

Locomotive Breath Cave, VA

S745

1. [Title Slide]
2. This is the story of Locomotive Breath Cave
3. Located just off Interstate 64 near Low Moor, it's the third largest cave in Alleghany County, Virginia.
4. The cave was discovered in 1974 by Billy Stull, a resident of the area. However, its existence was not generally known until 1988 when caves from the Virginia Speleological Survey met Billy by chance and asked if he knew of any caves.
5. After talking with the nearby landowner and putting on their gear, ...
6. cavers must hike a half mile through a forest ...
7. dotted with pits ...
8. that mark the collapse of the Low Moor Mine below.
9. The cave's entrance is located in cliffs along a remote section of railroad track.
10. It's very inconspicuous ...
11. and many a caver has walked by without noticing it.
12. Once through the short pinch...
13. you can look back at the railroad track.
14. When the next train comes by you'll understand how it got its name.
15. So far about 8,000 feet of passage has been mapped in Locomotive Breath Cave.
16. While most of it is walking passage ...
17. there are some crawls ...
18. and short vertical sections.
19. Much of the cave is decorated.
20. The north end of Crystal Passage lies under the railroad tracks ...
21. and the ground rumbles when trains come by.
22. This area has some of the better formations in the cave ...

23. with nice displays of soda straws ...
24. in several locations.
25. On the way to the Toilet Bowl ...
26. are calcite lined pools ...
27. with miniature rimstone dams ...
28. and calcite crystals
29. The passage appears to end; except for a hole high on the wall ...
30. known as the Toilet Bowl. You enter On top ...
31. and are flushed out the bottom.
32. Beyond the Toilet Bowl are colorful stalagmites ...
33. and the climb up Mud Mountain ...
34. towards Stull Highway.
35. One of the more interesting formations in this section are the gypsum spikes ...
36. some of which are six inches long.
37. One wall of the passage is covered by numerous small salamanders.
38. Just to the west is Long Shot Alley with its anthodites ...
39. peculiar floor popcorn, ...
40. calcite lily pads,
41. and soda straws.
42. As we enter Shuffling Madness Maze ...
43. the walls are lined with aragonite, ...
44. which covers much of the passage in the area.
45. The lower end of the maze ...
46. contains several nice helictites like this ...
47. and this ...

48. including the Nixon Formation, a crooked soda straw.
49. In the mud high up along one wall ...
50. are a series of scratch marks perhaps made by a bear.
51. Three hundred feet farther into the cave is a collection of bear bones most likely Pleistocene in age.
52. The existence of such bones so far into the cave suggests there was another entrance 10,000 years ago.
53. The area is crisscrossed by high fissure passages but so far none have led outdoors.
54. Exploration continues beyond the Mutiny Room area of the cave.
55. More than one trip has aborted at the thought of what lies ahead.
56. Here the passage is low ...
57. and muddy.
58. It's the kind of passage that makes you wonder why you're there.
59. Petticoat Junction at last offers surveyors the chance to re-carbide ...
60. and view some dainty frills.
61. But the leads beyond become tighter. So much so that it takes a buddy ...
62. to pull you out.
63. No wonder it's hard to find cavers who will survey the unexplored passage beyond.
64. Locomotive Breath Cave is one of Alleghany County's more spectacular caves. To enter it you must cross private land which should be done only with the permission of the landowner.
65. This program was developed and written by Paul Stevens. The photography was done by Paul & Lee Stevens with contributions by Tom Spina.
66. For further information contact the National Speleological Society, 6001 Pulaski Pike, Huntsville, AL 35810 for the current address of the Virginia Speleological Survey. [The program is copyrighted by Paul & Lee Stevens. The photographers retain copyright to their slides. The NSS AV Library has distribution rights]