

OLLI at SOU: Educational Travel Proposal

Oregon Caves National Monument & Chateau

Submitted to: Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Southern Oregon University

Submitted by: ROGUETROTTER Tour Co.

Proposed Date: **April 18th**

Departure / Return Location: Campbell Center, SOU, Ashland, Oregon

Program Overview

This proposal outlines a curated educational travel program for OLLI at SOU members focusing on the history, architecture, and preservation of **Oregon Caves National Monument and the Historic Oregon Caves Chateau** particularly. The program emphasizes expert, staff-led interpretation, behind-the-scenes access, and a comfortable pace aligned with OLLI's mission of lifelong learning.

Participants will engage with both the natural and cultural history of the Monument while gaining insight into current National Park Service stewardship and ongoing preservation efforts.

Educational Objectives

Participants will:

- Explore the natural and human history of Oregon Caves National Monument
- Examine the architectural significance of the Oregon Caves Chateau
- Learn about historic preservation and current rehabilitation efforts
- Understand cave geology, paleontology, and early exploration history
- Engage with experts involved in the stewardship of the site

Proposed Program Highlights

- **Chateau Preservation Experience**
Exclusive behind-the-scenes experience led by *Sue Densmore*, Executive Director of **Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau** — <https://friendsocac.org/>
- Grants Pass: Special access to the warehouse housing the Chateau's original **Monterey-style furnishings**. Interpretation will focus on the design, craftsmanship, and conservation of these historic pieces during the renovation period. The historic Monterey design style is characterized by:
 - Spanish Colonial and Arts & Crafts influences,
 - Hand-crafted hardwood construction,

- A rustic yet refined aesthetic well suited to lodge architecture of the 1920s–30s and finally,
 - Insight into how original furnishings are being conserved and prepared for reinstallation following renovation.
- **Lunch in Cave Junction**
Picnic lunch at the Illinois Valley Visitor Center (final selection TBD).
 - **Exclusive Access to the Chateau.** Including a talk by either **Sue Densmore** *or* Monument **Superintendent Jeremy Curtis**(dependent on a busy Superintendent’s availability), bringing into focus:
 - National Monument Designation,
 - Chateau History and Construction,
 - Stewardship challenges and
 - Long-term preservation vision
 - **Visitor Center & Artifact Interpretation**
Time at the Oregon Caves Visitor Center to view key interpretive displays, including early exploration artifacts, a skull of the now-extinct short faced bear, and a detailed 3D model of the cave system.
 - **Limited Cave Experience (Pending Availability)**
National Park Service volunteer–led entry into the first approximately 300 yards of the cave. This shorter, less strenuous experience would allow participants to observe notable cave features—such as stalactites, stalagmites, draperies, and the River Styx—while hearing the story of the cave’s discovery.

Accessibility & Pace

The program is designed with accessibility and participant comfort in mind. Walking distances and elevation changes will be communicated in advance, with frequent interpretive stops built into the itinerary. The optional limited cave experience is intended as a lower-impact alternative to the standard cave tour.

Pricing: \$155 per guest. Deli style lunch - \$25/guest.

Conclusion

This educational travel program offers OLLI at SOU members a rare opportunity to explore one of Oregon’s most significant natural and historic resources through expert interpretation and exclusive access. The proposed experience strongly aligns with OLLI’s mission of lifelong learning, intellectual engagement, and cultural enrichment. We are hopeful this will be an opportunity to collaborate with OLLI at SOU to bring this exceptional experience to its members.