

S744

THE MAGIC HOLLOW MOUNTAIN – FERN CAVE

Notes for the Narrator.

The presentation consists of 90 slides and should last approximately 25 minutes (assuming each slide is displayed for approximately 16.6667 seconds). Each numeric Item in the script corresponds to a particular slide in the tray and may be read as the slide is displayed. If at all possible, it is recommended that the script be read through as the slides are displayed at least once before the presentation. Some of the narrative is blended between slides.

We sincerely hope you have an enjoyable presentation.

1. Title Slide (*no narrative*)
2. Original title slide (*no narrative*)
3. Fern cave is contained within Nat Mountain, shown on a misty autumn morning. We are in Jackson County in northern Alabama.
4. The cave is certainly one of the more diverse caves in the Southeast.
5. The vast majority of the cave appears very similar to the scene depicted here; however ...
6. ...many wonderful anomalies occur, making it a splendid cave system.
7. Such as the 110-foot deep Coney's Chasm here depicted.
8. Even though it has been over 31 years since the cave was discovered, exploration continues ...
9. ...and discoveries are still being made.
10. Many visitors to Fern Cave are only aware of the Fern sink, so named, because of the proliferation of Ferns In the area.
11. From the sink entrance, water cascades down a simple unadorned stream passage.
12. Bill Torode, followed by Jim Johnston, was most likely the first to see this part or the cave.
13. Bill exclaimed, "We have a pit!" Jim retorted by saying, "We've got rope coming." Bill's response was, "If we tie every rope that we have with us today, we're still not getting down this thing!"
14. It was only later when the drop was first descended by Bill Cuddington that the awesome size of Surprise Pit was realized. At the Initial rig point, it was 437 feet deep.
15. This picture depicts less than half of the floor space of Surprise Pit.
16. This massive boulder choke on the floor of the pit thwarted further exploration for many years.
17. In 1971, Bill Torode pioneered a new rig point from the top and rappelled halfway down the drop. By negotiating tricky ledges he ventured into a vast hall that now bears his name.

18. It was then realized that Surprise Pit is not really a pit at all, but a 1,000 foot long canyon that is over 400 feet deep in places.
19. Torode Hall is very rarely visited.
20. But it is a very unique and fascinating area of the cave.
21. It is developed on two distinct levels, which are connected by gaping abysses.
22. In addition to many delicate formations, It contains many massive ones also.
23. The hall terminates in profusely decorated massive flowstone flow.
24. In 1969, events reversed themselves and Jim Johnston discovered the entrance that bears his name. Bill Torode was immediately behind him.
25. The Johnston entrance opened up into a cornucopia of passage.
26. Virtually every lead that was checked, went.
27. Numerous alcoves, each with its own pristine beauty, were bypassed In the fever to push the cave to its limits.
28. The mapping efforts were split into two teams. One was headed by Bill Torode. The other by Don Myrick.
29. The beautiful upper formation room, here depicted, was only an appetizer for what lay beyond.
30. The Elephant Ear Formation is one of the landmarks of the cave.
31. All of the upper levels of the cave are punctuated by numerous shafts. This one Is 117 feet deep.
33. One of the main routes through the cave runs directly over this drop.
33. It is the magnificent 157-foot Altoid Pit.
34. Like almost everything else in Fern, the passage from its floor goes.
35. It was quickly ascertained that Fern cave is a vast 3-dimensional labyrinth ...
36. ...punctuated by deep shafts and vast rooms.
37. A series of short drops leads to the middle cave.
38. And the cave continues unabated.
39. As well as many of the formation displays.

40. The middle cave begins with a stream passage that runs midway between the upper entrances and the base of the mountain.
41. While Bill Torode and his team mapped the upper leads ...
42. ...Don Myrick and his team mapped the Middle Cave and headed for the base of the mountain.
43. Their trek was not without numerous side passages and surprises.
44. The highlight of the Middle cave is the Balcony Room, so named because the passage intersects this room at a balcony near its ceiling. The formation plastered to the opposite wall is 80 feet high. The lead at the top has been checked.
45. While a tricky climbdown does exist to reach the floor, ...
46. ...it is far more fun to rig an 80-foot drop into the room.
47. For those who really know the cave, the Balcony room was aptly named. It has three different balconies adjoining it.
48. The middle cave formally ends in the vast West Room. But the cave continues. Through a series of drops out of this room, Don Myrick and his team reached the Lower Cave. Meanwhile ...
49. Bill Torode and John French discovered a Heaven of Helictites in one of the upper levels.
50. Some of the bushes are over 18 inches in height.
51. Others are small and delicate.
52. The entire Helictite Heaven area has been designated as a *helmets off* area. This gives the helictites a fighting chance.
53. There are also numerous examples of micro-helictites. This entire scene is less than 5 inches across.
54. *(no narrative)*
55. *(no narrative)*
56. The North Cave forms an appendix to the entire cave system.
57. It could comprise a complete cave system in itself.
58. To give some idea of the complexity of Fern Cave, it can be stated that the North Cave has 7 distinct levels spread out over 150 feet in elevation.
59. The entire cave system is spread out over about 530 feet in elevation and many more levels.
60. A pristine beauty can be found in some of the obscure levels.

61. This photograph was taken in virgin cave.
62. *(no narrative)*
63. Access down through the morgue entrance leads to a totally different type of cave.
64. In winter months, it is a hibernaculum for hundreds of thousands of bats. During these times, entry into this area of the cave is strictly forbidden.
65. Large sections of the morgue are copiously decorated with bat guano.
66. Massive breakdown rooms are frequently encountered.
67. It has been said that the Morgue Cave is so bleak and barren that it is beautiful.
68. As with everywhere else in Fern, it has shafts.
69. This is the normal condition of the sump entrance to Fern Cave.
70. For perhaps a few months during the driest time of the year, this area becomes accessible.
71. After about 1,000 feet, the passage terminates in a real sump.
72. In 1978, a dive team entered the lower sump entrance and proceeded to the sump at the end of the passage.
73. At the same time, a regular caving team worked its way from an upper entrance down through the mountain to a known sump in the Lower Cave.
74. The result was the Champagne connection. Yes, we are toasting with real Champagne. On the left is Bob Millot and Joe Dabbs is in the center. The innocuous fellow on the right is the producer/photographer of this series.
75. The sump room in the Lower Cave is a very unusual place. The cool air pressure from the rest of the cave forces its way through the sump. The result is an almost continuous reverberation of very unusual sounds. The waters literally speak.
76. The Lower Cave in Fern is without a doubt the most pristine area of the cave. It is certainly the most remote.
77. Its several miles are filled with broad avenues ...
78. ...and spacious rooms.
79. *(no narrative)*
80. Between the years 1969 and 1971, the cave was two distinct cave systems.
81. There was the Fern System and the cave around Surprise Pit.

82. In 1971, the two systems were connected by Don Myrick, Sherry Graham, and Dick Graham.

83. The connection was made from the lower cave.

84. *(no narrative)*

85. A modern connection. A joint American and USSR team splits up in the cave and rejoins In the Middle Cave. This team is from Ukraine. As we all know, only months later the USSR was no more.

86. Fern Cave is currently in the process of being totally remapped by 'the Fern Cave Project. The highest standards are being used.

87. But the efforts of Bill Torode (shown here) and Don Myrick are by no means forgotten. The achievements of the Fern Cave Project are built upon these predecessors.

88. Fem Cave is owned by the Wheeler Wildlife National Refuge which is a part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Entry is by permit only.

89. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Mr. H. T. Stone, who is the current manager of the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge. He has worked with the caving community in a cooperative and efficacious manner in the management of this wonderful national resource.

90. Credits