



There is an interesting place in the Bavarian region of Germany known as the Solnhofen Limestone. It's a place which features wonderful fossils, including fossilized remains of sea creatures.

How could there be sea creatures in Bavaria, a place known for gorgeous scenery and beautiful mountains (but no oceans)? We learn more from the Museum of Paleontology at the University of California:

Towards the end of the Jurassic, about 155 million years ago, a warm shallow sea studded with islands covered much of what is now Germany. Sponges and corals grew on rises in this sea, forming reefs that divided up parts of this sea into isolated lagoons. These lagoons were cut off from the ocean and also from terrestrial runoff.

Within these warm, isolated lagoons, the salinity rose, and the water may have been anoxic (depleted of oxygen) or even toxic at various intervals. Aside from cyanobacteria and small protists such as foraminifera, nothing could survive in the bottom waters of the lagoons for very long. However, any organism that fell into the lagoons from the land, or that drifted or was washed into the lagoons from the ocean, was buried in soft carbonate muds.

Thus, many delicate creatures were not consumed by scavengers or torn apart by currents.

One of those "delicate creates," which wasn't torn-up by currents or eaten by scavengers, was a jellyfish (Rhizostomites). We can see its fossilized remains in this image.

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Image, described above, from the UCMP (University of California Museum of Paleontology). Online, courtesy UCMP Berkeley.

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Solnhofen Fossils - Jurassic-Period Jellyfish

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