

Report on trips to la torca de la Corcada (n ° 780 Matienzo Caving Expeditions)

Translation by Google Translate with minimal alterations 11th September 2021.

- **Friday August 18, 2017**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, Ph. Papard, G. Simonnot, P. Smith + 1

With our English friends from Matienzo, we return to the torca de la Corcada located right next to Robert and Alison's house, whom Guy and Peter know well. In the abyss, we form two teams to review the two branches of the cavity and track down the suction current which is sometimes very strong at the entrance.

Peter, Phil and their Basque friend choose the fossil, but there is not much air and the background seems unclear. Meanwhile, Guy and Patrick go into the asset which itself is well ventilated. The background is an impenetrable meander but which seems to grow rapidly because we clearly hear the sound of a waterfall. They tackle the work without delay and in a few hours, they reach 6 m further at the top of a small well (6 or 7 m) which seems much larger at the bottom. Unfortunately the three batteries taken are empty and there is still a small meter to widen. Note that the team that explored the fossil heard very clearly the noise of the work in the asset.

Case to follow.

- **Wednesday July 25, 2018**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, G. Simonnot

Corcada: After having re-equipped the pitches, we continue to clear the active meander. It goes quite quickly and we have enough battery to make the passage more comfortable. Behind we descend a first pitch of 5 to 6 m. Just after, a second small vertical is blocked by a narrowing

that should be enlarged. Fortunately, upright, a short easy climb allows you to overcome the obstacle by a much wider pitch of 4/5 m. At the bottom of this pitch, the meander that follows doubles and we prefer to tackle the upper duct which seems almost penetrable a little further. We are therefore resuming work and progressing by nearly 2 m. At the terminus, the two conduits seem to become one which, suddenly, could be penetrable.

- **Wednesday, November 28, 2018**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, G. Simonnot

New clearance session at the end of the active gallery of la torca de la Corcada. Today, the draft is very quiet at the start of the day but will start to suck slightly at the end of the morning. The meander is not wide but we manage to gain close to 2m. Our last shot allows us to guess the continuation behind a right angle turn. It's annoying, because the rest is penetrable and we have no more battery or straws. To be continued.

- **Monday, April 29, 2019**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, G. Simonnot, P. Smith

This time, Peter is in the game. We immediately tackle the work, but the draft has not yet started and the first straws plunge us into a thick cloud which is struggling to dissipate. At the end of an hour, it begins to suck clearly and the work resumes more calmly. After a bend, a small punctual widening allows you to progress a few meters. Overall, the meander widens a bit and the slope becomes more pronounced. At the end of the day, we gained 3 good meters and we can guess another widening a few meters further.

TPST: 6 h

- **Friday July 12, 2019**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, G. Simonnot, P. Smith

Peter being available, we return to Corcada to continue the clearance of the meander. The small visible enlargement is quickly reached, but behind, after a bend, it pinches again. However, we seem to perceive a certain resonance in the distance. It's motivating. The straws are linked and we manage to descend a small step of 1.5 m. New bend and new narrowing but this time there is no longer any doubt, we are not very far from a pitch that we do not yet see. A few pebbles thrown at guesswork fall into a void estimated at 15 or 20 m. When we exhaust our last battery, the mouth of the pitch is only a good meter away. Next time will be good. On the way back we do the topography of the whole part where we resumed work, ie a good sixty meters.

- **Tuesday, September 3, 2019**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, G. Simonnot, P. Smith

It will have been difficult to find a date that suits everyone, but here we are finally back in this abyss where we had stopped just a few meters from a pitch that seemed quite large. The clearance is quite effective and at the end of the morning, the passage is open. Sandrine equips the first 17 m drop. The meander that follows is penetrable but 15 m further, a new vertical estimated at 30 m appears. We are in a beautiful east-west divide but at its end we can guess a significant widening. Patrick throws himself into it and our last two ropes barely allow us to gain a foothold in a beautiful

30m x 20m room. At the bottom of the rope, there is another pitch to go down but it will be for next time.

We search the room in every nook and cranny without finding a continuation or a draft. Obviously this will happen lower down, under the scree that occupies the back of the room. Unless the air escapes through the enormous well that opens above our heads and which we estimate at least fifty meters away thanks to the laser meter. We take some pictures and complete the survey.

- **Wednesday July 29, 2020**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, L. Guillot, J.N. Outhier

During our last exploration in La Corcada, we discovered a large crumbling room, corresponding to the bases of shafts. The whole was chaotic and any continuation seemed to be in jeopardy. However, there was still a small pitch to be investigated, located just below P.28, between the wall and the scree. *A priori* nothing very exciting. So it is with the prospect of detackling that we descend again into the abyss. Arriving at the terminus, we finally manage to descend the shaft by some easy descaling and via a roundabout route. At first glance, it seems quite broken but by slipping between large blocks covered with clay, Ludo manages to find a passage which will lead us after a short narrowing, into a beautiful gallery. This is lined with dry clay and ancient traces of loading (?) are still visible.

Initially, the duct is 10 m wide and 4 to 5 m high. Further on, it tapers off a bit while retaining good proportions. After a few hundred meters, the walls suddenly tighten and progress is made on all fours on a thick carpet of sand which almost completely fills the gallery. But there is always air and when the passage becomes impenetrable it is only natural that we begin to clear the obstruction. The fine sand is very dry and the earthworks are progressing rapidly. Unfortunately, large slabs partially embedded in this infill prevent going further. We have gained 3 to 4 m but we will have to come back with more impactful means. Before leaving, we search a few pockets without much interest.

TPST: 5 hrs; total surveyed: 100 m

- **Monday, August 24, 2020**

Participants: Patrick and Sandrine Degouve, Guy Simonnot

We return to La Corcada but this time with an air hammer. The hole is quite dry but the draft is weak. In an hour we are at the bottom. We start with an annoying shot in the block. This is quite effective but when we are about to make the holes for a second charge, our air hammer decides not to strike any more. Suffice to say that it is totally unusable. In desperation we try to dig the ground in order to pass under the block. It is very laborious because slabs, embedded in the filling of sand and clay, are very difficult to extract. Fortunately, this is not the case further on where we find fine sand that is easy to evacuate.

We progress a few meters in this way until we come out into a beautiful rotunda where we can stand. But 5 m further on, the scenario is identical with a new low passage occupied by a huge collapsed boulder. But again, on the side, the mostly sandy infill frees up a barely penetrable space. The site is quite trying but after a couple of hours we manage to overcome the obstacle.

Behind, the morphology changes radically and after a passage between imposing blocks we find ourselves in a room with a sloping floor. At its highest point, a narrow tube continues to rise, but it still requires a little clearing. It will be for next time. The air current, which we had been following since the start of our work in the gallery, comes from this duct. We come out by making the survey of this modest discovery.

TPST: 7h total explored and surveyed: 50 m

- **Friday, June 4, 2021**

Participants: P. and S. Degouve, L. Garnier, B. Pernot

The drizzle alternates with showers at times heavy. There is hardly any air at the entrance, however, the stream flows well. It doesn't take long to get to the bottom.

Laurent is the first to thread through the terminal tube. The steep slope facilitates the evacuation of rubble which can be easily removed with the crowbar. In less than half an hour it passes. Above the rising tube, the low duct extends a few meters before straightening out into a larger gallery. An opening on the right communicates with a beautiful room in the middle of which winds the bed of a dry stream. At its end we progress a few meters in a narrow passage where we try to clear the obstruction.

Unfortunately there is no air. At the bottom, a large boulder blocks the passage and it is possible that it continues a little behind. During this time, Laurent, remained at the bottom of the room, widened a passage between the blocks. But after going down a few meters it becomes impenetrable. So it is very compromised on this side.

Before the ascending tube, we dig through parallel conduits on the right bank, but here too, everything ends on airless narrowings or clay fillings.

We then decide to detackle everything, putting an end to our explorations in this abyss.

Total explored: 100 m; total surveyed: 90 m