a crocodile, so it is named "Crocodile Canyon".
13. It is possible to continue through the passage for another kilometer with the 2-Hour Guided Tour, but you will need lamps to get there. During the winter months you can visit 4 km of the cave climbing up and roping down with our guided and fabulous "Adventure Tour". A passage through the mountain to the other entrance of the cave at Semriach (6 km away) is not possible any more.
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Thank you for visiting the Lurgrotte and enjoy your holiday in Austria.