

**California Cavern,
State Historic Landmark**

(CA) 9565 Cave City Road, Vallecito, (866) 762-2837, (209) 736-2708, www.cavernstours.com;
Fee: Y; Open: Daily; Key: TH, KIDS

Often called the Tom Sawyer Cave because Twain based the caves in his famous novel on it. When he was writing the book, he spent quite a bit of time with his friend and fellow writer Bret Harte, whom he'd met in San Francisco, and who had a cabin up here right at the mouth of Cave City. Folks in the know claim the *Tom Sawyer* description can serve as a touring guide to the California Cavern.

This was the first commercial show cave in California. It's been an attraction since the days of the gold fields, and the current walking tour covers almost the exact same trail people used back in the early days. It has a "womb tube" for people who are thinking of trying out spelunking to figure out whether they're claustrophobic.

Steven Fairchild says: "We thought we'd buy it as a way to do spelunking trips. It wasn't till we put lights in it that we realized what a beautiful cave it was. When we started building trails, we realized that there was already a trail there. A guy named Captain Taylor jumped

ship in San Francisco and opened the cave as an attraction. The road to the gold fields would go right by it. People would come off stagecoaches in summer. The temperature would be very hot, but the caves would be nice and cool. They'd do the tours, have a snack, jump back on the stagecoach, and go up to Big Trees State Park to see the sequoias."

Mr. Motherlode State Monument
(CA) Highway 49, near Angels Camp

Driving Highway 49, also known as the Golden Chain Highway, you'll find a brass plaque on an ore cart at Carson Hill honoring Archie Stevenot, who was nicknamed Mr. Motherlode, because he was largely responsible for getting the highway into the Mother Lode built. Farther down there's a rest area with a state historical marker also commemorating him.

Millerosa
(CA) 4625 Camp Nine Road, Vallecito, (209) 736-4758, www.millerosa.com; Fee: Y; Open: Weekends by appt; Key: CHEESE

One of Gold Country's most unusual and silly activities—and, like many in the area, something you don't often stumble across elsewhere in the world. At this private twelve-acre property,