

# EXPLORING CAVES

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**Badger**  
LEARNING

# 1. WHAT ARE CAVES?

Caves are spaces that have been made naturally in rock or ice. These spaces are sometimes called chambers, or **caverns**. Cave chambers can be huge or tiny.

Words highlighted in this colour are in the glossary on page 30

Caves can be deep underground, in the sides of hills, in cliffs along the coast, and even inside icy **glaciers**. They are some of the least explored places on the planet because they can be very hard to find.

The caves we do know about are amazing. Read this book and see for yourself!

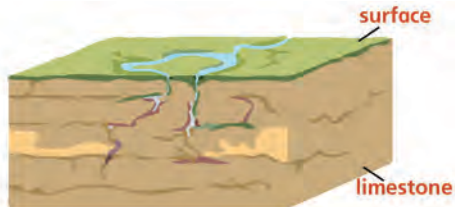


## Limestone caves

Most caves are found in limestone rock. Limestone is mainly made from mud and sea fossils, such as coral and shells, pressed together very hard. This kind of rock has lots of cracks where rainwater can **seep** in and dissolve, or wash away, the stone. Over thousands of years, the flowing rainwater makes the cracks bigger and bigger until they form the spaces that we call cave chambers.

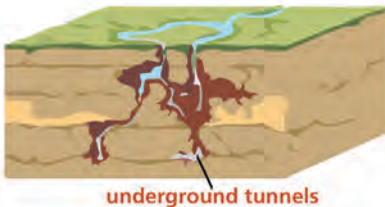
**1**

Water seeps into cracks in the rock.



**2**

Over time, water dissolves the rock to form tunnels.



**3**

Over more time, the tunnels become cave chambers.





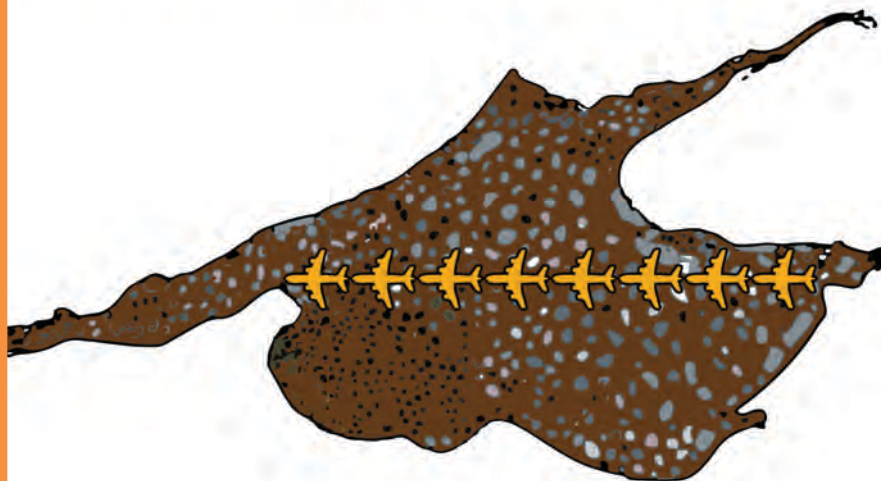
Some limestone caves are huge networks of chambers and tunnels all joined together.

The world's longest cave network (that we know about) is at Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, USA. Its chambers and tunnels stretch over 400 miles underground. That's about the same distance as from London to Edinburgh!



The largest known underground chamber is in limestone rock in Borneo, Malaysia. Cave explorers discovered it in 1980. It is called the Sarawak Chamber.

## SARAWAK CHAMBER



jumbo jet



The Sarawak Chamber is 600 metres long. Eight jumbo jets could line up across it!