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"A Fairyland of underworld beauty," is the way visitors describe the caves known as Grutas de Villa Garcia, reputedly one of the largest series in North America, and as intriguing as any to be found in the world.

Located near Monterrey, Mex., which is served directly by American Airlines, the caverns feature a series of "rooms" or "halls" with exotic stalagmites and stalactites forming strange figures and objects.

Typical is the "Room of the Maidens," dominated by two huge limestone stalactites. One resembles a woman with a child in her arms, while the other one resembles a girl wrapped in her rebozo.

"The Hall of Light" is a huge cavern, subtly illuminated by daylight filtering through cracks in the roof. Great stone giants appear to people the "Hall of the Colossi."

A deep crystalline pool is the center of attraction in the "Hall of the Lake," while the "Hall of the Altars" boasts natural altars, tastefully decorated with limestone flowers.

Today the caves are conditioned and well lighted by electricity. Meals and iced drinks are dispensed at a restaurant near the entrance. Because of their vastness, the caverns have to be seen with a guide. Current guides are descendants of Cornelio Marmolejo, who started showing visitors through the caves in 1875. The Garcia caves were discovered by Juan Antonio de Sobrevilla, a priest in a nearby village, in 1843.

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