

Caves for Unusual Heritage Hospitality

For thousands of years, mankind has found shelter in caves. Steve Dobson of the Unusual Hotels of the World guide found a number of properties with enough WOW to merit special mention.

From ancient sites dug out of the soft limestone in Cappadocia to survive the cold winter, to those excavated to escape the searing heat of the Australian outback around Coober Pedy, underground dwellings offer accommodation choices for the adventurous traveller.



With a constant temperature, they are cool in the summer and warm in the winter however an often remote location requires a little more planning than a standard city-break trip to enjoy.

One of the more noted cave properties in Turkey is the **Gamirasu Hotel**, near Urgup, with its 18 rooms run by the amiable Süleyman ÇAKIR. A trained tourist guide, like so many locals he has drawn from his local roots to offer trips that complement the serenity of these 1000-year-old dwellings for his guests from around the world. Popular with honeymoon couples, the surrounding 'fairy chimneys' area has many cave properties and you need to read reviews carefully to identify those that offer actual cave bedrooms, rather than those that are simply constructed from blocks cut out of the local Tufa limestone. The closest Airport to Cappadocia is Kayseri, around 75 km away. There are a number of cave property choices - some with luxury facilities, including one with a swimming pool - while others offer a more rustic and traditional experience.

Turkey is only one of many European destinations that offer cave accommodation. Spain has a number of caves available in the **Gaudix region** near Granada. Usually offered on a self-catering basis these have received a following from the backpacker community, keen for somewhere off the beaten track and away from the tourist beaches. Central Spain offers a less frantic pace and these caves offer shelter from the midday heat - perfect for a siesta, before an afternoon dip in the pool.



France also offers cave accommodation with **Le Prince Noir** in the charming Provence town of les Baux, a Bed and Breakfast hideaway worthy of mention. Carved out of mountainside rock, this 3-bedroom artist's house contains artworks, reflecting nearly a century of encounters and friendships. It offers a recommended self-contained lodging in one of the loveliest villages in the south of France.

Those that want more luxury need look to North America for modern conveniences with their cave accommodation. **Beckham Creek Cavern** in Arkansas provides a Jacuzzi among the stalactites, a billiard room bar as well as a giant TV among 1.4 mile of tunnels deep in the Ozark Mountains. Suitable for groups, the property is in 500 acres of woodland accommodation with kayaks and river

rafting for outdoor enthusiasts.

Kokopelli's Cave in New Mexico offers a man-made cave alternative, blasted out of a rockface by a geologist with high explosive expertise. To reach the cave, guests must walk down a path that takes you 70 feet below the cliff top. However, on arrival, the one room cave has all the amenities that self catering guests require. A kitchen with microwave and oven, hot and cold running water, a hot tub as well as the most amazing view of South West sunsets from your vantage point 280 feet above the La Plata River.



If you extend your search criteria to include all underground lodging, The Unusual Hotels of the World guide will soon see details published of an underground suite in a mine in Sweden and 2 properties deep in the mountains of Switzerland. One, deep in the St Gotthard pass, provides modern conference facilities in a reinforced underground fortress. The other, a former Swiss Army Festung (Fortress), was once a nuclear bunker carved in the mountains 25km outside Lucern, which will soon offer bunk rooms with weekend accommodation.

Wherever you decide to dig down for the night, you can be assured of a warm reception in the many cave and underground properties the UHOTW team review around the world.

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