

# Hang Son Doong, Vietnam

By Sarah Collinge

Have you ever explored a cave? A cave is an underground chamber in a hillside or cliff that has been formed over time by rainwater, ocean waves, lava, or oil-eating bacteria.

Places where the earth is made up of large amounts of limestone are known for having many caves. Limestone is made from the remains of shells and skeletons of sea creatures. This sedimentary rock is easily dissolved by slightly acidic water. Where limestone dissolves, an underground chamber forms.

No one knows how many caves there are on Earth, probably millions. Many natural caves remain undiscovered.

The largest known cave in the world is Hang Son Doong, located in the country of Vietnam. This cave was first discovered 20 years ago and is more than 2.5 miles long. Its widest chambers are 300 feet wide and over 600 feet high—big enough to easily hold an entire New York City block of skyscrapers. A very large “room” in one section of the cave is equal to the size of the Superdome in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The name Hang Son Doong means Mountain River Cave. The cave was originally discovered by a local man who heard a whistling sound made by an underground river. Flowing through the cave is a fast-flowing, subterranean river, the Rao Thuong River. During the flooding season, the river can rise close to 300 feet.

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