

National Park Service: Apostle Islands ice caves expected to open Feb. 16 if conditions remain stable

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BAYFIELD, Wis. (Feb. 14, 2026) – The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is expected to open the ice caves near Meyers Beach for visitation beginning on Feb. 16, 2026, if current ice conditions remain stable. This rare winter event occurs only when conditions meet minimum safety thresholds. The last time conditions allowed access were in 2015.

Park officials stress that public safety is the highest priority and conditions can change rapidly. Visitor access may close with little notice if conditions deteriorate.

“Few places offer an experience like the Apostle Islands ice caves,” said BriAnna Weldon, superintendent. “The ice caves are a rare and remarkable winter phenomenon. We know visitors are excited about the possibility of exploring the ice caves. Safety is our top priority, and conditions can change quickly on Lake Superior. Please check official sources before traveling.”

For Official Updates

- Website: <https://go.nps.gov/IceCaves>
- Ice Line: (715) 779-3398 x3
- Official Facebook Page: <https://facebook.com/apostleislandsnps>

About the Apostle Islands Ice Caves

In winter, when conditions allow, visitors can hike across the frozen lake to see dramatic ice formations created by waves and freezing water. Access is rare and depends on sustained cold temperatures, calm winds, and stable ice.

Where are the ice caves?

The ice caves form along the mainland cliffs of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore near Meyers Beach, on the south shore of Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin. These caves are part of the park's mainland unit, not on the islands themselves. Visitors access the ice caves by hiking across the frozen surface of Lake Superior from the Meyers Beach trailhead. The Meyers Beach trailhead is located at GPS coordinates 46.8834, -91.0484. There is no parking available at this location. Visitors must use off-site parking lots and county-managed shuttles provided by Bay Area Rural Transit to reach the trailhead at Meyers Beach.

Distances to nearby cities:

- Cornucopia, WI: ~4 miles southwest
- Bayfield, WI: ~18 miles east
- Washburn, WI: ~25 miles southeast
- Ashland, WI: ~38 miles southeast
- Duluth, MN: ~90 miles west
- Minneapolis, MN: ~230 miles southwest

Parking and shuttles

There is no parking at Meyers Beach or on nearby Hwy 13. Visitors must use county-managed shuttles (Bay Area Rural Transit) and off-site parking lots. Vehicles parked on closed roads may be towed.

- Shuttle service: \$5 each way (\$10 round trip), cash only. Shuttles will run approximately every 25-35 minutes, but traffic conditions may cause delays.

Parking and shuttle fees are separate from the NPS Ice Caves event fee and are not charged by the National Park Service.

Cornucopia parking lots (4 miles southwest of Meyers Beach):

- Bell Town Hall Parking Lot (GPS: 46.85267, -91.10198)
- Cornucopia Beach Parking Lot (GPS: 46.85875, -91.09975)

Sand River Gravel Pit lot (6 miles east of Meyers Beach):

- 30675 State Highway 13, Bayfield, WI 54814 (GPS: 46.89324, -90.93237)

What to bring

- Dress for harsh winter conditions
- Warm, waterproof boots with traction devices
- Warm layers and windproof outerwear
- Trekking poles for stability
- Water and snacks

Fees

- Ice Caves Event Fee: \$5 per person/day (ages 16+; under 16 free). Visitors are encouraged to pay online before visiting: <https://www.pay.gov/public/form/start/1442411180>
- Shuttle Service Fee: \$5 each way (\$10 round trip), cash only. Charged by Bay Area Rural Transit.
- Cornucopia Parking Fees: Separate fee payable on site by QR code (electronic payment only). Not charged by the National Park Service.
- Sand River Gravel Pit Parking Fee: Separate fee, cash only, payable on site. Not charged by the National Park Service.

Fees are established to recover costs associated with providing visitor services and managing safety operations required for this event in a remote area.

Facilities

There is no shelter, water, concessions or garbage cans at the caves or Meyers Beach. Visitors must pack out all trash. Porta-potties are available only at the Meyers Beach trailhead.

Other visitor information

- Dogs: Allowed on a leash (6 ft max), but not recommended due to harsh conditions
- Tours: No authorized tours; visiting the ice caves is self-guided

How to stay safe

- Dress for harsh winter conditions
- Avoid standing under hanging ice
- Watch for cracks and pressure ridges

- Do not crawl into small openings

For media inquiries contact mwr_communications@nps.gov.