

CAVE TOURISM IN HUNGARY

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On the territory of pre-Trianon Hungary (before 1920) there were known only two caves visited regularly since the 18th century. This cannot be called tourism in the present sense of the word, but the services of local guides were offered.

One of them, the *Deményfalva Cave* (today: Demänovská ľadová jaskyňa) was primarily visited for the abundant bear bones, regarded to have medicinal power ('dragon bones'). The so-called 'Visitors' book', a wall section with dense inscriptions, attests to frequent visits. The long section of this cave was mapped, first among the caves of Hungary, by György Buchholtz jun. in 1719. Visiting became organised in the 1880s using oil lamps.

Visits to the *Baradla Cave* can also be reconstructed from wall and ceiling inscriptions at the old terminal points. The first written document on the commercialisation of the dates to 1806: before the visit of Palatine Joseph "the cave was enlarged at the entrance and along its whole length illuminated by candles...".

The most valuable documents from the last century concerning cave visits are the two preserved visitors' books (1835—1897). The first rules for cave conservation and visiting, with entrance fees, were listed in the visitors' book dated 1839. At that time the annual number of visitors was 200 on average. Numbers rose slowly to 500—700 people by

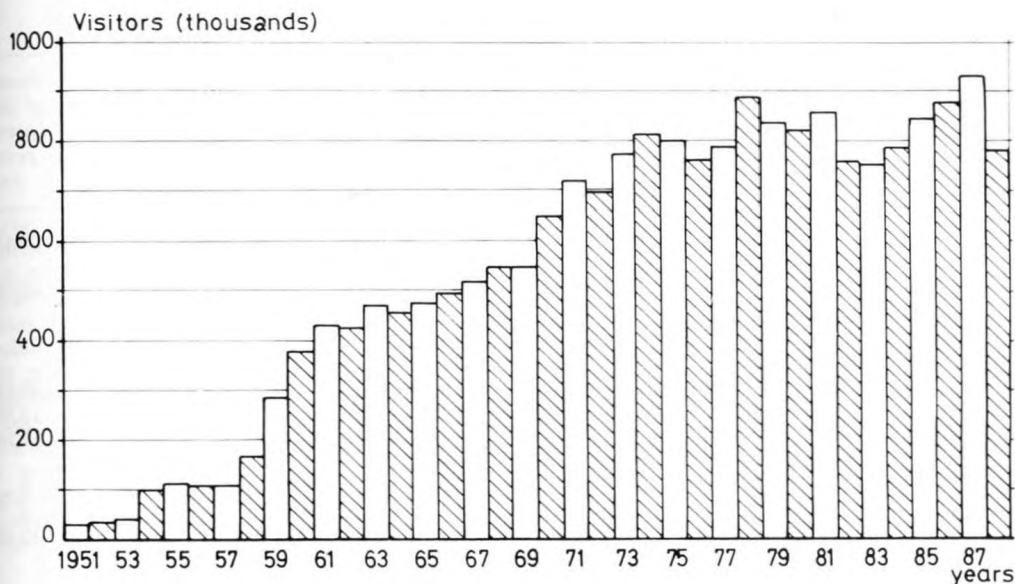
the end of the century and to 1,300—1,400 visitors early this century. With some fluctuation this figure reached 6,000 people by the outbreak of World War II. In post-war years a major boom began and during the last 40 years the number of visitors amounted to 200 to 240 thousand people.

The exploration of the cave and the building of facilities also dates back to the last century. In 1825 Imre Vass discovered a large part of the main branch. Between 1880 and 1890 path and bridge construction took place, the artificial entrance at Vörös Lake was built and this allowed cave touring without following the same route on the way back. In 1927 the Jóafősv artificial entrance was built and in 1935 reflectors were lit in the cave. After World War II modernisation work was undertaken on several occasions and a new exit was built at Aggtelek allowing a circular tour of the cave-

The first natural caverns of the Lillafüred *Anna Cave* were discovered in 1833, when a 94 m long horizontal drift was made into the tufa hill accumulated by the Szinva and Garadna streams. No document was preserved about cave facilities, but it is probable that soon afterwards visits to the 'cave of dripping stones' began. In a preserved diary a cave visit planned for July 5th, 1839, is mentioned, but it was not implemented because of high water.

Geographical distributions of the tourist caves in the pre-Trianon Hungary and on the present territory of country. 1 = Béla Cave (Belanská jaskyňa), 2 = Deményfalvi Cave (Demänovská ľadová jaskyňa), 3 = Dobsina Ice Cave (Dobsinska ľadová jaskyňa), 4 = Baradla Cave, 5 = Anna Cave, 6 = Szent István (Saint Stephen) Cave, 7 = Miskolctapolca Cave, 8 = Solymári-ördöglyuk Cave, 9 = Szemlő-hegy Cave, 10 = Pál-völgy Cave, 11 = Budai Vár (Castle Hill) Cave, 12 = Lóczy Cave, 13 = Tapolcai-tavas Cave, 14 = Abaliget Cave, 15 = Zichy Cave (Peștera de la Vadu Crișului), 16 = Meziád Cave (Peștera Meziad)





Attendance at the Hungarian tourist caves in the past four decades

The great Hungarian poet, Sándor Petőfi, on the occasion of his visit to the cave on July 8th, 1847, wrote: "...Nature also placed a cave into the valley, a dripping cave. It may be trivial compared with the Aggtelek one, but — as people walk in it with candles only instead of torches — it is much clearer and brighter than the Aggtelek Cave and this way splendour is somehow made up for." In the 1890s the cave was already forgotten and only sporadically mentioned in literature. Only in the 1920s, when the construction of the Hotel Palace began did the cave come again into the fore, new cave chambers were explored, the present passages were opened and the cave was supplied with electric illumination. Except for interruptions after the war and during restoration works, the cave has been continually visited ever since.

The *Dobsina ice cave* (today: Dobšinska ľadová jaskyňa) was discovered by Jenő Ruffinyi and his companions in 1870. It was opened to visitors as early as 1878 and soon gained fame in Europe as indicated by the 2,500—3,500 visitors, who came to see it in one year, as well as having the largest number published cave postcards, including colour ones, prior to World War I.

The *Béla Cave* (today: Belanská jaskyňa) was probably known by prospectors, who left their names on the walls of the cave, in the 18th century. The forgotten cavern was rediscovered in 1881. Soon visiting began and in 1883 a detailed guide was published about the cave. In the last century — when touring the cave took a whole day — visitors numbered 1,000 to 1,500 annually. Around 1910 the currently used 1,800 m circular path was built and the tour along it took two hours then.

As early as 1768 local people had descended the whole length of the *Abaliget Cave*, but as it had a narrow entrance only rarely ventured to enter it. In 1820 Bailiff Vince Kölesi described it in detail and published a map of it. Financed by public donation, at the initiation of Reverend János Chalupni, the cave entrance was broadened, paths, steps and bridges were built and visits began. The cave was left without an owner after World War II. Modern facilities, including electric lighting, were installed in 1957.

Among the numerous caves of the karst region of the Transylvanian Mountains, the impressive entrance of the *Meziád Cave* (today: Peștera Meziad) had been open since time immemorial. It was first explored by Adolf Schmidl of Vienna for 1,150 m in 1859—60 and he provided a description and sketch map of this section. Between 1880 and 1890 Gyula Czárán, the great explorer of the Bihar Mountains, began to develop the cave, levelling the surface and removing large boulders, before he presented the cave in his tourist guide published in 1903. Because of poor accessibility, visitors came only in limited numbers.

The spring mouth of the *Zichy Cave* (today: Peștera de la Vadu Crișului), reaching the Rapid Körös through a waterfall was opened by explosives. Gyula Czárán together with Károly Handl and István Veress explored the first sections, but then primarily Handl advanced to the first syphon lake. The local landowner, Count Ödön Zichy, also supported the cause and built a tourist cottage next to the entrance at his own expense. In 1905 the cave was made passable and opened for tourism. In the same year Czárán published a brochure presenting

Show caves of the recent Hungarian area

Name of the cave	Year(s) of the discoveries	Year of the opening for tourism and modernization	Year of the electrical installation	Commercial operation	Length of touristic way	Duration of touristic visit	Number of visitors (present) person/year
<i>Abaliget</i>	1768	1884, 1957	1957	1884—1944, 1957	500	1 hr.	100,000
<i>Anna</i>	1833, 1927	ca. 1834, 1926—27, 1985	1927	ca. 1834,— ca. 1890, 1929—	200	30 min.	40,000
<i>Baradla</i>							
Aggtelek tour	?		1935	ca. 1806—	2,000	1.5 hrs.	190,000
Jósvafő tour	1922	1927	1935	1928—	1,500	1 hr.	13,000
Vöröstó tour	1825	1966	1966	1890—1928, 1966	2,000	1.5 hrs.	37,000
long tour ¹	1825, 1922		—	1927	7,000	5 hrs.	} 700
special tour ¹	1932		—	19	9,000	8 hrs.	
<i>Buda Castle</i>	?	1935, 1938, 1961, 1984	1935	1935—44, 1961—75 1984—	350	30 min.	90,000
<i>Diósgyőrtapolca</i> ²							
<i>Lóczy</i>	?	1974	1974	1974—	—	—	5,000
<i>Mátyás-hegy</i> ¹	1948	—	—	1934—45, 1969— 1987—	120	20 min.	12,000
<i>Miskolctapolca-Lake</i> ³	?	1959, 1969—70	1959	1959—	80	max. 2 hrs.	200
<i>Pál-völgy</i>							
special tour ¹	1904, 1980—87	1919, 1964	1927	1919—1944, 1960—1987 1931—1944	400	45 min. ca. 3 hrs.	40,000 200
<i>Solymár</i> ¹	?	1931	—	1986—	300	35 min.	40,000
<i>Szemlő-hegy</i>	1930	1974—86	1975, 1986	1931—45, 1954—	300	30 min.	100,000
<i>St. István</i>	~ 1910, 1927	1931, 1955, 1988	1931, 1955	1913—1945, 1950—	340	30 min.	50,000
<i>Tapolcai-tavas</i>	1902, 1961, 1974	1913, 1938	1928				

Remark

the cave. A new stop was established for the cave along the Nagyvárád—Kolozsvár railway.

¹ with caving equipment

² sauna, cold-water basin

³ cave-bath

In 1920, with the territories disannexed by the Treaty of Trianon, Slovakia received the Deményfalva Cave, the Dobsina Ice Cave and the Béla Cave and Rumania the Meziád and the Zichy Caves.

The other tourist caves of Hungary were commercialised after World War I. They include caves such as the Solymár Ördög-lyuk, which for an entrance fee provided minimum facilities and allowed touring in overalls with a guide. This was stopped after World War II. Some years ago, however, this kind of cave touring again came to the fore and overall tours with several hundred participants a year are regular — after previous announcement — along the undeveloped sections of the Pál-völgy Cave in Budapest and in the nearby Mátyás-hegy Cave.

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