

CLIMAX CAVE

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The trip through this extremely popular cave is relatively easy, yet offers a variety of passage types and challenges. Cutting directly through the ridge, it carries no major drainage and is rather dry. But, there are some wet sections which produce lots of nice mud and some surprising flowstone. The combination of attractive features, and visibility of the impressive north entrance from the road, and the easy accessibility of the southern entrance has brought heavy traffic to Climax Cave.

The distance between the two entrances can be conveniently divided into three sections: a large trunk passage in the south, an utterly huge pile of breakdown, and a maze of intriguing canyon passages and crawls. The small south entrance is the one more frequently used. It immediately opens up into a 20 foot high trunk passage. Of particular note here is a very much alive column perched atop a firm mound of mud. To the right, a smaller passage sneaks off, but it does not go far. An alcove to the left features a series of tiny and intricate rimstone dams worth seeing. The trunk winds on for another 500 feet to the breakdown.

This breakdown pile is 300 feet long and, in places, 50 feet high. About 100 feet into it, a pit-like opening to the left is marked with an arrow pointing down. This leads to a pleasant crawl under the breakdown. The name John Clark scratched inside is significant, since he owns the northern entrance. The crawl goes on to a weaving walking canyon and crouchway which leads back to the main trunk near the rimstone.

The key to getting past the breakdown is finding a canyon to the right, about 200 feet in. A length of rusty chain bolted to the wall marks the way. The arrows lead down through the breakdown, a rocky belly crawl, a chimney, a low room, and a mud and water crawl. The way traveller here will take a good look at where he just came out, since he may want to come back this way if he cannot find the north entrance. This is the maze.

There are several routes to the other entrance, but it is not always easy finding one. The task is complicated by half of the important leads being obscure crawls under shelves. Look everywhere. This whole mess occupies at least two levels. Until a caver has spent a couple hours backtracking through these canyons, he has not really seen Climax Cave. Far back down some of these leads are works of flowstone well worth the trip. And there is plenty of mud!

The north entrance is worth a picture in spite of the pigpen built inside. It's okay to climb the fences to get out, and the land owner doesn't mind as long as cavers stay out of his crops and don't get trampled by a bull. From here, it is a half-mile hike down the road back to the south entrance.