

The logo for the Matienzo Caves Project features the word "Matienzo" in a large, white, stylized font with a black outline, set against a black silhouette of a cave entrance. Below it, the words "Caves Project" are written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

# Matienzo Caves Project

"As for the caving, well that is spectacular. The first time I went, I was amazed by the size of the passages and the amount of huge formations, which are just everywhere."

"I learnt to survey, place bolts, place caps etc. there - all pretty useful things to take home. I really wish we had gone to Matienzo when I was a student, then I'd have known all these things sooner!"

"I know of people who have been to Mulu and been disappointed because they would have found more in Matienzo."

"The campsite is next to a pub that never closes. It serves food all day and a beer or glass of wine costs €1.50."

"The expedition stores have all the ropes and rigging equipment that is needed, so you just need to take personal caving gear."

"Of course, the main reason for caving in Matienzo is to explore new stuff. This summer, I spent a fortnight in Matienzo, and as a family man, went caving only every other day - so in effect I had a week of caving. I explored more than 500 metres of new cave passage in total. And I mean, big stomping exciting passages with pitches and formations. I don't know of many expeditions in the world where you can expect to find so much."

## An Invitation to Student Caving Clubs and Individuals

Come caving with one  
of the longest-running  
caving expeditions:  
we celebrated 60  
years in 2020!

Photo: Paul Dold



### AIM?

The **Matienzo Caves Project** aims to explore and publicly document the caves, shafts and other sites of speleological interest in and around the Matienzo depression.

### WHERE?

Cantabria, Northern Spain.

[Matienzo de Ruesga](#) is a small village inside the largest enclosed karst depression in Spain. We explore around here and the surrounding areas. The headquarters is in the Bar-Restaurante *Casa Germán* where the expedition office is set up in the restaurant.

### HOW to GET THERE?

Direct [UK ferry to Santander or Bilbao](#); flights to Bilbao or Santander; drive through France.

### WHEN?

Summer and Easter are the main expedition times.

### WHO?

Cavers of all abilities and ages are welcome. Previous student groups have included SUSS and MUSC. The latter club is exploring new passages in the 23km-long Cubija System.

### ACCOMMODATION?

There is self-catering accommodation nearby or a campsite behind *Casa Germán* which also has toilets and showers, and the tackle store with fridge and charging facilities.

### FOOD?

Self-catering and / or restaurant meals / sandwiches in *Casa Germán* or at various other locations. The nearest town, Ramales, has a number of supermarkets and other shops.

### SOME CAVING DETAIL?

Typically, the previous evening will have been spent in preparation: researching, gathering and checking gear, and socialising.

The trip may involve some or all of digging draughting holes, SRT, exploring new passages, surveying and photography. Group tackle (ropes, bolts, etc) are provided but personal equipment is the responsibility of each individual. Cavers can expect to enjoy all the delights of UK caving plus world-class

formations, pitches, chambers, boulders, avens, etc, etc.

The MCP has a small network of laptops set up in the office allowing survey data and photograph input and storage. The office facility is also used to research caves and previous trips, write up logbook reports and process and draw up survey data.

However, there is no pressure on inexperienced individuals to "leap in at the deep end". Throughout each expedition there are a variety of speleological activities

to enjoy: hill walking to discover and document unknown entrances or digs, and exploring new caves and shafts.

Everyone has something to contribute, whatever age or experience. Coaching in surveying, scientific recording, conservation and water tracing, as well as general caving techniques needed in newly found caves will be available. Student groups may wish to cave together although individual learning may be enhanced by caving with the more experienced.

### REST TIME?

For "days off", the beaches are forty minutes away and Cantabria has many other attractions (including nearby *via ferratas* and show caves!)

### MORE INFORMATION?

*The MCP has a web site with details of more than 5100 sites of speleological interest – from digs to the Four Valleys System at 67.4km long. Some direct links to pages are shown here, although everything can be accessed from the front page.*

### Web site front page

[http://  
www.matienzocaves.org.uk](http://www.matienzocaves.org.uk)



### Newcomer info

[http://  
www.matienzocaves.org.uk/  
green.htm](http://www.matienzocaves.org.uk/green.htm)



### Facebook Group

[https://www.facebook.com/  
groups/7517519559/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/7517519559/)



### Project overview

[http://  
www.matienzocaves.org.uk/  
MatienzoCavesProject.htm](http://www.matienzocaves.org.uk/MatienzoCavesProject.htm)



**CONTACT?** Phil Papard runs the major expeditions and will provide dates and answer queries: [phil@papard.uk](mailto:phil@papard.uk)

Photo: Torben Redder