Glacial, Shoreline, and Karst Processes-*Boneyards*-Writing exercise by Russ Colson

Here is an excerpt from "Boneyards" by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. The protagonists are looking for an ancient lost spaceport under the mountains.

> "Now I understand why the people of Treffet consider this city legendary," DeVries says. He stands beside me, shoulders straight, hands clasped behind his back.
> "Why?" I ask.
> "It's lovely. It's the kind of city that would live in memory. Some cities just aren't worth remembering. This one would be." He speaks softly, as if he doesn't want the three members of the *Ivoire* crew to hear him.
> But they can, of course. They aren't responding.
> "I also see why it's lost," Seager says. She extends a hand toward the high mountain walls, which seem steeper and even more rugged somehow. "I don't see a way in, do you?"
> "It doesn't look like there ever was a city here," Coop says. It takes me a minute to realize he's not looking at the suggested images of the lost city. He's looking at the way the ground has overtaken the ruins. "This is just another valley, as far as they're concerned."
> "And if you looked at the topological map, "DeVries says, "You'll realize that there are dozens of these closed-off valleys throughout this mountain range."

Sounds fun! I love lost spaceport stories!

Now, I assume that what was really meant in this text was a topographic map, not a topological map. Given that assumption, we have a very unusual landscape on our hands.

Your challenge, should you choose to accept it (and I'm confident you will), is this: Is this landscape reasonable given what we've learned about how valleys form, and if so how might it form? If it's not reasonable, why not? What are the implications for the protagonists' search for a lost spaceport?

Write down some of your thoughts. Feel free to read other comments or post your own on our public blog Landscapes and Science Fiction.
http://earthscienceissues.net/earthwriteblog/2015/08/01/landscape-and-science-fiction/

Last updated Nov 22, 2016. Text is the property of Russ Colson except as noted.