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## Vice President Dick Cheney isn't the only person in the United States to occasionally disappear underground.

When situations warrant, Cheney presumably is rushed into one of the approximately 100 secret underground “continuity of government” facilities—known as COGs—strategically placed around the United States. With the help of steel-reinforced concrete walls, these restricted command and housing centers use the strength of the earth to keep the nation’s vital personnel protected in the event of natural and nuclear disasters.

Though the majority of us will never get to see the inside (or get near the outside, for that matter) of a COG, we can shop, dine, study, and play in the more than 300 public and commercial structures nestled in North America’s terra firma.

Millions of Americans and Canadians spend their leisure time underground in cool and comfortable surroundings. According to Loretta Hall, author of the new book, *Underground Buildings: More than Meets the Eye* (Quill Driver Books), “Underground buildings are safe, attractive, useful, and comfortable places to frequent and live. Unlike a common misconception, most are dry and warm, and they are often sun-filled.” Full of color photographs, Hall’s book is a fascinating exploration of the varieties of subterranean structures.

Pick any activity; chances are you can perform it underground. For instance, Arlington, Virginia, boasts a nine-block long underground corridor system that links twenty high-rise office and residential buildings. Within this system nearly 200 stores and restaurants sell everything from model airplanes to clothing. There’s even a popular supermarket.

If that isn’t impressive enough for you, with six miles of climate-controlled passageways, Houston, Texas, touts “The Tunnels” as the largest underground walkway and retail system in the United States. Yet in Canada, both Montreal and Toronto have even longer underground pedestrian systems with significantly more commercial development.

Like to go to the movies? Regal Cinemas opened a 13-screen theater in Rockville, Maryland, with only the lobby above ground. Is exercise your thing? Every February, more than 2,000 runners compete in the 10K and 5K Groundhog Run inside Hunt Midwest SubTropolis, an industrial park located in a former limestone mine in Kansas City, Missouri. There the weather is never a problem. Got a criminal streak? Break the law in San Rafael, California, and you’re likely to find yourself marking off the days in Marin County’s 362-bed underground jail.

Feeling moleish? For tourists who want to sleep under the ground rather than under the stars, Hall lists a half-dozen subterranean lodging establishments ranging from the conventional to the exotic. Want to live underground? A intriguing spectrum of private homes is presented including humble cubbyholes, luxurious underground mansions and decommissioned missile silos turned residences.

[Underground Buildings: More than Meets the Eye by Loretta Hall](#) is available at online bookstores, brick and mortar bookstores, at [QuillDriverBooks.com](http://QuillDriverBooks.com), or by calling 1-800-497-4909.

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