

<b>The Toronto Sun (Toronto, ON)</b>			Order/Commande
			<b>123457</b>
Date <b>24.02.2008</b>	Circ. <b>249000</b>	Page <b>T7</b>	<b>1 / 2</b>

# Caves get you close to nature

## Waterfalls, crystals adorn B.C. site

For a real change of scenery this winter, try looking at the earth from the inside out at Horne Lake Caves in central Vancouver Island.

"Where else will you get to do things like climb up an underground waterfall and see rare crystal rock formations without being some hardcore *National Geographic* adventurer?" says Richard Varela, manager of Island Pacific Adventures, which leads tours in Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park.

These tour include the three-hour Wet and Wild Spelunking Adventure tour, available in winter and spring only, which focuses on the Ice Age water forces that created one of the largest and most spectacular cave systems in North America.

Of the 123 longest and deepest caves on the continent, 76 are on Vancouver Island.

### Whimsical names

"When you are standing in the caves yelling over the roaring, splashing water, it adds weight to the description of the tonnes of water from the melting Ice Ages

that bore right through the mountains to carve these caves," Varela says.

Inside you'll come face to face with rock and crystal formations with whimsical names like bacon strips, moon milk, ice cream waterfall, flowstone and popcorn rock.

### 'Best decorated'

Some unique formations are named after characters they resemble, such as Jabba the Hutt, Piglet, Winnie the Pooh, Howling Wolf and Smiling Buddha.

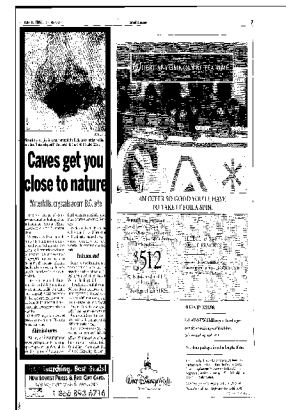
"Riverbend is probably Canada's best decorated cave in terms of its crystal formations," Varela says of the 387-metre cave, which features a seven-storey waterfall.

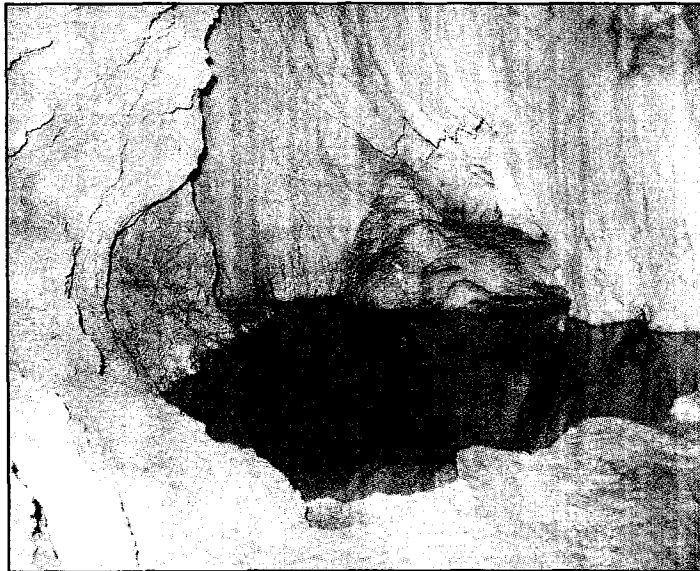
Anyone 8 or older and moderately fit can participate in the tour.

For more information on the provincial park, contact 250-757-8687 or hornelake.com.

For the Oceanside Tourism Association, contact 1-888-799-3222 or visitparksvillequalicumbeach.com. Tourism British Columbia can be contacted at 1-800-435-5622 or hellobc.com.

— Sun wire services





SUN MEDIA FILES

With a little imagination, you can spot the Buddha formation on the far side of this rock pool in Vancouver Island's Horne Lake Caves.