

#NATURE

Cuevas de Mármol

The Marble Caves of Chile: Nature's Hidden Cathedral of Color



Tucked away in the remote Patagonian region of Chile, the Marble Caves, also known as Cuevas de Mármol, are one of the

world's most stunning natural wonders. Located in the heart of Lake General Carrera, these magnificent caves offer a surreal, dream-like experience that feels almost otherworldly.

A Masterpiece Sculpted by Nature

Formed over 6,000 years by the continuous movement of water, the Marble Caves are the result of wave erosion slowly carving through massive marble formations. Over millennia, the lake's gentle yet persistent waves have smoothed and shaped the stone

into delicate arches, swirling tunnels, and cathedral-like caverns. The erosion process also exposed the layers of calcium carbonate, creating incredible patterns and colors, swirls of blue, white, and gray that dance across the walls like brushstrokes on a canvas.

The Magic of Reflection

What makes the Marble Caves especially mesmerizing is their interaction with the lake's turquoise-blue water. The color of the water changes throughout the year depending on the season, the light, and the mineral content of glacial meltwater. On clear days, the

caves mirror the water's dazzling color, making the marble walls appear to glow from within. This ever-changing play of light and color has earned the caves nicknames like 'The Marble Cathedral' and 'The Chapel,' due to their almost sacred appearance.

Getting There: An Adventure Worth the Journey

The caves are located near the small Chilean town of Puerto Río Tranquilo, in the Aysén region of southern Chilean Patagonia. They are accessible only by boat or kayak, which adds to the sense of wonder and remoteness. Boat tours typically last 30-

60 minutes and allow visitors to get up close to the formations, gliding through the narrow marble passages and under natural stone arches. Early morning visits are especially popular among photographers, when the water is calm and the reflections are at their most vivid.

Why It's a Must-See

- **Geological wonder:** Witness the power of water shaping solid rock over thousands of years.
- **Photographer's dream:** Stunning colors and patterns create endless photo opportunities.
- **Off the beaten path:** A remote and peaceful experience far from typical tourist crowds.

Preserving the Beauty

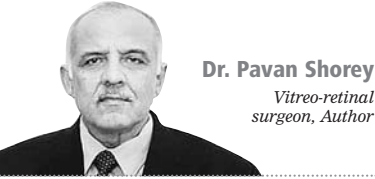
While the Marble Caves remain relatively untouched due to their location, conservationists stress the importance of sustainable tourism. Visitors are encouraged to travel responsibly to help preserve the fragile beauty of this natural wonder for future generations. The Marble Caves of Lake General

Carrera are a testament to nature's slow, patient artistry. With their glowing blue reflections, cathedral-like arches, and quiet majesty, they remain one of the most magical destinations on Earth, a hidden gem for adventurers, nature lovers, and anyone who appreciates the silent power of time and water.



Revisiting Covid

A lockdown was hastily implemented without much thought for the poor; how there was misgovernance in managing this epidemic: lack of hospital beds, lack of oxygen cylinders and under reporting of Covid deaths. That period was a blot on our system where the affluent were safely locked at home and there was no one to care for the migrant labour.



Dr. Pavan Shorey
Vitreo-retinal surgeon, Author

Recently, a film, *Homebound* (2025), was released and won laurels at different film festivals. It is the Indian entry to the Oscars in the foreign film category. The film tells the story of a marginalised youth, a Dalit and a Muslim from the lower economic strata, their quest to find a decent job but all they get is a labour job at a Surat factory. It occurs during Covid times, how the Surat factory is shut and how they undertake the long journey to their village on foot. A very

#THOUGHT



poignant film. This brought back grim memories of our Covid times: how a lockdown was hastily imple-

mented without much thought for the poor; how there was misgovernance in managing this epidemic:

lack of hospital beds, lack of oxygen cylinders and under reporting of Covid deaths. That period was a blot on our system where the affluent were safely locked at home and there was no one to care for the migrant labour.

It spurred me to write these poems during those times. 'In the lap of Ganga Maiyya' tells the story of a poor man who cannot afford a cremation for his dead wife. 'We live to serve' celebrates the selfless service of the Sikh community, how they endangered their lives and did community service in cremating the Covid infected bodies no one would touch. This poem tells the story of Jitendra Singh Shunty and his Shaheed Bhagat Singh Sewa Dal. They provided ambulance services for ferrying these bodies and cremated more than 4000 bodies in Delhi.

A salute to the selfless *Sewa* of the Sikh community!

A Migrant's Song

I drag myself up from a bed of stones
My legs stiff as Bamboo poles
I have many a hundred miles to walk
Will I make it to my home, my goal
Sab kuch hai Ram Bharse!

I am a 10th fail, only job i got was of a labourer
Half my wage I sent to my family
I slept in a Juggi, six persons to a room
There were times I had to sleep hungry
Sab kuch hai Ram Bharse!

I have no work, the factory is closed
Hunger will kill us before the virus can
I sold my phone for two thousand rupees
I save it for a bus ride, if I am lucky to find one
Sub kuch hai Ram Bharse!

On the way, some are runover by trucks
Some are crushed by trains
We were abandoned like orphans
It is not in our right to cry out in pain
Sab kuch hai Ram Bharse!

I bandage the foot blisters with rags
I curse myself, I curse my low birth
We do not matter, we do not matter
A helpless rage in me, we the scum of the earth
Sab kuch hai Ram Bharse!

The sun is up in the sky, I settle down to sleep
I drift into a dream, wind whistling past my ears
I am on a motorcycle with my wife and son
I am so happy, I never was in years
But dreams don't last, I wake up and true on
The never ending road ahead of me
Sab kuch hai Ram Bharse!
Sab kuch hai Ram Bharse!



In the lap of Ganga Maiyya



Devi, that is my wife's name
She has fever, keeps saying:
I am choking, I cannot breathe
I have no money, I give her jadi booti
She dies in a few hours, leaving us to grieve

I go to the Shamsan ghat
Two thousand, they say;
I explain my situation
I had no money for her treatment or now
I fall at their feet, stone hearted, they say:
no money, no cremation

Me and brother decide to perform Ganga Samadhi
To evade cops, we move after midnight
Sarkar has said, if caught, it will seize our homes
I laugh, seize my wretched hut,
bring more misery to my plight

O Keeper of this nation
You feed your peacocks with grain
Pause a moment, look at our sunken cheeks,
our skeletal frames
Don't you ever vince in pain

I drag the heavy handcart
Devi's body wrapped in a death shroud
My brother helps by pushing the cart
The grating sound of the wheels rings out loud

We reach the sandy Ganga bank
I carry the body past
the countless graves of bodies buried in sand
We head for a place where
the flow of Ganga is fast

We push the body into the rapid flowing Ganga
It ploughs through the shimmering waters in moonlight
Her happy face swimming in my tears
We turn away, there are so many floating bodies in sight
We fold our hands and pray
O Ganga Maiyya, take your daughter in your lap
Give her peace and happiness
Let her not be reborn poor again

We live to serve

Another day, another dawn
The line of nameless dead bodies
left hurriedly by relatives
We proclaim, Wahe Guru
And pick up the bodies one by one
And consign them to flames
Wahe Guru da khalsa
Wahe Guru di fatah

Our ambulance driver died of Covid
All ambulance drivers are hesitant
I tell them:

When a soldier dies
Does the army step back
We are Wahe Guruj's soldiers
We must carry on with our sewa
Wahe Guru da khalsa
Wahe Guru di fatah

A mother dead from Covid on the first floor
The son phones us frantically
There is no one to take the body down
When we arrive, he is busy stripping her off her gold ornaments
But he doesn't come forth to take the body down
Wahe Guru da khalsa
Wahe Guru di fatah

I am stricken with Covid
I spend my day in cremations
At night I sleep in my car
I remember Guru Gobind Singh Ji
Any dead body that comes to us
We treat it as one of our family
Wahe Guru da khalsa
Wahe Guru di fatah

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#SPORT

Shoes Don't Make A Difference

Runners do not need to worry about the amount of cushioning in their shoes

New research is good news for athletes and fitness enthusiasts who favor thick, heavily cushioned running shoes. Although these shoes are increasingly popular because they provide comfort and a high degree of shock absorbing protection, those benefits were thought to come at the expense of increased overall leg stiffness, which alters a runner's normal stride and could increase muscle fatigue.

Plenty of research suggests just such a result when

running on a compliant surface, like a synthetic rubber track, but no one had actually tested how the cushioned midsole of a running shoe affects overall leg stiffness. Until now. "Our results show that runners do not need to worry about the amount of cushioning," says Nicholas Holowka, an assistant professor of anthropology at the University at Buffalo and first author of the study in the *Journal of Biomechanics*. "That element of shoe design is not interrupting your normal running style in any significant or meaningful way."



RUNNERS' OPTIMAL LEG STIFFNESS

Leg stiffness can be compared to a spring's tension. If the leg alone were modeled as a single spring, that coil would have one level of stiffness. The leg, however, is made up of many muscles that control degrees of stiffness. When running on cushioned surfaces, leg stiffness increases, but that's not the case when running in heavily cushioned shoes.

There is an assumed optimal leg stiffness for runners, but if you increase your leg stiffness above that point, you'd be using more muscles to stiffen that leg spring, which means more energy and fatigue over long distance," says Holowka, an expert on the biomechanics of walking and running.

"We were interested in the idea that when people run on surfaces that are elastic, with a certain amount of compliance, they subconsciously change the stiffness of their leg to maintain an optimal stiffness. Was this the same when it came to the cushioning of their shoes?"

At a glance, the absence of research on midsole running shoe thickness and running style seems surprising, but Holowka says the problem is

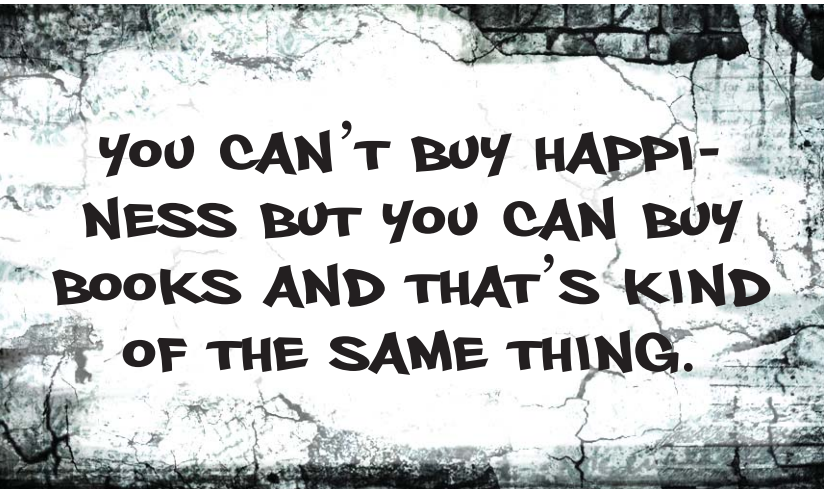


more complicated than it appears.

"It's very hard to account for all of the factors in such a way that allows you to isolate specifically on the stiffness of the footwear itself," he says. "If you try to compare difference shoes, then you have design differences, like heel height or arch support, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to look at the effects of the shoe's cushioning. Our study was geared at looking at this one variable." And to do that, Holowka's team custom created sandals for the study.



THE WALL

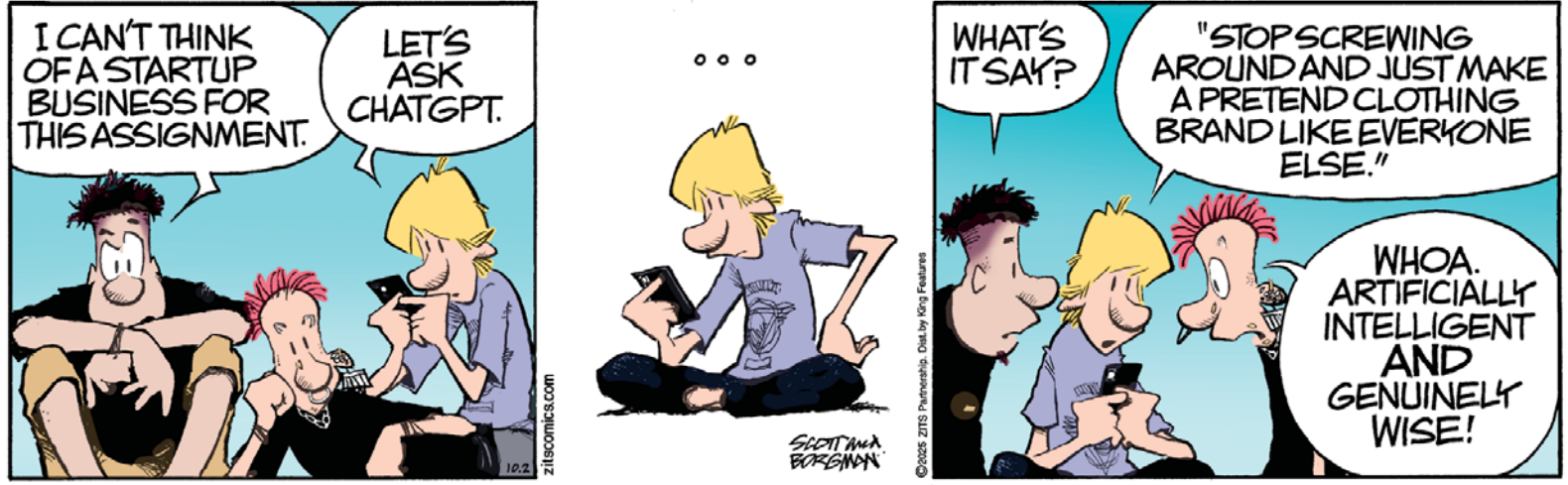


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman