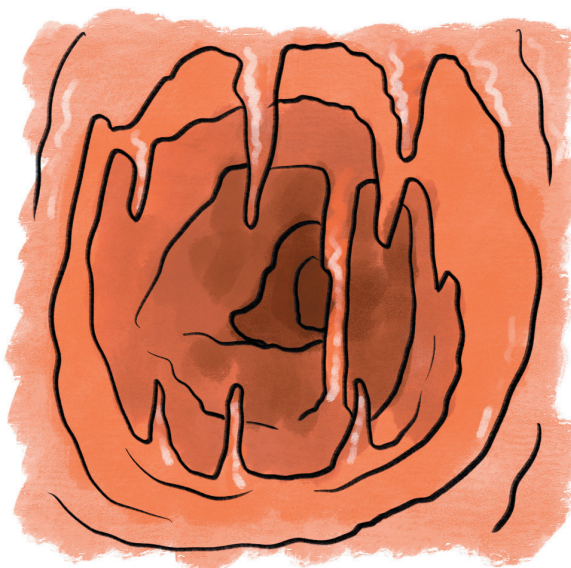




Devil's Throat Cave and climate change

In recent decades Bulgaria has experienced more and longer periods of drought, followed by atypically strong storms and heavy floods giving rise to destruction and casualties. The climate in Southern Bulgaria is becoming more and more Mediterranean, and to the north of Stara planina mountain the lands are gradually losing their fertility and the beginnings of desertification are observed. The snow periods in the mountains are decreasing shortening the opportunities for winter sports. The more significant snowfalls begin to shift to February-March, which is the reason for a change in the water reserves available to the country during the year. The consequences for human life and the economy are adverse.



“Devil's Throat” is an abyssal cave located in the Western Rhodopes mountains, not far from the village of Trigrad. Its formation is the result of the collapse of the earth's layers. The waters of the Trigrad river pour into the “throat” from a height of 42 meters, forming a huge hall called the “Rumbling Hall”. The entrance to the cave resembles a devil's head, and the huge roaring waterfall pouring into it has given rise to many legends since ancient times. The most popular of them is that it is through the “Devil's Throat” that Orpheus descends into the underground kingdom of Hades to search for his beloved Eurydice.

The cave is an object of great tourist interest. Descending through an artificial gallery, tourists reach an underground watercourse and the “Rumbling Hall”. The built steps pass the roaring waterfall, whose loud thunder and huge masses of foaming water amaze. The entire route is secured with safety railings.

In mid-December 2021, unusually heavy rains fell in the Rhodopes mountain and flooded the cave. Huge quantities of water are poured into the “Rumbling Hall” at a rate of 2,600 liters per second. The rock and wood material dragged by the water clogs the siphon through which the water continues its way underground. Railings, cables, lighting and any other facilities along the tourist route were destroyed. Over 60,000 bats hibernating in the cave have been driven away. The roads to nearby settlements and the cave were also seriously damaged.

Local people and the tourism organization that manages the cave are deeply concerned about the loss to the local economy due to the destruction of the infrastructure as well as the long period and significant funds required to recover from the damage. No less worrying is the gloomy prospect of repeating similar natural disasters in the future as a result of climate change.

