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News

Posted 8/10/2004 6:57 AM

Cave explorers discover pit in Croatia

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) ð Cave explorers discovered a pit inside a mountain range in central Croatia believed to have the world's deepest subterranean vertical drop, at nearly 1,700 feet, a scientific institute reported Monday.

The cave, in Croatia's mountainous Velebit region, has a steady, weaving descent of 203 feet before it takes a direct vertical plunge of 1,693 feet through the ground, said Ana Sutlovic Baksic, a researcher at the Velebit Speleological Society.

The cave's widest stretch is about 100 feet.

"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 5,610 feet. But the pit discovered in Croatia is thought to have the largest underground vertical drop.

Croatia, which is rich in natural wonders, 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. Much of the rugged area remains untouched, and scientific expeditions over its vast expanse covered by rare flora and fauna have been ongoing for years.

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