

## Links to the Wider World

This section aims to provide links to articles and items related to caves and karst that may lie outside the normal ACKMA sphere of influence but may still be of interest. All links are functional at the time of publishing but may not open if viewing at a later date.

### The Alien Underground

Overheard at National Geographic Podcast

[The Alien Underground - Overheard at National Geographic](#)



Half a mile below the surface of the earth, in a cave too hot to explore without an ice-packed suit, NASA scientist and Nat Geo explorer Penny Boston clammers around glassy crystals that are taller than telephone poles and wider than dinner tables. But it's not The Crystal Cave's grandeur she's interested in—it's what may be hibernating inside the crystals. Astrobiologists like Penny Boston scour the Earth's most hostile environments for microorganisms, to see if they hold clues to what life might look like on other planets—maybe even planets in our solar system.

Naica Caves - photo from National Geographic



### Balankanche – The Secret Cave of the Maya

This article appears in Heritage Daily – Travel section.

The full text can be read here; [Balankanche - The Secret Cave of the Maya](#)



Balankanche is a sacred cave used for rituals by the Maya, situated near the Maya-Toltec city of Chichén Itzá in the Yucatan, Mexico.

Balankanche is one such venerated cave, in which the current accessible system stretches for around 1.2 miles in length through the soluble limestone rock.

The cave was first explored by archaeologists in 1905, but the extent of Balankanche was first realised in 1959 when José Humberto Gómez discovered a series of passages sealed behind a blockage.

Image credit: Shutterstock

# Descending into One of the Deepest Caves on Earth

By Maya Wei-Haas

Story reproduced from National Geographic –

read the full article here [NG - descending into one of the deepest caves on earth](#)

They will ask you to sign up for their newsletter before you can access the whole article, but this will give you 3 free articles per month, and you can unsubscribe at any time. If you have access to the National Geographic Channel on any of the streaming platforms, they are also showing the documentary of this expedition; “*Explorer: The Deepest Cave*” – and it is well worth watching.

In 1990, explorers dumped green dye in the stream flowing into Cheve’s mouth. They discovered the coloured water burbling out near the mountain’s base, some 1.6 miles down from the cave’s highest known entrance at the time. If a human could navigate the full length the water did, Cheve would be declared the deepest cave in the world, beating the current record holder—Veryovkina in Abkhazia, Georgia—by almost a quarter mile.

The tantalizing possibility has drawn explorers for decades, and [this 2021 expedition](#) was the biggest push yet. Under the leadership of National Geographic Explorer [Bill Stone](#), the cast of cavers clocked more than 1,500 cumulative nights underground and discovered over 12 miles of unexplored passages.

The cavers follow a multilevel labyrinth through the mountain’s underbelly. Carved by rivers over millions of years, some passages are big enough to fit a Boeing 747 plane; others are so tight the cavers can pass only while exhaling to compress their rib cages.

As Stone’s crew tests the limits of exploration, pushing toward record depths and gathering mapping data on the way, camaraderie and teamwork are essential. By the end of the 2021 season, the farthest and deepest camp lay 7.3 miles, or about a five-day trip, from the closest entrance.

This story appears in the [June 2022 issue](#) of *National Geographic* magazine.



## Forgotten English Rainbow Cave

The following article comes from Good News Network and the full text may be read here;

[Forgotten English Rainbow Cave that's said to have healing powers](#)

The site, known as St Cuthbert’s Cave, creates mineral deposits leaving its stones red, green, blue, and yellow.



Most tourists now visiting Holywell in Cornwall, England are unaware of its hidden wonders.

Unlike other so-called ‘holy wells’ in the UK, the spring water in St Cuthbert’s Cave is washed out twice every day, when the tide comes in and floods the cavern.

John Cardell Oliver’s ‘Guide to Newquay’ from 1877 gave a detailed description of the cave from a bygone era.

“This well has Nature only for its architect, no mark of man’s hand being seen in its construction; a pink enamelled basin, filled by drippings from the stalactitic roof, forms a picture of which it is difficult to describe the loveliness.”

## Small, rare crayfish thought extinct is rediscovered in Alabama Cave

The full text of this article may be found here;

[Small, rare crayfish thought extinct is rediscovered in cave in Huntsville, Alabama](#)

Photo credit: Pensoft Publishers



A small, rare crayfish thought to be extinct for 30 years has been rediscovered in a cave in the City of Huntsville in northern Alabama by a team led by an assistant professor at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH).

Dr. Matthew L. Niemiller's team found individuals of the Shelta Cave Crayfish, known scientifically as *Orconectes sheltae*, in 2019 and 2020 excursions into Shelta Cave—its only home.

The crayfish's home is a 2,500-foot cave system that's owned and managed by the National Speleological Society (NSS) and is unobtrusively located beneath the organization's national headquarters in northwest Huntsville and is surrounded by subdivisions and bustling roadways.



## Is There a Future for the Sinkhole-studded Dead Sea?

The full text of this article may be read here: [Is there a future for the sinkhole-studded Dead Sea?](#)

Israel and Jordan make extensive use of the water flowing into the Dead Sea... As a result, the water level in the Dead Sea currently drops at a rate of more than three feet a year. As the water table recedes from the coast, it exposes a deep, old layer of rock salt—some 15 to 200 feet below the surface—to flowing rainwater that's not already saturated with salt. As that layer dissolves, the surface becomes unstable until collapse is inevitable. According to geologist Eli Raz, the Dead Sea region already has roughly 7,000 sinkholes, and that number is expected to double in the next few years.

The inhabitants and scientists in the region are developing various initiatives to turn this ecological catastrophe into a powerful tourist attraction. Kayak tours among the sinkholes are among the most popular.



Kayakers visit a slumped sinkhole on the Dead Sea Coast. IDO MEIROVICH



Receding water levels cause sinkholes like this one, revealing the layered geology around the Dead Sea. PHOTOSTOCK-ISRAEL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

## Race to save undersea Stone Age cave art and opening of museum replica

The full text of these articles may be read at the following links;

[Race to save undersea Stone Age cave art masterpieces](#)

[Replica of prehistoric undersea Cosquer Cave opens for public in Marseille](#)

[In Pictures: See Inside France's Replica of the Submerged Cosquer Cave](#)



A replica of the Cosquer Cave in the Villa Mediterranee is pictured in Marseille, southern France, Thursday, June 2, 2022. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)

To reach the only place in the world where cave paintings of prehistoric marine life have been found, archaeologists have to dive to the bottom of the Mediterranean off southern France.

But the cave and its treasures, some dating back more than 30,000 years, are in grave danger. Climate change and water and plastic pollution are threatening to wash away the art prehistoric men and women created over 15 millennia.

Around 600 signs, images and carvings—some of aquatic life never before seen in [cave paintings](#)—have been found on the walls of the immense cave 37 meters below the azure waters of the breathtaking Calanques inlets east of Marseille.

The idea of making a replica of the site was first mooted soon after the cave was discovered. But it wasn't until 2016 that the regional government decided that it would be in a renovated modern building in Marseille next to Mucem, the museum of European and Mediterranean civilisations at the mouth of the city's Old Port.

As of Saturday (4<sup>th</sup> June 2022), visitors to the port city of Marseille will be able to see the Cosquer Mediterranee, a replica of the over 30,000-year-old site. The visual and audio “experience” features copies of the prehistoric paintings that made the cave internationally famous.

Using the 3D data gathered by the archaeological teams, the 23-million-euro (\$US24 million) replica is slightly smaller than the original cave but includes copies of all the paintings and 90 percent of the carvings, said Laurent Delbos from Klebert Rossillon, the company which copied the Chauvet cave in 2015.

# What Happens to Caves When Wildfires Scorch the Surface?

The full text of this article can be read here; [What happens to caves when wildfires scorch the surface](#)



Photo: Over the last few years, wildfires have burned across almost all of Lava Beds. JORDAN KEMP/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

On the flanks of medicine Lake Volcano in remote Northern California is Lava Beds National Monument. And beneath that is a sprawling network of some 800 lava tubes, caves carved out by flows of molten rock that date to between 65,000 and just 1,100 years ago.

The lava tube caves are home to an exciting range of life that relies on the cold, dry, stable conditions, conditions that have been threatened by a plague of wildfires. In July 2020, the Caldwell Fire burned around 70 percent of the park. In summer 2021 came the Antelope Fire, which burned 27 percent more. Wildfires are a normal part of Western ecosystems, but the intensity and reach of

these had park ecologists wondering whether they even impacted the refuges that the lava tubes usually represent. It's too soon to say for sure what the legacy of the fires will be for the region, but scientists have found that the story is complicated. The fires have knocked back populations of some species, while boosting diversity of others.

I asked Andy Baker if he could add some extra information with regard to research he has been involved with on this topic and he responded with the following:

*“Up at Daylight Cave in the Macleay karst, somewhere I have visited very regularly, we have a cave actively used by a lot of bats. That was up to when the 2019/20 Carrai East Fire went past. We visited a month later and they had gone. The vegetation started to recover strongly in 2021, but the bats stayed gone in 2021, and inside the guano had been largely washed out, and it was a very different cave. I was last there early this year and for the first time a handful of bats were in the cave.*

*It would be interesting to find out if staff at any of the recently impacted caves have noticed any changes (Yarrangobilly, Wombeyan, Jenolan, Yanchep, Caldargup Cave, Lake Cave etc.) It would be anecdotal of course.”*

If you have any information you could contribute, please let the editor know and I will pass the information on to Andy Baker.



## Your journal needs YOU!

While it is easy to fill up pages with pretty pictures, the heart and soul of the ACKMA Journal is stories from members!

Particularly as most of us have been restricted in our movements over the last couple of years, we depend on others to help us live vicariously – and this is where you come in. While you may not have been jet setting recently, I am sure there are lots of you that have stories and photos from previous caving trips, expeditions and holidays.

Now is the perfect time to remind yourself of those fantastic times and share them with other ACKMA members by writing a short (or long!) article for us, and as they say, “a picture is worth a thousand words”, so any pictures you have (clear and in focus) to accompany the words will only embellish your efforts!

You can write them in any font and format you like, and I can edit them when you send them to me. If anyone has any questions about the suitability of subject matter, then please drop me an email and I will be happy to explore the possibilities with you. I am also happy to help with minor technical or formatting issues if needed – so don't be shy.

I look forward to being deluged with articles for upcoming issues!

