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Cavers discover 500m pit

From AP

August 10, 2004

ZAGREB, Croatia: Cave explorers discovered a pit inside a mountain range in central Croatia believed to have the world's deepest subterranean vertical drop, at over 500m, a scientific institute reported Monday.

The cave, in Croatia's mountainous Velebit region, has a steady, weaving drop of 62m before it takes a direct vertical plunge of 516m, said Ana Sutlovic Baksic, a researcher at the Velebit Speleological Society. The cave's widest stretch is about 30m.

"We have even bigger caves in Croatia, but according to available data, this cave has the world's deepest vertical drop," Sutlovic Baksic said.

At the foot of the Velebit cave are small ponds and streams, including one of the largest known colonies of subterranean leeches, Sutlovic Baksic said.

It is located in the Rozanski Hip National Park reserve in the rocky Velebit mountain range in central Croatia. The pit was discovered by a team of explorers from around the country.

The Voronya Cave in Georgia's West Caucasus has the world's deepest cavern, measuring 1,710m. But the pit discovered in Croatia is thought to have the largest underground vertical drop.

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Croatia is home to two of the world's 20 deepest caves. The Velebit region is Croatia's largest mountain range, attracting speleologists, botanists and hikers from around the world.

AP

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