

**NATURAL BRIDGE
CAVERNS.**

TEXAS' LARGEST

underground adventure

ILLUMINATIONS TOUR

NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS was discovered in 1960 by four cavers from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. For years, it appeared that the Sinkhole was at the beginning of the **NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS** and that the only passages extended for two miles to the north. However, the owners and the cavern developers began to wonder, "what if the Sinkhole formed in the middle of the cave and not at the beginning?" If true, this would mean the possible existence of additional passages to the south. With lack of any obvious entrances on the surface, the only way to test such a theory was to drill exploratory wells into the ground. In 1968, while drilling exploratory shafts south of the main cavern entrance, an additional ½ mile of cavern was discovered, an area now known as the Hidden Passages.

The Illuminations Tour takes you through the Hidden Passages and is accessed by 180 steps interspersed with several landings to serve as resting places at particularly scenic points. The cavern is dramatically lit with a state-of-the-art light system using both light and darkness to enhance the unique experience. Guides synchronize their presentation to strategically reveal glistening cave formations one at a time, beautifully unfolding long-held secrets of the cave.

Some of the most rare and delicate formations found at **NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS** can be found while on the Illuminations Tour. This uniquely guided tour, which takes approximately 70 minutes, will take you into monumental chambers where extraordinary formations have been preserved, inaccessible to man for years.

Special conditions existing in the Hidden Passages have allowed for the growth of extremely delicate and well formed formation, with unusually long 'soda straws', waves of 'cave ribbon' and profusion of intriguing 'welt and turnip shields'. There are a great number and variety of beautiful formations, and nearly all of them are still growing.

One special feature of the Illuminations Tour is when all the lights are turned off and guests experience total darkness. Groups are kept very small and the guides are specifically trained in the unique features of the Illuminations Tour. You haven't truly experienced **NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS** until you have taken the Illuminations Tour.

A NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARK

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