



An American Tour:
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Kentucky's Mammoth Cave

Mammoth Cave is the longest cave system known in the world, being well over twice as long as the second longest cave system, which is South Dakota's Jewel Cave, with just over 150 miles (240 km) of known passageways. The official name of the system is the Mammoth-Flint Ridge Cave System for the ridge under which the cave has formed. Portions of the system were incorporated as a national park on July 1, 1941. It became a World Heritage Site on October 27, 1981, and an international Biosphere Reserve on September 26, 1990.

The National Park Service offers several cave tours to visitors. Many of the most famous features of the cave, such as Grand Avenue, Frozen Niagara, and Fat Man's Misery, can be seen on lighted tours ranging from one to six hours in length. Two tours, lit only by visitor-carried paraffin lamps, are popular alternatives to the electric-lit routes. Several "wild" tours venture away from the developed parts of the cave into muddy crawls and dusty tunnels.

The park's tours are notable for the quality of the interpretive program. The lectures delivered by the National Park Service cave guides are varied by tour, so that in taking several tours the visitor learns about different facets of the cave's formation, or of the cave's human history and prehistory. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammoth_Cave_National_Park]

