Today’s Troglobytes

“A cave is a “good place to visit but you wouldn’t want to live there”………

Or would you?

The Malibu, CA cave retreat of the late American Bandstand television idol, Dick Clark and his wife Kari, is the perfect “Man Cave.” Like something out of the Flintstone Cartoon, but in a much grander style, this mountain villa, with its vaulted ceilings and expansive windows seems much larger than the average one bedroom, two bath home.

Spectacular 360 degree views of the glittering lights of Hollywood, the Channel Islands, the Boney Mountains and Serrano Valley from it’s position atop a plateau, make it the ultimate in cave-living.

Cave-dwelling has been a way of life for millions of people over thousands of decades, and is still the chosen life-style by many throughout he world.
In **China** over 30 million people live in caves, mostly in the **Shaanxi Province** where the yellow, porous soil makes for easy digging.

Eighteen caves comprise the rooms of **Le Grotte della Civita**, an unusual hotel in **Matera, Basilicata, southern Italy**. Rock walls and a rough-hewn and heated floor lead to a **Philippe Starch bathroom**.

The ridge upon which the hotel rests is flanked by deep canyons.
Clay tops the surface of the ridge, but the canyon walls contain layers of softer, sandier rock.

Ancient grottos honeycombing the town lend credence to Italy’s claim of having continually inhabited cave dwellings, which are believed to be the oldest in the Mediterranean.

Cave-living is nothing new in the Middle East. In caves that their grandparents built 100 years ago lives a clan of Palestinians.

Their subterranean homes which are located in the Mount Hebron region of the West Bank, cause heated controversy between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Palestinian cave-homes sometimes have two levels—one topping a network of underground chambers. It is thought that the lower level was built first by those who couldn’t afford to construct above-ground houses.
Matmata in southern Tunisia is home to some Berber troglodytes.

A must-stay location in Matmata is the Hotel Sidi Driss, made famous by the Star Wars movies as the location of the Lars Homestead of Luke Skywalker and his aunt and uncle.

Ten meters into the ground in Gharyan, Libya a young man prepares tea in his multi-generational cave home. His ancestral cave was once occupied by eight families at the same time, each having its own network of chambers.
The world’s tallest standing Buddhas were carved into a cliff in Bamiyan, central Afghanistan during the sixth century. They were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, because they were considered an affront to Islam.

At the foot of the statues cave dwellings once housed thousands of monks. After the Taliban were driven from the region by American troops, civilians established residences inside of them.

Located in Nas Montanhas de Fafe in Portugal this house looks like it’s straight out of the fictional town of Bedrock. It’s actually a countryside vacation cottage and little information is known about the boulder which gives the house a cave-like appearance.

Carved into the soft sandstone of the Kinver Edge, England are some of the most famous cave houses in the world, a few being clustered under Holy Austin Rock which was once the location of a hermitage. The British National Trust has restored some of them.

Perhaps these quaint cave-cottages, with their lovely gardens, inspired J.R.R. Tolkien, who grew up in the area.
A short stroll from the mayor’s office in Souzay, France, a “troglo” sign points to the Chemin des Ecoliers (street of schoolchildren). It is from there that you enter what was once a thriving cave-village, complete with homes, shops and artisan workshops.

Formal entryways and courtyards show evidence of recent refurbishment, but many have been left abandoned and are still rugged cliffs with untended vines drooping over upper-story windows.

The village dates back to the War of the Roses (a series of wars between 1455 and 1487.) Rods drilled into the cliff to ensure cavity stability and new facades over ancient stone faces, announce rehabilitation.
In **Saumur** in **France’s Loire Valley** some former cave homes have been “revamped as troglo hotels, restaurants, museums, artist galleries, wineries, farms for mushrooms, silkworms and snails, a rose water distillery and a disco. There’s even a troglo zoo, where large animals live in open quarries and enclosed caves display bats and other lovers of dim light” (Smithsonian)

**Coober Pedy** in **South Australia** claims to be the Opal Capital of the world and has a population of 1,916, many of whom live underground.

Since the 1920’s, Coober Pedy has been an opal mining town, where Australian folks seeking refuge from the hot sun, have literally “gone under.” Although some mines are still in operation, others have closed and their shafts have been enlarged and hollowed out to create homes.
There are stores and churches, and even a local golf course. To avoid the daytime heat, most golfers prefer playing the game at night, using glowing golf balls. Although the area has no grass, golfers “turf up” a small amount of dirt to tee-off.

Aussie Humor, Mate!

You don’t have to live in Bedrock City to set up housekeeping in a cave. Natural caves can be extended with a minimal amount of digging. Caves provide excellent protection from the elements and maintain a constant temperature (cool in summer—warm in winter).

Underground springs run through some of them, bringing a great source of clean water. The lack of natural light or an occasional falling rock or two can be hazardous, but if you have an adventurous spirit and want to retreat from it all, go build yourself a subterranean paradise!