

Secret Caverns

*nature's wonder underground
featuring the 100 foot waterfall*

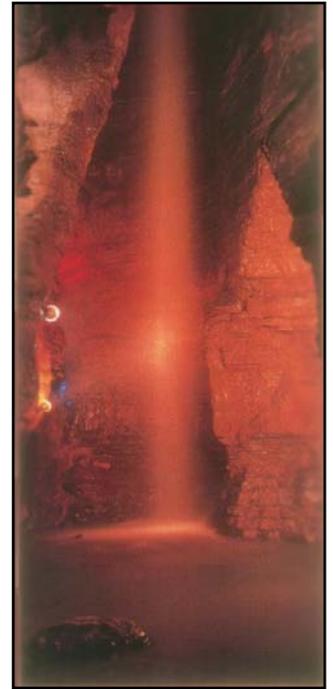
Outside of Cobleskill, New York, in the summer of 1928, on a rural farm owned by Leon Lawton, an amazing discovery took place. Two of Leon's cows (Lucky and Floyd), sought to escape their dreary pastoral existence

and find fame and fortune in the great outside world. Actually, they were star-crossed lovers on an ill-fated honeymoon that would end in shocking tragedy. OK, we made that up....

Really they were just two hot cows who got out of pasture and found a shady spot in the woods with a strong, cool breeze issuing from a mysterious abyss. Attracted by the cool air Lucky and Floyd became the first unwitting explorers of Secret Caverns. There was a very quick and dark tour which ended abruptly at the cavern floor 85 feet below ground level. The farmer found the original entrance and his not so lively livestock. He was less than enthused at the discovery of this cave entrance on his property, and probably would have fenced off or attempted to fill in the entrance for the safety of his cows.

Luckily, for us, word of his discovery spread through the area, and was heard by a local civil engineer named Roger Mallery, who was just finishing work down the road reopening Howe Caverns. Upon inspection of the sizable opening, Roger decided that the cave would be worth exploring. Two more of Leon's cows were given flashlights and helmets and lured into the hole by a matador. Not really..

For this mission five local teenagers whose hobby was spelunking, volunteered to plumb the depths. Sponsored by Albany's Bright Star flashlights, each descended on an 85 foot rope and crawled on their bellies for 200 feet through 42 degree water and mud before the inner chambers allowed them to stand. Soaring domes and winding passages unfolded before them until they came upon the cavern's main attraction, a thundering, spectacle of subterranean splendor that is the 100 foot underground waterfall.



The creation of the business

The teenagers told Roger about their discovery and he took the trip himself, immediately purchasing the land. Later, in 1929 Roger started to let the public check out the cave. He charged a special rate of \$0.40 for admission (a lot of money back then).

If you had the money and were brave/crazy enough, you would receive 100 feet of rope, a helmet, a flashlight, and a bag lunch. It was an unguided tour that would take between four and six hours. In the early '30's Mr. Mallery began to make the cave more easily accessible to the public with the addition of wooden walkways and wet, swaying metal ladders. Soon a level concrete walkway was poured, 103 cement steps were installed, and lights were added. Roger believed in keeping Secret Caverns as natural as possible, and so it remains today.

The Geology of Secret Caverns

Creation:

The caverns in this area were formed largely during the last Ice Age about 38,000 years ago. At that time, gigantic waterfalls pouring off the melting glaciers bored out great holes (glacial potholes) into the ground. Whenever these potholes formed over crevices in the bedrock, the slightly acidic meltwater eroded the rock, leaving the network of caverns below.

What is the cave made of?

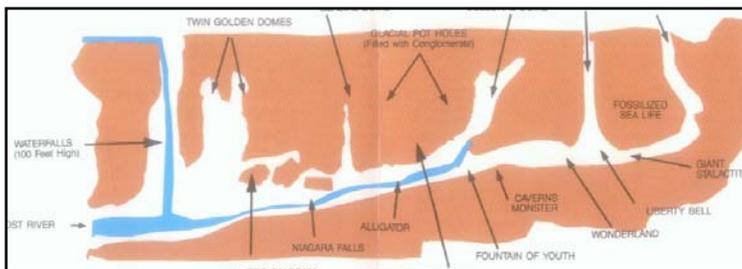
The rock in secret caverns are found to belong to the lower Devonian Age (Coeymans Limestone), and the upper Silurian Age (Manlius Limestone). As one takes the 85 foot descent down the stairs into the cavern you can see the transition between the rock from the two periods as a layer of large brick like stones. This transition period, known as the line of cleavage, represents the ancient oceans receding and the ocean floor drying out for 40 million years (give or take a couple million) before being submerged again. The majority of our fossils of prehistoric sea life are easily found in the younger upper layers of Coeymans Limestone. Watch for fossils as you go up and down the top 50 stairs!

Formations:

For thousands of years mineral laden (a.k.a. "hard") water has been precipitating on the walls, ceiling, and floor of the caverns, leaving behind great deposits of golden calcite. When these deposits hang from the ceiling like icicles, they are called stalactites. When they build up from the floor, they are called stalagmites. Calcite forms at an incredibly slow rate of one cubic inch every one hundred years. The growth of calcite is impeded by the oils on hands, so please respect nature's work and don't touch!

The Tour

The complete trip of one half mile takes about an hour. A group of generally no more than twenty enters the cave with a guide every 15-20 minutes through out the day. The walking tour descends 103 steps to the concrete walkway, and gives an intimate view of ancient calcite formations, prehistoric fossils, and the spectacular 100 foot underground waterfall.



What to wear?

The Temperature in the cave remains close to fifty degrees all year long so we recommend a light jacket or sweater. Comfortable walking shoes are strongly recommended. Weather conditions rarely affect the daily life of the cavern, so tours generally continue rain or shine.



Directions From Hunter :

Rt 23A West to Junction with Rt 23. Take Rt 23 West to Junction with Rt 30. Take Rt 30 North to Junction with Rt 145. Take Rt 145 North to Junction with Rt 7. Take Rt 7 North and follow signs to Secret Caverns