

The Matienzo Caves Project and Covid-19

BACKGROUND

Caving activities under the MCP permit (if issued) depend on the following factors being favourable

- open borders
- no travel restrictions
- no 14 day isolation / quarantine
- happy Spanish neighbours
- exploration permit
- travel / caver insurance with rescue in place
- social distancing
- Peter and/or Steve being amenable to provide small quantities of tackle as outlined below.
- Cavers may be using usual accommodation / camping arrangements?

THE FUTURE - A NEW NORMAL?

The following guidelines should be adhered to as contacts will have various degrees of vulnerability to the Covid-19 virus. Those who have already had the virus can also be carriers of the infection and should also respect the following guidelines. Some virus carriers may be asymptomatic. Visitors should provide their own hand sanitizer and face coverings - and use them.

Special care should be taken in the two weeks after travelling, i.e. masks worn in any social situation and much hand washing.

OFFICE

There will be no MCP Office in Pablo's restaurant. There are too many potentially contaminated surfaces and difficult / impossible to keep people any distance apart. (Pablo will also have Cantabrian restaurant regulations to adhere to, e.g. number of people in the room.)

CAMPING

Please tell Steve / Sue if you are camping so that Pablo can be informed. Tents should be socially distanced and money paid directly to Pablo.

TACKLE

If the campsite (showers / toilets) is in use, the tackle store will not be used except for battery charging, etc.

Limited tackle can be booked through Steve and picked up and returned (thoroughly washed and cleaned). Gear can stay with a group until they leave Matienzo to return home. Steve and Pete will work out a safe system of pick up and return.

CAVING

Speleological activities under the MCP permit should be carried out in the following manner:

- Prior research can be carried out online at matienzocaves.org.uk or by phoning Phil / Juan or others. Any personal contact should adhere to social distancing.
- Activities should be well within the team's capabilities as rescue may be hampered by Covid-19 regulations / precautions.
- Tackle and equipment can be booked, picked up and returned as described above.
- Call-out must, preferably, be left with someone in Matienzo, otherwise with Phil or Juan.

- When digging / exploring, the following issues should be considered: draught direction (where a 2m distance will not be enough as the draught will not disperse in a small passage, unlike wind outdoors); wearing masks; companion proximity; gloves to be worn; no hand / face contact; gear washing. Constricted passages can be treated as "indoors" (or worse if a draught!), larger chambers more like "outdoors" - but there is no wind to disperse droplets - keep 2m+ if possible.

DOCUMENTATION

A "logbook" for all speleological activities - either hand-written or on computer - must be kept. The usual details should be recorded, as appropriate:

- date, site code and name, people involved. Description of the activity. Photos / video / survey taken.
- New sites should be coded when first discovered, e.g. 27A, 27B - where 27 is the day of the month, and that code kept through the visit. Juan / Phil will allocate an 'official number' in due course. Photos can then be re-coded as 27A-js-2020a-01 - site 27A, first photo by John Southworth in a 2020 autumn visit.
- Logbook info, photos / videos etc should be emailed to Phil and Juan for future publication. Large files can be transferred using *WeTransfer* or be handed-over / posted on a memory stick.

DONATIONS TO THE MCP

As some tackle may be used, and there are ongoing IT costs, it is expected that all participants will donate to the MCP, online in the usual manner. (No cash please!)

Other contributing issues:

- Risk and responsibility. Face coverings and sanitizer - individuals must provide these; they are currently mandatory in Spain.
- Group size should be kept small; try to keep with the same group. If one person feels unwell and suspects coronavirus infection, the whole group will need to isolate.
- Older, high risk, population in Matienzo are looked after by people who are out and about.
- Once people arrive they should stay in the valley and on the hills as much as possible. Minimal shopping trips; refrain from eating out, etc.
- At all times, visitors should respect local sensibilities; be aware of sources of possible infection and use hand sanitizer and face coverings where appropriate.

Juan Corrin, Phil Papard, Steve Martin, Peter Smith 24/6/2020