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## ***Stop 5. Mammoth Cave***

Arrival datetime: Sunday April 7, 4:15PM (CDT)  
Sites visited: Cumberland Falls, Mammoth Cave National Park  
Accommodations: Mammoth Cave Hotel  
States traveled: Tennessee, Kentucky

On the way out of the Great Smoky Mountain tourist belt, we stopped at the Old Mill Inn. It had been advertised as a genuine working old mill, whose products were sold there and served in the restaurant next door. We had decided to start the visit at the restaurant for breakfast. The food was bland, and there were packets of fake butter on the table. When we asked for real butter, the waitress told us that a lot of people complain about the butter, but that the kind on the table is the only kind they had. On our way out, we told the cashier that we normally would have explored the mill and the gift shop next door, but the lack of real butter had led us to believe the whole enterprise was a fake, so we were moving on. That we did.

There were some distant mountain landscapes north of the Smokies. Hills in the distance became smaller and smaller. There were quite a few state parks and recreation areas on the way. We chose to stop at Cumberland Falls because we would reach it at about lunchtime. Happily, it was a State “Resort” Park and had a restaurant. In the restaurant, there were pictures of the falls. To our amazed surprise, Cumberland Falls was Niagara-like in appearance. Though nowhere near as large or magnificent, its water came from a large river that meandered

through the landscape, picked up speed as it reached the falls, poured thunderously over steep cliffs, then landed in great gushes of waves and spray. Mist rose from the swirling waters below. The swirls and waves rocked the surface of a wide pool beneath before gradually being reabsorbed into the steady currents of the river. We sauntered through a series of overlooks, and wandered the beaches above and below the falls.

The landscape on the drive from Cumberland Falls to Mammoth Cave consisted almost entirely of livestock farms. Lush green pastures populated with mostly black cattle, a few brown cattle, and even fewer horses. We reached Mammoth Cave in time to explore the Visitor’s Center.

The Mammoth Cave Hotel was not your typical national park hotel. It actually had phones and television, but it did not have heat. We got a few conflicting reports from the front desk, then a maintenance man came out to deliver extra blankets. He explained that the heat did not kick in until the temperature outside went into the forties. The temperature was hovering at 50°. Not surprisingly, there were very few people in the hotel. But it did have some



*Michael and Jennifer at Cumberland Falls.*

surprises. The gift shop was marvelous. Jennifer bought a necklace made of green-colored gold and oblong-shaped pearls that looked like a flowering plant. The cafeteria-looking dining room also held surprises, the food was great and the service even better. But surprise, no alcohol. Mammoth Cave is located in a dry county.

We had trouble using the local numbers for our Internet Service Provider (ISP) because we were configured to have a static IP address at home. Jennifer dialed into work instead and we used her work email to report the dialing problems to our New Jersey ISP. She fielded some email questions from her staff and accepted a

speaking engagement for the fall. We slept early and rose early for the tour. There were fake butter packets on the breakfast table, but the waitress was able to provide real butter upon request.

Mammoth Cave was not your typical tourist cave. There was not a lot of color or awesome rock formations. It was just huge. We followed the guide through tunnels made by long-extinct underground rivers. Beside us were piles of limestone that had once been layers of rock above the river but now appeared as chips peeling off the ceilings. Many of those chips were over 20 feet long and 10 feet wide. Some passageways were the size of auditoriums. Others were so narrow that



*Historic Entrance to Mammoth Cave.*

our six-foot-one, two-thirty pound guide had to turn sideways and bend at the waist to get through.

We took two tours, the Making of Mammoth and the Frozen Niagara. The Making of Mammoth covered the same ground as the History tour, and our guide was nice enough to include both narratives in his banter. In between cave tours, we hiked an aboveground sinkhole, Cedar Sink. We had a picnic lunch overlooking a wide stream of lime green water that was the same as we had seen in the bottom of the cave. It was a bit drizzly, but let up enough for us to enjoy the short steep trek through short trees and low brush.

The Frozen Niagara tour started by descending a 300-step steel staircase encapsulated in a twisted column of limestone. Then it was also mostly water-formed tunnels and flat chipped ceilings, but had more of the stalagmites and the stalactites we had expected. The guide was good at making the trip memorable. For example, he taught us the list of all the rocks that have been found in Mammoth Cave: 1. limestone, 2. limestone 3. limestone, etc. etc. etc. Also, he taught us the difference between stalactites and stalagmites is that stalactites hang tight to the ceiling. The spelling holds another clue, but the important letters are silent. Stalactite has a silent “c” that stands for ceiling.

Stalagmite has a silent “g” that stands for ground.

The most amazing thing about the cave was that scientists were not yet sure just how far reaching it was. Tests with dyes in cave waters had turned up in facets hundreds of miles away. When questions as to its probable extent or evolution came up, our Ranger guide was very vague. Apparently, the jury is still out on whether the cave might extend clear across the state of Kentucky.

It rained steadily for the rest of the day. Back at the room, we put together our first design of a web site, and posted it under Jennifer’s professional resume site,

www.bayuk.com. The site is public, but not advertised. There is no listing within the resume site and no hints as to the trip link, so only those who know the full pathname of the trip link will find it. We had Michael’s nephew, his family’s webmaster, link to it from www.bayuk.org, so family should have no trouble finding it. We selected one photo from each stop. Each photo was about 1MB, so it was necessary to scale down. The first page had mini-versions of each photo, reduced to basic watercolor format to make the size small enough for the web page to load quickly. If you clicked on the photo, you would get the full version. We were officially broadcasting.

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Miles traveled:	285
Departure datetime:	Tuesday April 9, 9:30AM
Departure weather:	Cloudy 62°