



— Jennifer Greenhill-Taylor/staff
A group of prospective cavers on a ranger-led tour descend the stairway to one of the entrances of Mammoth Cave in Kentucky.

Mammoth Cave

National Park

Journey to the center of the earth, almost

By Jennifer Greenhill-Taylor
Staff writer

MAMMOTH CAVE, Ky. — The deep, stony silence of Mammoth Cave can be the ideal antidote for the stress of interstate driving.

As long as you're not claustrophobic. Or suffering from vertigo.

The highways heading north out of Florida are busy commercial arteries that don't lend themselves to slow sightseeing. Or even fast sightseeing. If you try to maintain 65 mph, the truckers get a tad anxious and do everything the law allows, and some things it doesn't, to encourage you to keep up.

So when the signs appeared on Kentucky's Interstate 65, just north of Bowling Green, advertising the Mammoth Cave National Park exit, it seemed the perfect place to escape for a few hours.

No trucks.

No rain.

No mountains to cross in the dark.

The 10-mile road into the park is a narrow, old-fashioned two-laner. It creeps in quiet solitude through verdant, rolling hills studded with rustic farms, through peaceful woods, into the 52,700 forested acres of the park itself and finally up to the well-kept and educational visitor center.

As luck would have it, a tour would be departing in about a half hour. Just enough time for coffee and delicious homemade blackberry cobbler in the park's dining room.

The Historic Tour — one of several tours of varied lengths and athletic requirements — takes two

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