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Welcome! to **Psssss.....t!**—Your Flight To Quality webZine—Your One-Stop Information Center. Here is everything you need!—"Click" on most resources mentioned in the following articles...

What You Ought To Know About How To Fly At A Low Fare

by
Marilyn King

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Would You Like To Fly At A Low Fare? You can fly at a low fare with **consolidator** tickets. Consolidator tickets are available on major airlines. They are generally sold for international travel. Flying with consolidator tickets is the **same** as flying with published fare tickets. You fly on a major airline—but you really save money. Lower priced tickets are available because consolidators buy a certain dollar volume of tickets from the airlines. The airlines give them low, contract rates. These savings are passed on to you—the flying customer.

Can you can get a cheaper ticket if you **wait** until the last minute—when "airlines sell off blocks of unsold seats to consolidators, who then re-sell for whatever they can get"? No—it doesn't really work that way. Sometimes you can get a cheap ticket on very short notice. But the best way to be assured a cheaper ticket is—plan ahead. It may be impossible to get a reasonable price or even find a seat at the last minute.

Airlines know for any given flight a certain percentage of seats will be empty. By "selling" these seats to consolidators, airlines increase the odds of flights being full. Once a plane leaves the gate with empty seats, it is lost revenue for the airline. Consolidators bear the burden and expense of **marketing** these "cheap seats." This is why airlines can afford to sell these seats to consolidators at deep discounts.

Buy a consolidator ticket—you save between 10%–70%...or more... off the airlines' published fares. During airfare **sales**, you might get a cheaper ticket with a published fare. But that is not the normal case—particularly during spring and summer season.

There are a few differences between published fare tickets and consolidator tickets—

-  You will notice that the price is not printed on the ticket. Airlines don't want you to know how cheap they are willing to sell their tickets!
-  If you change your plans and wish to change flights, or have your ticket endorsed and transferred to use on another airline, you may not be able to. Most airlines do not accept consolidator tickets issued on other airlines. However, if your airline cancels your flight—it is bound by law to accommodate you on another flight.
-  Sometimes you won't get frequent flier miles when flying with consolidator tickets—but policies vary. Check before you buy if this is important to you.
-  There is usually no advance purchase requirement on consolidator tickets. Practically all published fares require a 7, 14 or 21 day advance purchase.
-  Consolidator tickets are usually refundable after purchase but before your travel date if you need to cancel your travel plans. The penalty may be a little stiff, though. That's still better than airlines' published fares—once purchased, you **cannot** cancel. Airlines' published fares are **non-refundable**.
-  Consolidator tickets usually do **not** impose the restrictions that airlines have on advance purchase fares. For example, you can fly into one city and depart from another. Saturday night stays are not always required. Your trip can last for more than 30 days.
-  You cannot purchase a consolidator ticket direct from an airline. You can only purchase these low priced tickets from a travel agency that sells consolidator air tickets.

Consider the differences between a consolidator ticket and a published fare ticket. Make sure to find out the rules before you buy your ticket. Enjoy your savings the next time you fly. You deserve to fly at a low fare!

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Czech Out Czech Castles
History! Magic! Romance! Architecture!
by

Marilyn King

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Yes, of course Prague is wonderful, and you should spend at least a week there. I recently lived there for eight months.

But if you really want to get to know the Czech Republic—explore the beautiful countryside. Visit a few of the hundreds of castles. The Czech Republic is a castle lovers dream!

Over 2000 castles, chateaus, and castle ruins have been preserved and are currently found in the Czech Republic—including the largest castle complex in the whole world, Hradcany—the Prague Castle!

Why? Czech Republic is in the heart of Europe—a major crossroads of trade routes, and cultural influences. Starting with ancient Slav settlements (about 1000 AD) to the golden age of castle building in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Forty years of communism kept most of this a secret. Today these treasures are being proudly restored and updated. Discover some of the wonderful castles of the Czech Republic countryside with me—

Prague—Fresh air! Vacationers and locals cruise on the Vltava, drink and dine outside near Charles Bridge, and...

visit Hradcany Castle in the distance.

Photo by Abel O'Kian



Most famous is **Prazsky Hrad (Prague Castle)**...okay, it's not in the countryside, but you can't do Czech castles and skip this one. Allow at least half a day (it does not include time for museum visits) if you want to examine it in depth.

Prague Castle is the most popular sight visited in Prague—and the largest ancient castle in the world. Begun around 880, it has a very long history. Built on the site of an old Slavic settlement on a hill, it overlooks the Vltava River. A wooden fortress already stood on the hill by 870 AD. Slowly it got larger and larger, built of wood, but parts being replaced by stone buildings over time. (Building in stone was much more expensive.) By 1135 most buildings were made of stone, and the Czech Kings made the castle their main residence.

The castle reached it's zenith of importance during the reign of Czech king Charles IV. He had very ambitious plans for it and his capitol city. Charles' son Vaclav had a new Royal palace built in the old town in 1383, where the Kings resided after that date.

Rulers made their own additions so there is a mixture of styles. Prague Castle has had four major reconstructions, but it retains its classical facelift from the 18th century—during the reign of Maria Theresa of Austria. She painted all the buildings yellow which was her favorite color—*noblesse oblige*—but they have since been restored. The castle has three courtyards and has always been the seat of Czech rulers as well as the official residence.

Czech presidents have used Prague Castle as their principal office since 1918. When the square presidential flag waves above the royal palace the President is in the country.

Konopiste Castle, about 55 km east of Prague—was founded by noble family Benesovec in the wooded valley of the river Sazava in 1300. A unique example of a French style castle in Czech Republic, its rectangular ground plan was divided into a larger outer bailey in the west and the inner castle in the eastern part. Seven round towers lined the periphery of the fortification walls.

Architectural modifications took place through the centuries—until Konopiste was extensively renovated into a residence for its last occupant, Archduke Ferdinand. (You remember him from 9th grade history?). To say that the Archduke was obsessed with weapons and hunting trophies would be an understatement. In 1914, he was assassinated along with his Czech wife Sophie Chotek in Sarajevo. This sad action started World War One.

Today, this beautiful romantic castle houses a fascinating valuable collection of historical weapons and armor. Rich interiors contain Bohemian crystal chandeliers, hunting equipment and unforgettable collections of hunting trophies—over 300,000 animals.

About 35 km southeast of Prague is **Karlstejn Castle**, founded by Czech King and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV in 1348. Built as a Royal Gothic castle, this massive complex served as a vault for the Czech Coronation Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Bohemia.



With many sieges and battles over the centuries, the castle slowly deteriorated. In the 18th century the Austrian Hapsburg rulers were aware of the historical significance of Karlstejn and most seriously damaged parts were repaired. After 1853, work supervision was taken over by a newly established Central Monuments Protection Commission residing in Vienna.

Karlstejn gained its present appearance with repairs made during 1887–1899. Its most precious space is the "Chapel of the Cross". This spectacular room is decorated with semi-precious stones embedded in the gilded stucco lower walls. Above this is the finest collection of Gothic painting in the World—127 portrait paintings representing "the entire army of heaven" by Master Theodorich from the 1360s. The ceiling is entirely gilded and adorned with real golden stars. Dividing the room is a many-arched grate, hung with precious stones and jewels.

The only down-side is a steep uphill walk through a gauntlet of tacky tourist shops to reach the castle—but it's well worth the effort. If you are not up to hiking uphill—take the horse drawn carriage ride to the castle entrance.

About 35km north of Prague, near where the Elbe and Vltava rivers converge—sits **Melnik Castle** and town of Czech queens. This early Gothic castle (1050–1100) was built upon an old Slavonic fortified settlement (800 AD). It became a Royal castle—was expanded twice between 1400 and 1480, and rebuilt into a Renaissance chateau in 1553.

Princess Ludmilla was born in Melnik, and from her time forward, Melnik Castle has been the residence of the queen widows of Bohemia. Under Emperor Charles IV, Melnik became a royal city. His last wife had the castle's chapel with Gothic vaults built. The last queen residing in Melnik, was the wife of Jiri Podebrad.

Different noble families occupied the Melnik Estate throughout the centuries until the castle was abandoned during the Thirty Years War. In 1646 Count Czernin started a major reconstruction with the early Baroque southern wing added. The Count purchased the Melnik Estate from the Emperor. Heiress, Countess Ludmilla Czernin married Prince August Anton Lobkowitz in 1753. With the exception of the Second World War and the 40 years of communist rule, Melnik Castle remained in the family. The present owner Jiri Lobkowitz has been renovating the Castle since 1992.

Melnik Castle with its historic interiors houses the art collections, furnishings and hunting trophies of the Lobkowitz family. From the terrace overlooking the valley, you can see parts of the Royal vineyards. The grapes that make the same kind of wine favored by the Czech Kings (500 years ago) are still grown there. This special wine can be bought at the Castle gift shop in Melnik—as well as some specialty wine shops in Prague.

I tasted wonderful Melnik wines in the romantic, mysterious cellar vault under the castle—dating from the 14th century. A wonderful selection of both white and red wines presented by candlelight—in this wine cellar which spans 1500m² on three floors under the castle. Next to an exhibition of old machines used for the vinification process—you find an exhibition of fabulous heraldic animals that are found on coats of arms of different

aristocratic families. You walk over a fascinating floor created from thousands of wine bottles. Bottoms up—remove any two and the whole floor would collapse!

Hluboka, the "Pearl of South Bohemia" is about 140 km south of Prague in South Bohemia—above the Vltava near Ceske Budejovice. This famous place started as a Gothic castle about 1250 to strengthen the power of the Czech Kings (the Premyslids). It remained a Royal property and administrative center until 1562, and then turned into a stately Renaissance chateau. In 1661 it was bought by the Schwarzenberg family—and 40 years later they had it rebuilt into a Baroque styled chateau.

This lasted until 1841 when the charming chateau was rebuilt and modeled after Windsor Castle in England. Romantic bays, balconies, barriers, battlements and other elements give Hluboka a fairy-tale appearance. The chateau has magnificent and magical exteriors and interiors. Surrounded by a vast chateau park with French and English gardens, riding hall and terraces—it offers a view to the town and the river Vltava. One of the most visited chateaus in the Czech republic, Hluboka is lavishly furnished with huge family collections of furniture, paintings, arms, rare tapestries, and artifacts.



Cesky Krumlov is the 2nd largest Castle complex in Czech Republic. Founded in 1230, the castle was expanded and remodeled several times. It had several owners until 1947 when it was given to the Czech state.

Its setting lordling over the historic town is breathtaking. It has more than 40 buildings! It has many valuable Renaissance and Baroque rooms, paintings, tapestries, and furnishings of the last five centuries. It boasts the most unique 18th century Baroque theater in all of Europe with **all** its original furnishings and fixtures. The chateau garden with Rococo summerhouse, fountain, small lake, chapel! Their rotary auditorium

summer theatre is one of ten most interesting theatres in the world.

Plus—**all** important Czech castles have live bears living in their non-water moats. Live bears have been living in Cesky Krumlov Castle's moat since before 1600.

Pernstejn in South Moravia, this magnificent, well-preserved late Gothic fortress was founded about 1250 as the seat of the Lords of Pernstejn. The castle's present appearance results from its remodeling between 1450–1550. It became known as the "marble" castle because of the marble-like local stone used to frame its doors and windows.

The castle preserved some of its Gothic vaulting. About 1600 the family was obliged to sell both the castle and the estate—which marked the end of its days of glory. Around 1700, Baroque alterations were carried out in some rooms, and in 1716 the ceilings of the chapel were decorated. White stucco was added to the Knights Hall. The most authentic medieval castle in the Czech Republic—it has no electricity or fancy interiors. Hidden in the forest, Pernstejn is one of the most beautiful castles in Central Europe.

Helfstyn Castle in central Moravia is a ruin of a 16th century fortress. Originally a rather small Gothic castle without towers, it was founded about 1310 by Knight Fridus of Linava as a hideout. This Black Knight loved to rob people...and Czech King Jan Lucembursky took the castle away from him.

Helfstyn Castle expanded substantially from about 1365 to 1385. About 1600, more extensions, and in particular, mighty fortifications were made by Vilem of Pernstejn and his son Jan. The effectiveness of the fortification system was apparent during the unsuccessful siege by the Hungarians in 1468 and the Swedes during the Thirty Years War—(1618–1648). At the end of the 18th century Helfstyn was abandoned, but ever since the 19th century—efforts have been made to preserve it.

The new Gothic Lednice and the Baroque Valtice in South Moravia—

The romantic **Lednice** Castle is situated on the Austro–Moravian frontier near Breclav, near an immense natural park. A Middle Ages stronghold, it was rebuilt as a Renaissance castle in the 16th century. A garden was laid out next to it. Around year 1600 three ponds were built, forming the basis for Lednice's landscape arrangement you see in present days.



Today, Lednice is an excellent example of English Tudor neo-Gothic style and one of the most important buildings of Romanticism at its peak. See prestigious rooms, an artificial stalactite cavern, the rare tree of life made from ivory, a large landscaped English park with Minaret Obelisk, and a French garden.

In 1715 the Lichtenstejn's built a highway to connect their two castles—Lednice and Valtice.

The **Valtice** Castle, was not connected politically to the Czech lands—but had close historical and family ties with Moravia and a similar cultural development. The oldest records concerning Valtice date from 1192. In the 14th century the castle was established.

The Lichtenstejn family became the owners of Valtice estate in 1395—and it was in their possession until 1945. In the 17th–18th century the castle was rebuilt in Baroque style. The ground plan has four wings, one courtyard, a tower and farming buildings.



The interiors of Valtice Castle are decorated in 18th century styles—Baroque, Rococo and Classical. All the rooms have lovely frescos, beautiful furniture (especially Rococo) and valuable paintings.

If you walk from Valtice Castle, you pass small Belvedere Castle and the Temple of Diana, also called the Rendezvous. Walking towards Lednice through the forest you reach the romantic neo- Gothic—Chapel of St. Hubert.

The castle list goes on and on. It's hard to make a bad choice. Czech out as many Castles as you can.

Czech here...

[Czech Out Czech Castles—](#)

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Tuscany is a richly landscaped region and wonderful to explore by balloon. The splendid rolling landscape of luxuriant vegetation and constantly changing colors, textures, and patterns is glorious. Terraced farms of wheat laced with vineyards and olive groves share the terrain with cypress and pine, all bathed in beautiful Tuscan



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Experience the spectacular Palio festival, pageant and horse race in Siena's town square with premium seating provided by Buddy Bombard, who weaves magical, 7 day Tuscan vacations surrounding this event including his popular daily, low level balloon adventures through medieval Siena and 13th Century San Gimignano, just-above-the rooftops of hilltop towns, villas, mighty castles and gothic abbeys of Tuscany.

Also included are private sightseeing and rare, daily dining experiences with Italian nobility (who are also Buddy Bombard's personal friends), in their historic castles and estates.

Includes six nights accommodations at Park Hotel, Siena, all meals, fine wines with lunches and dinners, balloon adventures, sightseeing, normal gratuities, round trip transfers from tour meeting place, baggage handling.

For More Information and a...

[Day-By-Day Itinerary—](#)

Multicultural Differences in Greetings You Need to Be Aware Of

by
Susan Dunn

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Multiculturalism is a reality in the US and for those of us who do business globally. The US has more legal immigrants yearly than all the other countries in the world combined. Also there are vast cultural differences among "native" Americans living in the US for several generations, as you know if you've done business with a New Yorker (better be quick!) or business with a Texan (better stand at a 90° angle to your male companion).

Culture is not ethnic or racial. It is learned and of course each culture is different. Treat everyone like a unique individual, as you would like to be treated, don't get hung up on stereotypes, and develop your emotional intelligence so you can be more intuitive about how to communicate with, negotiate with, and provide services and products for people from cultural backgrounds other than your own.

- 1. In South Texas, if you're talking to a male, they will stand at a 90° angle to you.

If you move to reorient, a "dance" will begin. This is a markedly non-intimate position (macho), and often the eyes are cast down at the floor or out across the floor, not at the other party. South Texans generally say "Pleased to know you," while Mid Westerners say, "Pleased to meet you" or "Pleased to make your acquaintance." More from San Antonio, Texas - in a strictly social setting, it's not customary to shake hands with women. In society, there's the haute hug - two women will parody a hug with no part of their body touching, just tapping each other on the back. Often with an older, respected person, or to express affection with respect, you shake hands, then cover their and your hands with your left hand, patting or stroking while maintaining eye contact.

- 2. Be aware that most of the world does not greet by shaking hands.
- 3. People from Asian cultures bow in greeting, but the bows are different.

People from Cambodia and Laos will often bow with both hands together in front of the chest as if praying. In Japan, the depth of the bow signifies the level of respect for the other party. Many Koreans prefer bowing and if they shake hands, the right hand is supported at the wrist by the left hand to show respect. Thais bow with palms together about chest-high with their fingers outstretched. And, there are exceptions. The Taiwanese usually nod the head in recognition rather than bow.

- 4. Some cultures naturally greet by hugging.

Native Hawaiians hug each other, exchanging breaths. The custom is called "aha". Ancient Hawaiians, incidentally, actually bumped heads together. Mexicans use the abrazo.

- 5. Some cultures kiss!

If your Cuban male client kisses you on the cheek, you know you've made the short list. Immigrant men from the Middle East often shake hands with a slight nod or bow and then exchange kisses on both cheeks. Men from that country usually don't shake hands with women, nor do they introduce the woman with them. Do not attempt to shake hands with a Middle Eastern woman unless—and here's where the EQ comes in—she extends her hand. Men in Eastern Europe, Portugal, Spain and Italy will often kiss male friends on the cheek.

- 6. Pakistanis (largely Muslims) greet with salaam which is the equivalent of our "hello".

The salaam is done by bowing with the palm of the right hand on the forehead. Salaam means "peace" or "Peace be with you."

- 7. Postures also have meaning.

Ready to settle in with your Middle Eastern client? As an American, you're likely most comfortable sitting back in your chair and crossing your legs. Well, don't! In the Middle East, one of the most insulting things you can do is sit with your legs crossed so the bottom of your foot is pointed in the other person's direction. The foot is the dirtiest part of the body and the sole of the shoe is the dirtiest of the low. To show someone the bottom of your foot means you're looking for a fight!

- 8. Even hand-shaking cultures such as England, France, Germany, Italy and the US do it differently.

Brits prefer a brief but firm handshake. The French prefer a light grip while sharing one gentle single shake that is quickly withdrawn. Germans will give a very firm handshake—just one "pump" then quick withdrawal. More than one shake with Germans or French is considered aggressive. Italians will shake hands and then hug friends or kiss them on both cheeks. In many southern US states, it is not customary to shake hands with women.

- 9. Bear in mind the other person may be trying to accommodate to your culture, so don't assume they will use their traditional greeting.

For example, if you start first, for instance bowing, and then see a hand extended for a shake, and switch to that, the other person will then have switched to a bow and this becomes awkward. For many cultures such "awkwardness" will kill the deal early on.

- 10. Greetings are critical first moves in relationships.

Begin with a polite word or two, such as "Mr. and Mrs. Taekwondo, it's so nice to meet you at last," and then hesitate for a moment to see what they want to do and are comfortable with. Then mirror their gesture, be it bow, hand shake, abrazo (hug) or nothing! Use your intuition! When in doubt, err on the side of conservatism.

(c)Susan Dunn, The EQ Coach,
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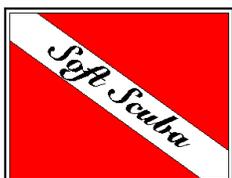
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Entry—You need a Passport—and a return or ongoing airline ticket.

Weather & **W**ater—Enjoy your best conditions from January through May—which is *low* season as far as prices are concerned. Water temperature remains ~84 deg.F. year round. Visibility is usually over 100 feet.



Your Palau Dive Adventures

Palau—an incredible cluster of islands and giant lagoon. The diverse diving cannot be matched anywhere else. Inside the lagoon the glistening flat ocean surface is sprinkled with 328 rock islands. These unusual formations are topped with a thick green growth of tropical foliage. Small marine organisms have spent centuries boring into their limestone base, sculpting them into fantasy mushrooms. Clustered together, the rock islands form lovely and intricate passageways through which boats motor at full speed.

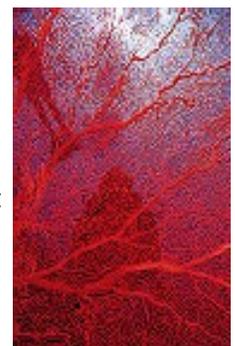
Palau is world renowned for spectacular drop-offs. Vertical walls begin at a depth of two feet and plummet straight down to more than 1,000 feet. Diving these magnificent formations is an exhilarating experience. More than 50 shipwrecks are sunk in the lagoon—remnants of WWII attacks. Most ships are Japanese, but sunken aircraft are both American and Japanese.

A landlocked marine lake offers a bizarre opportunity to dive with a million non-stinging jellyfish. Blue holes, giant undersea tunnels, stalactite filled caves and a dozen more oddities make Palau Lagoon different from any other place in the world.

Fabulous Wall Diving—Palau is best known for its spectacular wall diving. Vertical drop-offs provide the opportunity to enjoy 200-foot visibility and a spectacular array of colorful marine life. Some of the deep gorgonian fans reach gargantuan proportions—15 feet tall and 10 feet wide!

Ngemelis Drop-Off—On the north side of German Channel, the reef begins in two feet and plummets vertically to more than 1,000 feet. It is world renowned for its giant gorgonian fans and magnificent soft corals in radiant yellows, purples, oranges and golds.

Blue Corner—One of Palau's most exciting sites, the wall makes a 90 degree turn,



forming a sharp point that juts out into the open sea. Divers drift, letting the current carry them around the point. This is a high voltage dive. Divers encounter packs of Gray Reef Sharks swimming in the current, moving very close to the wall. This spot is famous for Blue Marlin, Manta Rays, Dogtooth Tuna and schools of over 100 Pacific Barracuda and other pelagics.

Siaes Tunnel—Siaes Tunnel is another extraordinary dive that can be experienced only in Palau. On the west side of the atoll the vertical wall line juts out into the Philippine Sea, forming a very pointed corner, where a horizontal tunnel cuts right through the wall. This huge tunnel measures some 50 feet high. The ceiling is approximately 80 to 90 feet, while the floor is at 120 to 130 feet. The interior is covered with soft corals and deepsea gorgonian fans. Halfway through the tunnel there is a "window" in the wall that looks out into the deep blue sea.



Big Drop-Off—In a protected area close to Ngemilis Island this wall dive begins in five feet. Absolutely vertical, it offers a multitude of large fans and rare tropicals.

New Drop-Off—Halfway between Blue Corner and Big Drop-off, this vertical wall is similar to Blue Corner where a horizontal shelf sticks out of both ends. The spot is a favorite for Gray Reef Sharks, Dogtooth Tuna, Manta Rays and Blue Marlin.

Shark City—A vertical wall, it forms a point jutting out into the open sea. A deep-V crevice cuts into the vertical face of the wall. Several giant Table Corals measuring six to eight feet in diameter are found. It is a favorite haunt for several Gray Reef Sharks and a school of Barracuda.

Jellyfish Lake—This is one of the strangest bodies of water known. Millions of years ago, a geologic upheaval caused a portion of Palau's lagoon to become trapped in a landlocked lake in the center of a larger rock island. To reach this lake, divers hike over a steep ridge and descend into a valley surrounded by jungle foliage. Although the lake is surrounded by high ridges on all sides, it is fed seawater through a maze of cracks and fissures in its limestone base.

In this mysterious, prehistoric lake live million or more non-stinging jellyfish. Traveling in a tightly clustered school, the cloud of jellyfish moves around the lake—following the sun's rays. Instead of stinging and feeding upon stunned fish, these former predators have become undersea farmers—growing their own food through photosynthesis. Divers can reach out and touch these jellyfish without injury, even gathering them in their arms.

Chandelier Cave—Another fairyland experience is a dazzling underground tunnel and cave system. Chandelier Cave is under and inside the island of Ngarol. You enter this labyrinth through a 10-foot wide tunnel opening in the side of the Rock Island. The top of the tunnel is approximately 15 feet below the surface.

The cave system, comprised of five or six distinct chambers, meanders 400 feet or more under the island with several chambers filled with magnificently colored flowstones and crystalline stalactites. The freshwater portion is exceptionally clear as it forms a crystal lake.

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