



## *An American Tour: 21*



### **Manitou Spring's Cave of the Winds**

“Long ago, warm shallow seas covered the Pikes Peak region of Colorado. In those ancient seas, abundant shell life thrived. As the sea creatures died, their shells fell to the sea floor and were broken up. Layer upon layer of seashells accumulated over millions of years. The weight of the overlying layers squeezed, compacted, and cemented together the underlying layers into a solid rock called limestone. The process is similar to squeezing snow into ice.

The limestone in which Cave of the Winds was formed dates back almost 500 million years, deposited during the Ordovician period of Earth's history.

About 70 million years ago, the seas that covered most of Colorado receded and the remaining limestone was uplifted, forming part of the present Rocky Mountain region.

The Cave of the Winds' system of rooms and passages began to form approximately 7—4 million years ago, when the limestone was below the water table. Rainwater mixed with carbon dioxide and formed a weak carbonic acid. The acid solution dissolved away portions of the limestone, leaving behind small passageways that filled with water. As more limestone dissolved over thousands of years, the passageways grew larger and the rooms were formed.

Cave of the Winds literally makes your jaw drop in wonder and astonishment. It is geology and adventure rolled into one—a true, unique Geo|Venture! Located in scenic hills above historic Manitou Springs, the caves are one of America's most important show caves. Visitors have shared in the stunning beauty of Cave of the Winds for over a century.

Early legends of the Jicarilla Apaches, who migrated through the Pikes Peak region around 1000 AD, tell of a cave in this area where the Great Spirit of the Wind resided. In the late 1800s, the modern era of Cave of the Winds began when two young brothers, George and John Pickett, stumbled onto the caves. Just out for a day's exploration with a church group, the boys never expected to stumble upon what would become one of America's greatest show caves!

Through the years, visitors have ventured to the caves by foot, horse, carriage, car, and RV. But whether 100 years ago or today, a visit to Cave of the Winds entralls the whole family with the magnificent wonders of our special underground world.”

[<http://www.caveofthewinds.com/>]

