

Punia and his mother sat on a cliff high above the ocean and looked down. They could see big, dark shadows swimming in and out of the large hole in the rock just under the water. "The cave is down there, isn't it?" Punia asked his mother. "Yes," she said. "That is where we lost your father." The story always made Punia sad and angry.



Long ago, Punia's ancestors swam into the cave to get lobsters. But one day, when Punia was a baby, the Shark King came to live in the cave. And that is when Punia's father went diving for lobsters and never came back.

Since that time, no one in Punia's village would take the risk of swimming into the cave. Everyone was afraid of the Shark King and his ten shark followers. So no one ate the tasty lobsters that were inside the cave.

But now Punia was older, and he wasn't afraid.

"I'm smarter than the Shark King," he thought. He knew that every afternoon the Shark King took half of his ten followers to hunt way out in the ocean. The Shark King left his other five followers behind to protect the cave.

Punia smiled. He turned to his mother and said, "I have an idea. We'll be eating lobsters again very soon!"

Facts About Caves

A cave is a natural passage under the earth. Caves are usually formed by water eroding rock over thousands of years. As there are probably millions of caves below the earth's surface, much of the dark and mysterious world of caves still remains unexplored. Here are a few caves that *have* been discovered.

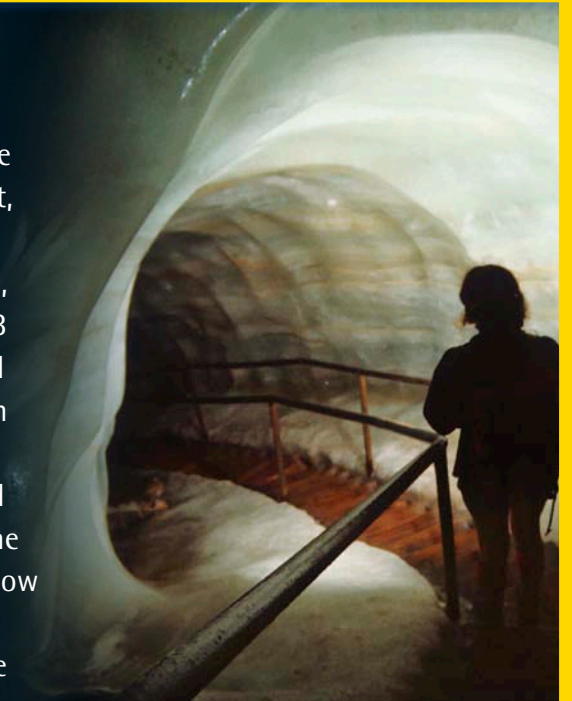
Cave of Swallows

This cave, found in 1966, is located in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. It is a pit cave – a cave that has a vertical drop deep enough that a person can not descend into the cave safely without using ropes or ladders. The Cave of Swallows has a drop of more than 366 meters (1,200 feet). The cave gets its name from the large number of swallows, a type of bird, that live in the vertical walls of the cave.



Eisriesenwelt Cave

Eisriesenwelt in Austria is the largest known ice cave in the world. Eisriesenwelt, which means "World of the Ice Giants" in German, is over 40 kilometers (24.8 miles) long. It was created by a river flowing through a mountain. This eroded the mountain and created passageways. The ice in the cave was formed when snow melted, drained into the cave, and froze during the winter.



Reed Flute Cave

China's Reed Flute Cave in the northwest of China was created by an underground river more than a half million years ago. The cave is filled with amazing stalactites, stalagmites, columns, and rock formations in fantastic shapes. Because it is easy to enter, it is one of the area's most popular tourist attractions.

