

Belum Caves, About, Location, Formation, Important Features

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Belum Caves are the **second largest cave system in the Indian subcontinent** and the **longest caves in the plains region**, known for their spectacular **stalactite and stalagmite formations, long passages, and historical significance as a Buddhist/Jain meditation site.**

Belum Caves Key Details

Location: Belum Caves are located in **Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh** in a flat, semi-arid agricultural landscape. They are also locally known as **Belum Guhalu.**

Discovered by: The caves were first recorded in **1884** by **Robert Bruce Foote.**

- Although identified in the 19th century, they remained neglected for decades. Scientific exploration and mapping were later undertaken in 1983 by German speleologist Herbert Daniel Gebauer along with Indian researchers.
- Excavations during this phase revealed pottery, tools, and artefacts dating back to around 4500 BCE, establishing their antiquity.

Formation: Belum Caves are formed due to long-term action of underground water on limestone rocks, making them a prominent **karst landform**. Over thousands of years, water from the **Chitravathi River** percolated through limestone layers, gradually dissolving and eroding the rock. This process created an extensive network of:

- Long horizontal passages
- Narrow galleries and siphons
- Large underground chambers
- Freshwater streams

The caves are especially rich in speleothems, which are mineral deposits formed inside caves, such as:

- **Stalactites** – Hanging formations from the ceiling
- **Stalagmites** – Rising formations from the ground

The deepest point inside the caves is known as **Patalaganga**, located about 150 feet below the entrance level.

Belum Caves Important Features

Belum Caves are characterized by diverse and well-defined chambers and rock formations created by prolonged underground water activity, each reflecting unique geological processes and cultural associations.

- **Simhadwaram (Lion's Gate):** A natural arch resembling a lion's head, formed by stalactite structures.
- **Kotilingala Chamber:** Contains thousands of formations resembling Shiva lingams, along with a massive pillar formed by the fusion of stalactite and stalagmite.
- **Saptasvarala Guha (Musical Chamber):** Produces musical notes when the formations are tapped, due to acoustic properties.
- **Patalaganga:** A perennial underground stream marking the deepest accessible point.
- **Dhyan Mandir (Meditation Hall):** A spacious chamber associated with meditation practices of monks.
- **Saint's Bed:** A rock formation believed to have been used by ascetics for meditation.
- **Thousand Hoods:** Stalactite formations resembling the raised hoods of cobras.
- **Banyan Tree Hall (Voodalamari):** A structure resembling a banyan tree with hanging roots.
- **Mandapam:** A large hall-like chamber with pillar-like rock formations.

Belum Caves



- **About:** Belum Caves are the second largest cave system in the Indian subcontinent and the longest caves in the plains, known for stalactite and stalagmite formations, long passages, and historical use as a meditation site.
- **Location:** Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh in a flat, semi-arid region.
- **Also known as:** Belum Guhalu.
- **Discovered by:** Robert Bruce Foote in 1884.
- **Formation:** Formed due to long-term erosion of limestone by underground water from the Chitravathi River.
- **Geological features:** Presence of speleothems such as stalactites (hanging) and stalagmites (rising), along with karst formations and quartz deposits.
- **Other features:** Long passages, narrow galleries, large chambers, underground streams, and key formations like Simhadwaram, Kotilingala Chamber, Saptasvarala Guha, and Patalaganga.
- **Religious Significance:** Used by Jain and Buddhist monks for meditation, with evidence of ancient ascetic practices and relics found inside.