WORLDLY CAVES – Unusual Tours

When you travel the world of caves, you will find many different ways to visit and view caves. There are two basic types of caves to visit – “wild” caves and “show” caves.

Visiting a wild cave is just that … an adventure in the wild. Some of these caves are located very conveniently. Some are located in distant and exotic locations. Touring and exploring these wild caves takes an amount of skill and experience. Some are very easy treks while others require expert skills and much experience. It is very important to know the difference. Caves, while beautiful, can be dangerous. Some require rappelling, or using ropes to access the cave. Some require long crawls through tight spaces for great distances. Floods, blockages, hypothermia and simply getting lost are all possible hazards of cave exploring.

Touring a show cave is quite different than exploring a wild cave. Most cave attractions open to the public have made accommodations in the cave to allow visitors to see the natural wonders in relative comfort and safety. Most cave tours in the world are seen by walking through…stairs, ramps and walkways wind through the cavern. Modern lighting systems cast enough light on the cave’s highlights to be easily seen and enjoyed by tourist visiting this attraction. A few select caves around the world have nearly unique methods of touring. These include trams, railways and boats. Some cave experiences, while using a walking tour, have interesting ways to reach the cave.

At Lake Shasta Caverns in California, tourist first cross scenic Lake Shasta on a special cave ferry, then board a low-geared bus for the trip UP the mountain where the cave is located. Glenwood Caverns, in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, uses an aerial gondola that moves visitors from the village of Glenwood Springs two mountains away to the cavern visitor center and entrance. Both add a great deal of adventure to the cave experience.

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What a view! From the heights of the mountain tops to the depths of the Colorado Rockies, the visit to Glenwood Caverns offers spectacular views on every level.
Louis Conti – 2007 Excellence in Science Award Winner

The 2007 Excellence in Science Award was presented to Mr. Louie Conti during a February 16th 4-H Awards Ceremony in St. Peters, MO. Mr. Conti received the award in recognition of his long-term Champion Geology project for 4-H. Louie, a student at Timberland High School, has spent over 8 years working on his extensive geology discovery project. His research has taken him to geode mines in Missouri, glass factories in West Virginia, glaciers in Canada, volcanoes in New Mexico and several of Missouri’s famous cave attractions. His family played an important role assisting him with research and experimentation. Congratulations to Louie Conti for his wonderful project and to 4-H for encouraging a venue of study so very important to Missouri’s history and future.

The Excellence in Science Award is sponsored by the Fantastic Caverns Science Research Program. Fantastic Caverns, located in Springfield, MO, understands the importance of science education and is committed to encouraging students whenever possible through learning resources, educational opportunities and recognition.

Louie with cave formations while on tour in Missouri.

Grandpa helps to identify rocks specimen.

Louie Conti with his 2007 awards and honors for his geology project.
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Several caves in the United States have combined a boat ride and walking cave tour. Central Tennessee is home to many caves including Lost Sea Caverns. Here, cave tour participants begin their tour by walking through the scenic caverns for about ¼ mile. When they reach the underground lake (Lost Sea) they board a pontoon for a ride through the huge chamber. Special lighting highlights the caves prettier sights, including some formations at or below the water level. In Pennsylvania, Penn’s Cave is toured via small boat. Cave visitors descend to the boat tour level on a fairly convenient stairway. Once there, they board a motorboat for the remainder of the tour. The same set of circumstances applies to Howe Caverns in New York. Riding a boat through a cave adds quite a thrill to the adventure!

One more unusual way to get to a cave is a little more common; several caves around the world are equipped with elevators that move people from the surface facilities deep into the heart of the cave. A few of these in the United States are Ruby Falls in Chattanooga, TN, Carlsbad Caverns in Carlsbad, NM, and Blanchard Springs Caverns in Mountain Home, AR.

Some caves around the world have made touring a cave incredibly easy. In France, Rouffignac Cave (Grotte Prehistorique De Rouffignac) has a motorized tour that propels visitors through the cave where they may enjoy the pre-historic art and cave scenery in comfort. The guided tour on an electric train takes you through places where bears once dug their lairs and shows you part of the cave with its wall paintings.

Another on the European continent with a riding tour is Postojna Jama (Cave) in Slovenia (southern Europe) where tourist board a locomotive-powered train that delivers them to select scenic and historical points within the huge caverns.

This cave was once even used as a fuel storage facility during World War II. Petrol (fuel) supplies torched by partisans explain the blackened and scorched room called the “Upturned Ship.”

In a tropical local, Harrison’s Cave on the Caribbean island of Barbados offers a cave tour unique to the tropics. (Continued on Page 4)
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Visitors to the centrally-located cave attraction are first treated to an audio visual experience depicting the history and formation of Harrison’s Cave. Next, they board a special tram that transports them through the cave and allows them to get off at select locations to “take a closer look” at nature’s offerings.

Much closer to home you will find a cave with a tour unique to North America. Located in the Ozarks of southwest Missouri, Fantastic Caverns (Springfield) is the only all-riding cave tour in the nation. This unique attraction is an example of a show cave that is well suited for visitors of all abilities. The specially designed tour trams are “wheel-chair” friendly allowing travelers with physical disabilities to enjoy the beauty and wonder of a natural cave.

This ride-through cave is also well suited for seniors, families with small children and others to have the opportunity to sit back, relax and just enjoy nature’s handiwork without the worry of long walks or steep stairs.

You can find out about show caves located in North America at www.cavern.com - the web site for the National Caves Association.

![Guide driving tour-tram through Harrison’s Cave, Barbados](image)

![Fantastic Caverns, in the Missouri Ozarks, is the only all-riding cave tour in North America.](image)
MASTODONS
2007

*Mastodons 2007* will include a paleontology “dig” at a simulated Missouri mastodon site, located at the outdoor classrooms near the cavern entrance. Here, students will unearth remains of a pre-historic mastodon once common to central and eastern Missouri. This touchable adventure, under the direction of skilled staff, will teach visiting students about the now extinct mastodon…its physical features, habitat and range. The program will apply the study directly to Missouri history.

One common, but often overlooked feature is that Missouri caves are comprised of the fossilized remains of pre-historic creatures that once inhabited an ancient sea. In addition, a recreated mastodon track-way will let students sharpen up their math skills as they calculate the animals gait, weight and height. They’ll even have the opportunity to try their skills at Mastodon hunting!

*Mastodons* is one of three special educational programs that are designed to specifically meet instructional goals of regional schools and scouting groups. This 90-minute program is presented by the Fantastic Caverns Science Research Program and is available from June 1 through November 21.
**SPRING 2007 WORD SEARCH**

**Vocabulary Words**

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D W D M H Y P O T H E R M I A Y
E S W O A K D L R O W C Q M D N
Z N H M O R C I T O X E A P R O
I Q I O L L T M X F C Z A V A D
L P R L W E F Z K E K R Q L E O
I R U L P R S N U T T P O N K T
S E O A R U C Q W I R D M E E S
S H S C M T I M S Y N O D G W A
O I S O M N E A K O T U A T X M
F S I M U E N Q G O C K K Q N D
J T M M J V C X R A C R U O T R
T O T U A D E B T O C M Z B W T
Y R L N V A O I L B W F L T X E
E I Y I A A O B N K P I V N Z C
B C J T T N J G K R A I L W A Y
O U T Y C A R I B B E A N D K U
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- ADVENTURE
- EXOTIC
- MISSOURI
- SHOW
- BLOCKAGE
- FLOOD
- MOTORBOAT
- TOUR
- CARIBBEAN
- FOSSILIZED
- PARTISAN
- TRAM
- CAVE
- GONDOLA
- PREHISTORIC
- UNIQUE
- COMMUNITY
- HYPOTHERMIA
- RAILWAY
- WILD
- EDUCATION
- MASTODON
- SCIENCE
- WORLD