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EARTH: Setting off a Supervolcano

Alexandria, VA – Supervolcanoes are one of nature's most destructive forces. In a matter of hours, an eruption from a supervolcano can force thousands of cubic meters of molten rock above ground, and scar landscapes with massive calderas and craters. These catastrophic eruptions have a global impact, and yet scientists still do not fully understand them. Today, a team of scientists studying Bolivia's Uturuncu volcano are trying to shed some light on how supervolcanoes can become so powerful.

Uturuncu, nestled within one of the largest collections of supervolcano calderas on Earth, isn't simply getting larger: it is the fastest growing volcano on the planet. Since monitoring began in the 1980s, the magma chamber has been steadily increasing at a rate of one centimeter per year. Could Uturuncu be the next supervolcano? And will any of us be alive to see this magnificent volcano come to a catastrophic end? Find out at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/earth/article/5ef-7dc-1-11>.

Read this story and more in the January issue of EARTH Magazine, available online now at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/digital/>. Learn about the astronomy under the ice; travel to Utah to take in some of the most dramatic geologic scenery in the world; and, read about how inland waters are releasing much more carbon into the atmosphere than previously thought.

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