

Cavers find snakes but no genies in Yemen's 'Well of Hell'

September 22 2021, by Dana Moukhallati



Yemen's Well of Barhout, a 112-metre deep sinkhole in the desert which locals call the 'Well of Hell', had been largely unexplored until a team of Omani cavers reached the bottom last week.

A team of Omani cavers has made what is believed to be the first

descent to the bottom of Yemen's fabled Well of Barhout—a natural wonder shunned by many locals, who believe it is a prison for genies.

The forbidding 'Well of Hell', whose dark, round aperture creates a 30-metre (100 foot) wide hole in the desert floor of Yemen's eastern province of Al-Mahra, plunges approximately 112 metres (367 feet) below the surface and, according to some accounts, gives off strange odours.

Inside, the Oman Cave Exploration Team (OCET) found snakes, dead animals and cave pearls—but no signs of the supernatural.

"There were snakes, but they won't bother you unless you bother them," Mohammed al-Kindi, a geology professor at the German University of Technology in Oman, told AFP.

Kindi was among eight experienced cavers who rappelled down last week, while two colleagues remained at the surface.

Footage provided to AFP showed cave formations and grey and lime-green [cave](#) pearls, formed by dripping water.

"Passion drove us to do this, and we felt that this is something that will reveal a new wonder and part of Yemeni history," said Kindi, who also owns a mining and petroleum consultancy firm.

"We collected samples of water, rocks, soil and some dead animals but have yet to have them analysed," he said, adding that a report will soon be made public.



Despite the sinkhole's reputation as a prison for genies, the cavers found no demons, only snakes, dead animals and cave pearls.

"There were dead birds, which does create some bad odours, but there was no overwhelming bad smell."

Yemeni officials told AFP in June that they did not know what lay in the depths of the pit, which they estimated to be "millions and millions" of years old, adding that they had never reached the bottom.

"We have gone to visit the area and entered the well, reaching more than 50-60 metres down," Salah Babhair, director general of Mahra's geological survey and mineral resources authority, said at the time.

"We noticed strange things inside. We also smelled something strange... It's a mysterious situation."

Over the centuries, stories have circulated of malign figures known as jinns or genies living in the well, which some regard as the gate of hell.

Many residents of the area are uneasy about visiting the vast pit or even talking about it, for fear of ill fortune.

Yemenis have had enough [bad luck](#) as it is.

The country has been embroiled in a devastating civil war since 2014 that has triggered what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with two-thirds of its 30-million population dependent on some form of aid.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: Cavers find snakes but no genies in Yemen's 'Well of Hell' (2021, September 22) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-09-cavers-snakes-genies-yemen-hell.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.
