



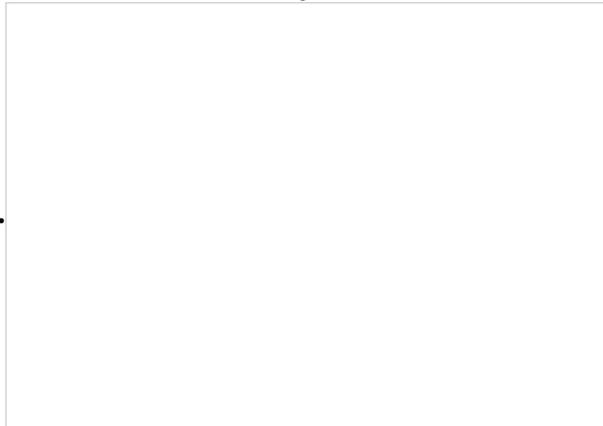
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World's Longest Salt Cave

 drishtiias.com/printpdf/worlds-longest-salt-cave

Israeli researchers have claimed that they have discovered the **world's longest salt cave**

near the dead sea.



- **The cave named Malham, stretching over 10 kilometers (6.25 miles) runs through Mount Sodom, Israel's largest mountain, and spills out to the southwest corner of the adjacent Dead Sea.**
- In the cave, **thousands of salt stalactites hang from the ceilings, and some of the walls have salt crystals.**
- These were formed by the dissolution of the overhead rock by rainwater. The water percolates through cracks and deposits salt on the cave's ceiling.

Formation of Caves

- **In areas where there are alternating beds of rocks (shales, sandstones, quartzites) with limestones or dolomites in between or in areas where limestones are dense, massive and occurring as thick beds, cave formation is prominent.**
- **Water percolates down either through the materials or through cracks and joints and moves horizontally along bedding planes.**
- It is along these bedding planes that the limestone dissolves and long and narrow to wide gaps called caves result.
- There can be a maze of caves at different elevations depending upon the limestone

beds and intervening rocks. Caves having openings at both the ends are called tunnels.

Depositional Landforms in the Caves



- Many depositional forms develop within the caves. The chief chemical in limestone is calcium carbonate which is easily soluble in carbonated water (carbon dioxide absorbed rainwater).
- **This calcium carbonate is deposited when the water carrying it in solution evaporates or loses its carbon dioxide as it trickles over rough rock surfaces.**
- **Stalactites, Stalagmites, and Pillars**
 - **Stalactites hang as icicles** of different diameters. Normally they are broad at their bases and taper towards the free ends showing up in a variety of forms.
 - **Stalagmites rise up from the floor of the caves.** In fact, stalagmites form due to dripping water from the surface or through the thin pipe, of the stalactite, immediately below it.
 - The stalagmite and stalactites eventually **fuse to give rise to columns and pillars of different diameters.**