

# The woman who spent 500 days in a cave

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*Grimy determination: Beatriz went without a bath for nearly one and a half years.*

**Should we spend more time alone? Beatriz Flamini says she had an “excellent” time — but it was not always easy.**

## What’s happening?

Beatriz Flamini, a brave adventurer, started a huge experiment on 21 November 2021. Wearing a safety helmet and carrying a bag, she went down 230ft into a cave and said goodbye to the world for 16 months.

## Find out more

Beatriz used to teach sports. But when she was 40 and going through a tough time, she decided to live in the mountains. She lived in a freezing camper van for months without seeing anyone. During the **pandemic**, she stayed in an old **hermitage** in the mountains and loved its peacefulness.

But she wanted to spend even more time alone. So she trained to walk across the **Gobi Desert** and planned to spend 500 days in a cave in the mountains of **Granada**.

A team kept an eye on her, and she read, drew, listened to music and exercised. It was not always easy — sometimes she heard things that were not real. When she came out, she was lighter but in good shape, missing roast chicken and chips.

People wanting to be alone is not new. **Simeon Stylites** lived alone on a pillar for 37 years. And even though **Nelson Mandela** did not choose to spend time alone in prison, he found that he learned more about himself.

**Should we spend more time alone?**

**Some say**

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Yes! We live in a very busy world. There is nothing better than going back to your own room with your favourite things and no one to bother you.

No! When you are by yourself, it is easy to start thinking too much and become sad. We need other people around us at least some of the time — and we need their love too.

## Others think

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### Some people say

*"I never found a companion that was so companionable as solitude."*

**Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862),**  
American philosopher and writer

*What do you think?*

### Six steps to discovery

#### 1. Connect

**How do you feel about this story?** - Do you spend much time on your own?

#### 2. Wonder

**What questions do you have?** - For example: How many books did Beatriz read? Did she miss her friends?

#### 3. Investigate

**What are the facts?** - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

#### 4. Construct

**What is your point of view?** - You are given the opportunity to miss school for 501 days — and beat Beatriz's record by living alone in a cave. Would you say yes?

#### 5. Express

**What do others believe?** - What would you miss most if you lived alone in a cave? Take it in turns to say.

#### 6. Reflect

**What might happen next?** - Imagine you find yourself trapped in a cave for the rest of term. Write a letter to a friend describing the experience.

### Glossary

**Pandemic** - An outbreak of disease which occurs across a wide geographic area, as opposed to an epidemic, which is confined to a particular region.

**Hermitage** - A place where an isolated person lives on their own, away from society, often for religious reasons.

**Gobi Desert** - The largest desert in Asia, covering over 500,000 square miles.

**Granada** - A province of southern Spain, and also the name of a city within it.

**Simeon Stylites** - A Syrian Christian who spent 37 years living on a small platform near Aleppo.

**Nelson Mandela** - A South African anti-apartheid activist who spent 27 years in jail before becoming president.