

Cenote Calavera's Geohistory

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Cenotes are arguably the most popular natural wonders of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula and understandably so. Cenotes are sinkholes that result from collapsed limestone bedrock to reveal groundwater and underground caves that home various forms of life. One of the most popular cenotes is Cenote Calavera or "Skull Cave," named aptly after its skull-shaped opening.

Cenote Calavera is an anchialine system in that groundwater is land-based but has subterranean connections to the ocean making it a part of a coastal aquifer system where entering rainwater floats upon saline water. With this system, various flora and fauna can survive in the caves. Cenote Calavera also holds incredible cultural importance as ancient Mayans believed that cenotes were gateways to the afterlife and considered them sacred wells where religious ceremonies were held.

Cenote Calavera is especially recognizable because of the qualities that make its resources preservable. Sites that allow for groundwater recharge and stormwater management are particularly eligible for preservation (International Union for Conservation of Nature). Opportunity for tourism and recreation also contributes to a site's preservability as it brings revenue to that location (United Nations Environment Programme). Cenote Calavera's complex water system and support of life-forms as well as open diving tours make it particularly unique.

Of course a site's significance comes partly from other aspects of its value. The condition of its resources is an important factor as well as overall aesthetic and rarity. Cultural importance also plays an important role as mentioned above. Tourism rates help greatly, too, and Cenote Calavera is abundant in tourists looking to explore the caves.

Ultimately, Cenote Calavera shows characteristics of a culturally and economically valuable site for the Yucatan Peninsula in its contribution to the water cycle, plant and animal inhabitants, and history with the people of Mexico.

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