



Cave Diving - A Skull Cavern Guide



Not being able to get past the early floors can be anxiety inducing. It is normal to feel like that but don't you worry!

I will share my strategies in detail, and try to keep it simple and easy to understand. We don't want to feel intimidated by complex tricks now do we?

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The Guide

This can possibly be a “no cost” strategy but... there are prerequisites to it. That is because this guide focuses on long-term preparation.

Heading into Skull Cavern with a strategy that is planned in advance helps you get all the iridium you need in a single run.

You won't have to look back at it for a good while. I can guarantee that you will have enough iridium for all your tool upgrades, a reasonable amount of iridium sprinklers, iridium band, and even some crystalariums.

So, people who do not enjoy going to Skull Cavern, this is for all of you. Just a single run will allow you to ignore the cavern for a good while.

Now for the planning, let's see -

1. First of all, don't expect to hit the Skull Cavern until at least Y1 Fall. But, I suggest Y1 Winter, because you don't have to do any farming, so you don't need to worry about any harvesting.
Winter gives you a lot of time to explore other aspects of the game, and of course, it is a great season to upgrade your equipment.
2. Minimal socializing. This guide requires you to put an effort into hitting the local mines regularly. I think Y1 is tough for everyone, so you should do everything you need to in order to make Y2 easier, then you can socialize all you want.

But you don't have to be cut off from everyone. I usually socialize with people on Saturdays, whether it is gifting or just talking to the townsfolk. I choose Saturday (Sunday resets the forage spawns) because that's when I forage the whole map.

3. A barn consisting of at least 2 cows. CC Bundles or not, cheese is a valuable resource at any point in the game. Not only is it great to replenish your Health and Energy, it is also good for gifting. Almost everyone *likes* cheese.
4. Have reached the bottom of the local mines for Skull Key.

Now that you have a roadmap, let's check our strategy for cave diving equipment. For a first trip to Skull Cavern, there is small flexibility with weapons, outfit, and other tools that you can use. You don't have any iridium yet that could've been used to acquire better gear. Therefore, I shall categorize them.

Minimum requirement

Weapon - Obsidian's Edge. You are guaranteed to get this sword at floor 90 (as long as you are not using Remixed Rewards).

Some may argue that this sword is not good enough to fight the monsters in Skull Cavern, which is true, but it is sufficient to give them a little slap and run away. You do not have to kill the monsters. Just swing them away and keep running. Tank the damage a little while munching on some cheese.

Boots - Space Boots. Guaranteed drop at floor 110 (as long as you are not using Remixed Rewards).

Ring - Any ring with magnetism is a must. You can run away from the monsters and collect iridium while doing so.

Food - Cheese.

Pickaxe - Gold. Just to save time with those hits.

Mining Skill - Level 8 in mining. Regardless of which skill you chose, level 8 gives you a crafting recipe for Mega Bombs (*yes, this is a bomberman guide*).

Note - Mega Bombs are not only superior to regular bombs, they are also less resource heavy.

A regular Bomb requires coal. Coal is a precious resource that is easily depleted while smelting, or in other craftable items. Y1 is already tight on affordability, so I think we should save all the coal we have for better purposes.

Mega Bomb on the other hand, does not require any coal. Gold ore and essences are very easily acquired. I shall explain in detail later.

Backpack - 24 storage. You will be carrying quite a bit of gear, and you will also receive a lot of loot.

Recommended

- Galaxy Sword. If you have been lucky with your first Prismatic Shard, you should save it to obtain the sword.
- If you don't have your first Prismatic Shard yet, consider spending 25,000g for a Lava Katana at the Adventurer's Guild.
- Miner skill for +1 ore per vein. This is very helpful to obtain more iridium.
- Gold Cheese. Guaranteed to get Gold Cheese from Large Milk.
- 36 Storage Backpack. Doesn't hurt to have more storage.
- Ruby ring with that 10% increase in attack is decent. Burglar's ring is great if you have a Galaxy Sword, so that you can actually kill those monsters and get that extra loot. You can also go with another ring with magnetism, magnetic rings will stack in range.

You can buy a Ruby ring at the Guild for 5,000g. Burglar's ring is a reward for killing 500 Dust Sprites.

Long-term Preparations

Build your barn and get 2 cows as soon as possible. Getting as much milk as you can is beneficial. You can then start converting the milk to cheese once you have acquired Cheese Press.

You should make your own plans to reach the bottom of the mines, latest by Y1 mid-summer. Once that is done, regularly farm for gold ore when you are not farming copper/iron ores for craftable items (kegs and such).

If you don't already know, it is very easy to farm any sort of ore. It's just a matter of how much you are willing to grind. Generally, you can mine copper at floor 21, iron at floor 61, and gold at floor 81.

For this guide, I will explain gold ore farming.

After you have done your farm chores and tasks for the day, head straight to the mines. Use the elevator to go to floor 80, take the stairs to floor 81.

See any gold? Take it, and then leave the floor right away.

No gold? Quickly exit.

Do not try to break rocks to go down any further.

Elevator > 80 > Stairs to 81 > Take the gold. Leave.

Repeat this cycle.

This works with floor 21 for copper, and floor 61 for iron (and also Dust Sprites if you want the Burglar's ring). You can easily get 100 ores per day, more if you are lucky or have Gold Pickaxe.

Keep upgrading your pickaxe so that you have an easier time with farming ores.

Your adventures in the local mines through weeks and seasons will net you a lot of resources. Rocks, gems, Geodes, loot from monsters, and mining skill experience so that you can reach level 8 and unlock Mega Bomb recipe.

Hitting floor 81 for gold ores will also give you the Solar and Void Essence that is required for Mega Bomb. You will come across plenty of monsters for these drops on floor 81. That is how you accumulate resources for crafting a good bulk of Mega Bombs.

Skull Cavern Preparation

Since you have been exploring the local mines for ores, you should have also acquired a decent amount of Jade, Ruby, Diamond, and Omni Geodes.

After unlocking Calico Desert, pick any Sunday to visit it at least once before you actually do the cave diving.

Go on a Sunday because that's when the Desert Trader has Staircases in stock. You need at least a minimum of these items:

1. Omni Geode x3 = Warp Totem
2. Diamond x4 = Triple Shot Espresso
3. Ruby x4 = Spicy Eel
4. Jade x10 = Staircases

Optional - if you have an excess amount of Quartz lying around, consider trading 5 Quartz for 1 regular Bomb. These regular Bombs are good to blow up smaller clusters of rocks.

After you are done getting the items you need, go to the Skull Cavern and head inside, then quickly exit. This will unlock [Qi's Challenge](#), which has a decent reward.









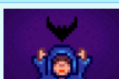



You should also check the Oasis and give Sandy a visit, she will be surprisingly pleased to see your lovely face.

If you've got a Prismatic Shard, use it at the Pillars to obtain the Galaxy Sword.

Once you have gathered all "Skull Cavern Day" gear, put it in a special chest that is quickly accessible inside your house or by the front door, we do not want to waste any time for cave diving.

Skull Cavern Day

When you are all prepared, make sure to check the Fortune Teller Program on television to find out your daily luck.

Message	TV Display	Stat Bonus ^[2]
The spirits are very happy today! They will do their best to shower everyone with good fortune.		 Luck ($> +0.07$)
The spirits are in good humor today. I think you'll have a little extra luck.		 Luck ($> +0.02$ and $\leq +0.07$)
The spirits feel neutral today. The day is in your hands.		 Luck (≥ -0.02 and $\leq +0.02$, but not 0)
This is rare. The spirits feel absolutely neutral today.		 Luck (0)
The spirits are somewhat annoyed today. Luck will not be on your side. The spirits are somewhat mildly perturbed today. Luck will not be on your side.		 Luck (≥ -0.07 and < -0.02)
The spirits are very displeased today. They will do their best to make your life difficult.		 Luck (< -0.07)

You certainly have to go on the luckiest day, when the TV display has a **purple star** in it.

It is also advisable to go on the second luckiest day, when the TV display has a **yellow pyramid** in it.

After checking the television, grab your mining gear, food, bombs, and warp yourself straight to the desert.

There is no need to wait for Pam's arrival to take the bus, Warp Totem will give you more than 2-3 hours very easily, which is a lot of floors in the mines.

Once you have teleported to the desert, eat a Spicy Eel for speed and luck buff, and drink the Triple Shot Espresso for another stack of speed buff. Dash straight to the cavern and take a deep breath, it is time to mine.

Here is a quick backpack checklist for Skull Cavern Day -

1. Pickaxe
2. Sword
3. Warp Totem
4. Spicy Eel
5. Triple Shot Espresso

6. Bombs
7. Staircases
8. Cheese

Mining Strategy

This is quite straightforward.

Kaboom! Down. Kaboom! Down.

Ah, the details? Alright, let's see, this is how it goes -

Floors

Rapid descent is the name of the game. Time is ticking and you need to ignore the world and rush down to at least floor 50, after that you will start seeing iridium ores more frequently. Getting iridium becomes a lot easier after floor 100.

You always take the first stair you find!

I can't stress this enough, found a stair? Take it! See a stair? Take it!

Same applies for holes. Make sure that your health bar is at least half before jumping inside of it.

Floors for using your staircase -

- Monster infested floor - always use your stairs. They can look like [this](#) or [this](#).
- I drop a staircase on [spirals](#) as well, unless I see a good bombing spot at the entrance. For example, I broke that one rock in front of me. Nothing? Staircase.
- [Square](#) floors are also worth using a staircase as you might end up wasting time.

Another point to note is that every time you enter a floor, pause the game, look around, and plan your path. Zooming out and making the UI smaller helps.

Bombing strategy

[On this floor](#), I start by breaking that one rock, then moving to where the arrow is for the first bomb. If I see a stair, I will go down, if not, I move to the next spot which also has 2 iridium nodes.

This floor doesn't have a good bombing spot at the entrance, as there aren't as many rocks as I would prefer, so I break two rocks, move down for the first bomb, and if I don't see any stair, I go further. I also ignore the single nodes if they are out of the bomb's range.

This floor has a perfect entrance for bombing. Quickly drop a bomb right in front of you, no stairs? move ahead where there are a bunch of rocks. I don't go for non-iridium ore unless they're within the bomb's reach.

Monsters

Best to ignore them as much as you can. I would not recommend going for a kill unless you have the Galaxy Sword. Take the damage or swing them back while you are bombing, eat your cheese, and go about your business.

Food

Keep food in an easily accessible slot so that you can continue to consume it. Keep your health bar above half. When you are taking blows from the bombs and tanking damage from monsters, it is easy to lose your health.

So keep eating those chunks of cheese and continue mining.

You will need to replenish your coffee before having a Spicy Eel. So keep that handy as well. You want to keep checking your buffs at the top of the screen and make sure all three status icons are active at all times

Personal Testing

I had the strategy theorized and had been preparing it for 3 seasons. Now that Winter has arrived, it's time to put that theory into practice.

- [Daily Luck check](#). Yeah it could have been better but this will also do.
- [Backpack check](#). As you can see, I was lucky enough to find a Prismatic Shard while fishing, so I saved it to obtain the Galaxy Sword.
- I could have crafted more Mega Bombs, but I had regular Bombs available so didn't bother. These regular Bombs were obtained from monster loot in the local mines, and by trading Quartz x5 for each Bomb with the Desert Trader.
- I also had plenty of Jade so I got as many staircases as I could.
- I have always ended up consuming all the base Cheese, but I only happen to use no more than 5 Gold Cheese (plus the base Cheese) by the end of the run.
- You don't need any more than 5 each of Spicy Eels and Triple Shot Espresso. That will be plenty for the whole day.
- I never got lucky by getting any ring with magnetism, so I crafted a Glowstone and it gets the job done. I got a Burglar's Ring as a reward for killing Dust Sprites x500, which is also a good source to get coal. I also have a Ruby ring which is effective in the Skull Cavern, only if you are going to kill the monsters.
- I also have Miner in mining skill, which gives +1 ore per vein.

Oh yeah, now it's warp time.

For some reference, here is my inventory through the day in one of the run -

[At 12:10 pm](#). Reached floor 52, have used up some bombs, not a lot of iridium either.

[At 6:10 pm](#). Reached floor 110, have used more than half the bombs and a few staircases. A lot of iridium and 4 Prismatic Shards.

As you can notice, things drastically change after floor 50, and it only gets better after 100.

Indeed, deeper = better, that is why you need to rush down to floor 50 even if you have to ignore some loot.

So I did three runs, the first run with a Burglar's Ring to see if it is worth using, the rest of the two with Ruby ring.

Test Results

Run #1 - Burglar's Ring. 401 iridium ores, and 5 Prismatic Shards.

After doing this run, I realized that if I'm only looking for iridium ore, there is no point in trying to get the extra loot from monsters. I ended up using more than half of the staircases, and almost all of my bombs.

Run #2 - Ruby ring. 466 iridium ores, and 7 Prismatic Shards.

Definitely the most effective run, used up all my bombs, but I did get some more of them from monster drops so I used those as well. More than half of the staircases used, yet again.

Run #3 - Ruby ring again. 412 iridium ores, and 4 Prismatic Shards.

This run proved to be difficult as I wasn't getting lucky in finding stairs, I ended up crafting some regular Bombs out of desperation, but I think it was still a satisfactory run.

To summarize it, this long-term strategy has rewarded me with at least 400 iridium ores, which is 80 iridium bars. I think that's more than enough to upgrade your tools and get iridium equipment.

Using the Ruby ring helped in killing monsters rather quickly, and that helps when you have more than a couple Serpents jumping on you. But it does not make or break your run.

You can just knock the monsters back, bomb, eat, and go down the stairs

Miscellaneous

1. If you go the Community Center route, you will have obtained one Crystalarium in the process of unlocking the Vault Bundle. Use this one to get more Jade. You can also get one Crystalarium as a reward from the Museum. All you need to do is donate 50 minerals.
2. Break the crates/boxes when you are mining, you can get more Geodes. Try to process 10 non-Omni Geodes, and then process 1 Omni Geode; this can give you a chance for getting a Prismatic Shard.
3. When you have finally obtained a lot of Milk, craft a Cheese Press and take it to the local mines when you are farming for ore. Always keep converting Milk to Cheese.
4. Don't let Skull Cavern intimidate you, when you have been preparing for weeks, you will find it very much achievable. This long-term preparation during Y1 will make things a lot more fun during Y2. After putting Skull Cavern aside, you can indulge yourself in other activities of your choice.

Conclusion

This guide is very useful for people who have no iridium; hence, no iridium pickaxe, no iridium band, or any of the fancy rings.

All you need are bombs that can be crafted, food that is obtainable from cows, and using gems to trade with the Desert Trader.

Even with a gold pick, magnet ring, and Obsidian's Edge, you can certainly do a Skull Cavern run with effective results.

Shout out to ConcernedApe, the team behind Stardew Valley, people behind the wiki, and the community for always being helpful.

If you read this guide through to the end, I really appreciate it.

Thank you! 