

# SPELEOMEDIT: ITALIA SPELEOLOGICA



## THE ITALIAN CAVE INDEX

### Hidden Treasures Beneath the Surface

In Italy, areas of speleological significance, characterized by naturally occurring underground cavities, account for one-sixth of the country's total land area.

Every region in Italy is affected by these geological formations, although there are substantial variations in the size and nature of the caves. For instance, in Emilia Romagna, approximately one percent of the region features karst formations, while in Puglia, due to the widespread presence of carbonate rocks, karst regions encompass half of the region's land area.

### A Rich History of Exploration and Documentation

Over the years, Italy has witnessed the discovery, exploration, and documentation of more than 45,000 caves, primarily in carbonate rocks such as limestone and dolomites. Additionally, there are numerous caves found in gypsum and basaltic lava tubes, as well as natural cavities in various other rock types.

The cataloging of subterranean discoveries began in 1928 with the establishment of the National Cave Register and the founding of the Istituto Italiano di Speleologia in Postojna (now located in Slovenia). During two National Speleological Congresses in Sardinia (1955) and Lombardy (1957), the responsibility for the Cave Register was transferred to the Italian Speleological Society (SSI). Their Commission for Cave Register took charge of managing the records of caves throughout Italy.

In the 1970s, the Cave Register was decentralized and formalized through specific laws in different Italian regions.

The Regional Speleological Federations, under the coordination of the Italian Speleological Society, have been working together to create a comprehensive framework for speleology in Italy. Their goal is to produce 20 posters, one for each Italian region, providing a comprehensive and immediate overview of the diversity and significance of Italy's underground world.

### Disseminating Karst Knowledge to the Public

The aim of creating these 20 posters is to educate the general public about karst formations and speleological findings, extending beyond the confines of the caving community. Each poster provides information about a specific region, including the total number of caves, details about active speleological organizations, unique local karst features, and insights into registration methods.

### A very encouraging balance

The diffusion of the speleological poster got good reception: the underground world drawn by speleologists attracted general interests. It highlights the positive role endorsed by Regional Federations and recognizes the fundamental work, carried out by speleologists.

The caves index data's is a unique and powerful tool for the development of environmental measures useful for the long term development and sustainable karst land use.

The preservation of precious fresh water stored in karst aquifers, as well as the conservation of the underground biodiversity must become priorities in limestone area's of Italy.

302,026 Km2 National Surface  
31,880 Km2 Protected Areas

more than 200 Caving Clubs  
16 over 1000 meters dept caves

6230 cavers  
45,393 caves

