

Digging for caves beneath Wisconsin



Maribel (MyFoxWausau) -

Though the scenery of Wisconsin is beautiful, it's what lies underground that is incredible, according to Mike Sobush of Cherney Maribel Caves County Park.

"Our west passage is our most scenic one" Sobush told FOX55 News@9.

Sobush is a volunteer tour guide and also leading the charge to excavate the caves found in the 75-acre park in Manitowoc County.

"It was a glacially-filled cave, and it was filled almost to the top" Sobush said. "We've been actively digging it out since 2004."

At present, approximately 500 feet has been restored inside New Hope Cave, the largest of seven discovered caves in the park. The underground voids vary in size, with some offering plenty of room for walking, other areas only allowing space to crawl through.

Though the caves that have been restored so far are impressive, it's what hasn't yet been uncovered that keeps Sobush hard at work.

"The old history said if you crawl back 300 feet, you can come to a room that was big enough for 300 people to dance in. It's huge" Sobush said.

Recent resistivity tests of the park support anecdotal evidence of such a cavernous room underground that has yet to be uncovered.

"We know about where it's located" Sobush said.

But before any further discoveries can be unearthed, there is plenty of work to be done in the cave to get there.

Sobush and his volunteer team now use wheelbarrows to remove glacial sediment from the cave to make walking trails in the park. But before the cave was large enough, Sobush says he had to use five gallon pails to clear the way.

Tours of New Hope Cave and the six other geologic features at Cherney Maribel Caves County Park are offered the third Sunday of each month from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. A donation of \$2 per person is requested.

Sobush says for groups of 10 or more, a two and a half hour walking tour of the park can be arranged.

Cherney Maribel County Caves Park is located just north of the junction of County Highway R and County Highway Z east of the town of Maribel. From Wausau, take Highway 29 west toward Green Bay. Merge onto US-41 south, then east on US-32. Merge south onto I-43. Take exit 164, turning left onto County Highway Z, and then a quick left onto County Highway R. The park is located on the right hand side of the road.

For a live video of the broadcast tour of the park go to <http://www.myfoxwausau.com/story/18661878/digging-for-caves-beneath-wisconsin?autoStart=true&topVideoCatNo=default&clipId=7346716>

For more information or to arrange a tour of the park, visit the park online at <http://www.maribelcaves.com/>.