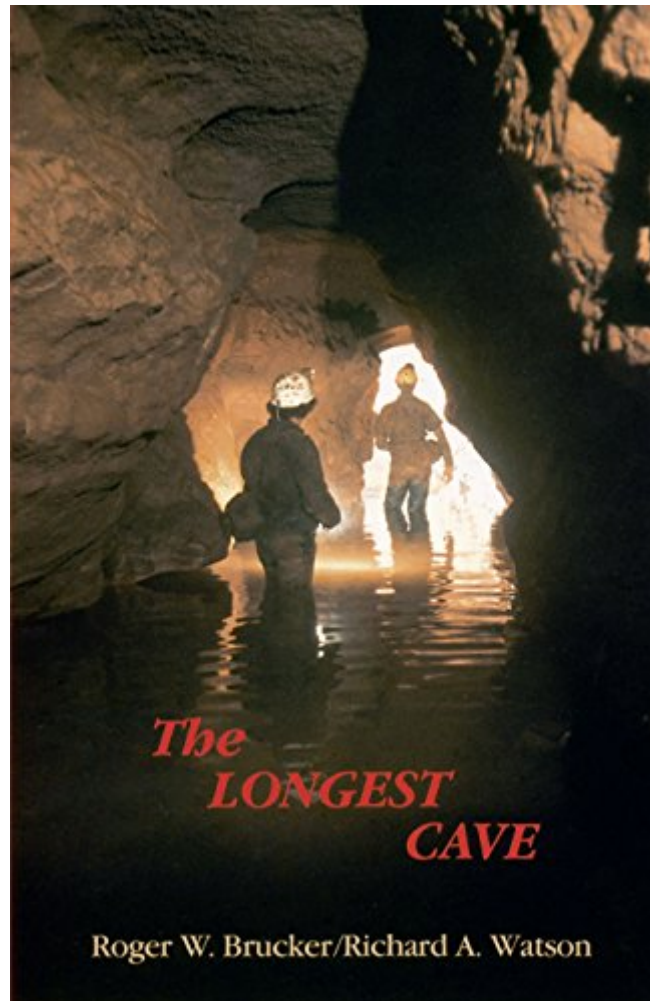




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The Longest Cave



Synopsis

In 1925 the geological connection between Flint Ridge and Mammoth Cave was proved when dye placed in a Flint Ridge spring showed up in Echo River at Mammoth Cave. That tantalizing swirl of dye confirmed speculations that were to tempt more than 650 cavers over half a century with the thrill of being the first to make human passage of the cave connection. Roger Brucker and Richard Watson tell not only of their own twenty-year effort to complete the link but the stories of many others who worked their way through mud-choked crawlways less than a foot high only to find impenetrable blockages. Floyd Collins died a grisly death in nearby Sand Cave in 1925, after being trapped there for 15 days. The wide press coverage of the rescue efforts stirred the imagination of the public and his body was on macabre display in a glass-topped coffin in Crystal Cave into the 1940s. Agents of a rival cave owner once even stole his corpse, which was re-covered and still is in a coffin in the cave. Modern cavers still have a word with Floyd as they start their downward treks. Brucker and Watson joined the parade of cavers who propelled themselves by wiggling kneecaps, elbows, and toes through quarter-mile long crawlways, clinging by fingertips and boot toes across mud-slick walls, over bottomless pits, into gurgling streams beneath stone ceilings that descend to water level, down crumbling crevices and up mountainous rockfalls, into wondrous domed halls, and straight ahead into a blackness intensified rather than dispelled by the carbide lamps on their helmets. Over two decades they explored the passages with others who sought the final connection as vigorously as themselves. Pat Crowther, a young mother of two, joined them and because of her thinness became the member of the crew to go first into places no human had ever gone before. In that role, in July 1972, she wiggled her way through the Tight Spot and found the route that would link the Flint Ridge and Mammoth Cave systems into one cave extending 144.4 miles through the Kentucky limestone. In a new afterword to this edition the authors summarize the subsequent explorations that have more than doubled the established length of the cave system. Based upon geological evidence, the authors predict that new discoveries will add another 200 miles to the length of the world's longest cave, making it over 500 miles long.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Would recommend this to any spelunker or anyone interested in Mammoth Cave history.

Fascinating and factual, it is well written. It may be an "oldie" but it is a "golden oldie."

This book is written by cavers for cavers and if you're not a fanatic caver it will probably be a little boring. After the first pages , the description of expeditions look all the same and it is easy to loose interest. To keep a non-caver entertained would have been a hard task even for very talented writers and these authors do not seem to stand above the average.The most interesting part is the first appendix, which narrates the history of past Mammoth Cave expeditions (back to ancient times). As stated also in the preface of the book, it is better to read this appendix first to have a better picture.3 stars.

Surprisingly, one of the best, most well written book I've ever read! This book is an example of how to draw people in and keep them interested. From inside jacket covers to table of contents to preface you are drawn deeper and deeper into amazing cave adventures.

It's not quite as described -- It's got a serious case of stenchy, acidified, aging, yellowing pages that wasn't even listed as a possibility -- all due to acidification.I'm afraid to give this book to anyone, but I'll probably read it myself. Maybe I'll sprinkle baking soda between the pages ...

Product as advertised

This is by far the best caving saga ever written. It is a true story of the effort to connect Floyd Collins Crystal Cave with Mammoth Cave to make the worlds longest cave system in the words of the people who made it happen. It is filled with high adventure and humor. A must read for anyone interested in adventure.

This book is full of interating storys about thw history of mammoth cave and the ppl who have been cace touring for yrs.

I bought this book about 15 years ago while visiting Mammoth Cave National Park. I still enjoy rereading it from time to time. It is the sort of book one hates to see end. The book narrates the history of the discovery that Kentucky's Flint Ridge-Mammoth Cave system of caves is by far the world's longest known series of continuously-connected caverns. The writers and their many cohorts are not only daring adventurers, but a collection of cavers who deeply appreciate the mystery, beauty and science of caves. A very interesting part of the book is the well-developed character sketches of the many explorers, a good number of whom participated in parts of the long, arduous struggle to discover the connections between five different large caves so as to make them one. The overriding star of the show is the cave system itself, and the book contains many facinating portions about the beauty, danger, wonder, and history of the things found there by explorers dating back to prehistoric Native Americans, forward. After a frustrating series of events, including an initial startling lack of interest/resistance by National Park personnel, progress begins to be made in leaps and bounds. When the Ohio cavers find that the Flint Ridge system is the longest then know, an effort is taken up to connect it with Mammoth Cave. In a spine-tingling narrative about going past the "Tight Spot", a very small passage, the cavers eventually make the connection by going down in Flint Ridge and emerging in a well-known Mammoth Cave tourist gallery. The sense of truiumph and relief is overwhelming and excellently captured. My size and age prohibit me from doing the things described in this book, and I have never done them. But I was captivated from start to finish by the story of these brave, resourceful people and the cave system they explored and charted. It is as if I am there myself. My only quibble is that the photographs are limited and in black and white, but the excellent descriptive writing overcomes this factor. I love the book. Very, very highly recommended.

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