

Sleepy hollows



» **Wonder world:** Bubbles flatten out on the ceiling of a tunnel, above, in Warbla cave, and a section called The Bathtub, below. The cave is north-east of Border Village, in the Nullarbor



FLOATING through a vast chasm, seemingly free of the constraints of gravity, Liz Rogers captures remarkable images inside the silent world of underground caves. Flanked by gently swaying pond weed, she loves nothing more than to explore these amazing geological formations – and travels the world to feed her passion.

One of her favourite places is The Cathedral, part of the Piccaninnie Ponds cave system in the South-East, where it is possible to look up from 30m down and see clouds in the blue sky above. Such is the amazing clarity of the water in this wondrous amphitheatre.

Twenty-five-year-old Liz (pictured), from Melbourne, is fascinated by underwater caves. "In crystal-clear cave waters, I feel like I'm flying," she says.

"I enjoy the whole experience of being weightless and free underwater. With the camera, I'm often thinking about the best way to convey how the dive feels through the lens to people who may never get the chance to do anything similar.

"It's about getting the right angle to give a perspective on the scene, and getting the right lighting happening to explain the shot. I love cave-diving, and I love underwater photography, and a dive where the photos come out looking like these is fantastic."

The Cathedral was created over thousands of years by fresh water slowly filtering through limestone, rising to the surface under pressure and eroding the stone to form the huge chamber. Above The Cathedral is The Chasm, a huge chamber popular with snorkelers, which was formed by the same processes.

More than 90m down, cave divers recently discovered a "Chamber of Secrets", a room that sits directly underneath The Cathedral and is yet to be fully explored. Liz says that wherever she dives, powerful torches are used to get the best shots where there is no natural light.

"Photos bring the serenity and beauty of underwater caves to the people," she says.

However, with cave-diving comes risk. In February, close friend Agnes Milowka, 29, ran out of air and died in the Tank cave system near Piccaninnie Ponds.

"Cave-diving is all about redundancy and planning, and thinking things through before you get in the water," Liz says. "On a standard cave dive there's a lot of things to think about – air consumption, navigation through the cave, decompression obligations, buoyancy and trim."

Aside from taking pictures, Liz works with other divers to place salinity monitors at various depths in caves they explore.

Not only are these to measure salt levels but they also indicate the amount and direction of water flow between areas of caves.

"I never get tired of doing this; it's another world," Liz says.

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» **Deep and meaningful:** Inside the massive Cathedral cavern, part of the Piccaninnie Ponds, 30km south-east of Mt Gambier, above and bottom left and, below right, the nearby Tank cave. Visibility is so high in both cave systems that it is ideal for divers – and photographers. **Pictures:** Liz Rogers/Barcroft Pacific Media

