

ORGAN CAVE SYSTEM, WEST VIRGINIA

1.[Title]

2. The Organ Cave System is located ...

3. at the southern end of Greenbrier County, West Virginia under the community of Organ Cave.

4. It is developed in an erosional plateau that covers an area of approximately twenty-six square miles and has a relief of between 400 and 700 feet. It is bounded on the north and west by the Greenbrier River and on the south by Second Creek.

5. The Organ Cave Plateau is capped by the Hillsdale and Sinks Grove limestones of the Middle Mississippian Group which are approximately 200 feet in thickness at Organ Cave. These limestones lie stratigraphically on the clastic red sandstones and shale sequences of the Maccrady and Pocono Formations which outcrop on the eastern surface of the plateau and along its north and west escarpments.

6. The Organ Cave Plateau is located near the eastern edge of the Dissected Plateau Physiographic Providence. Structurally, the plateau consists of gentle anticlines and synclines that are the after-effect of the forces that formed the Valley and Ridge Physiographic Providence which is only nine miles to the east.

7. To date, ten entrances to the system have been discovered:

8, 9. Organ

10, 11. Masters closed since 1980.

12.. Hedricks and Great Escape in the low point of this valley. They have been closed since 1960.

13, 14.. Sively #2

15, 16. Sively #3

17, 18. Deems

19, 20. Lipps

21. Erwins

22, 23. Humphreys

24. While Foxhole Cave is surrounded by the Organ Cave System and its streams empty into Organ, a connection has yet to be made.

25. All of the water in Organ Cave System comes out at the Organ Cave Resurgence on Second Creek.

26. In colonial times Organ Cave was located on the Salt Sulphur Turnpike between the resorts at White Sulphur Springs and Salt Sulphur Springs.

27. As early as the late 1700's tourists visited the cave which was famous for its namesake, a calcite formation which resembled a pipe organ.

28. By the late 1920s the cave had been commercially developed.
29. Prior to 1949, only the commercial section of Organ Cave was known. Hedricks Cave, a small pretty cave about a mile north of Organ, was thought to end at the "water hazard."
30. Then in May 1949, three Charleston cavers (Bob Flack, Bob Barnes and Bob Handley) entered Hedricks Cave, bypassed the water hazard and proceeded down Hedricks Stream Passage, and up Organ Main Stream Passage. They exited Organ Cave amidst electric lights and tourists.
31. By November 1949 cavers had explored the Organ section of the developing cave system finding the Flack and Handley Rooms, Hedricks Maze, Waterfall Room, and Cyclops Hall.
32. Bob Handley and John Rutherford extensively explored two other small caves located about a mile west of Organ, known as Humphreys and Lipps, and connected them in 1951. Meanwhile, back in Organ Cave cavers explored Big Canyon, Meatgrinder and the Jones Canyon Maze.
33. Then Lipps-Humphreys was connected to Organ-Hedricks.
34. After much exploration and survey by West Virginia Association for Cave Studies (WVACS) and the NSS District of Columbia Grotto (DCG), 37 miles of passage had been mapped by 1980.
35. Let's take a typical Organ Cave System trip,
36. entering the Lipps entrance and exiting Organ.
37. The Lipps entrance immediately opens into a small room that leads to the Lipps Stream Passage.
38. Walking is easy until exiting into a side lead off the stream and into Lipps Maze.
- 39,40. Negotiating the dry maze of passages...
41. leads to Skid Row, a tributary stream passage
- 42,43. ... into Jones Canyon
- 44, 45. After heading north and upstream in Jones Canyon, the Pendulum...
46. and Treasure Passages provide interesting diversions.
47. The low crawl and narrow crevice that form the Breezeway provide a connection to the Organ section of the cave.
48. An interesting formation marks the exit.
- 49, 50, 51. The Left Hand Passage is large and easy going, quite a change after the crawls in upper Jones Canyon.
52. A long soda straw decorates the wall.

53. The Left Hand Passage continues to...

54. the Handley Room.

55, 56. Climbing down a pit at one end of Handley Room, and

57. dropping through a squeeze

58. opens to the continued descent

59. down Handley's Silo.

60. Continuing along easy walking passage and by a column

61. the Sand Room comes into view.

62. Leaving Sand Room going downstream in Upper Stream Passage leads to

63. the Throne Room and the Junction with "A" Trail, the route to the next lower level of passages. Before taking "A" Trail,

64. lets continue down Upper Stream Passage...

65. to the waterfall Room, the largest room (150 foot long, 100 foot wide and 50 foot high) in the cave system.

66. After returning to the Throne Room, 'A' Trail winds past ...

67. several sections of gypsum hair which appear only in the winter.

68.. "A" Trail then combines with Discovery Passage, ...

69. which proceeds to intersect the top of Organ Main Stream Passage.

70, 71. Organ Main Stream passage is one of the large breakdown littered stream passages typical of the Organ Cave System. Upstream from here is the tourist section of the cave.

72. The tourist area of Organ Cave is noted for its collection of Salt Petre vats...

73. used during the American Civil War,...

74, 75. and the formations near the Rock Organ.

76. In the entrance room...

77. is a storage shed built by the federal government in the 1950s to hold survival supplies in the event of nuclear war.

78,79. So ends our visit to Organ Cave.

80. CREDITS: The slide of the Waterfall Room was by George Dasher. All other slides were by Paul and Lee Stevens.

81. Summary