Matienzo Summer 2025 Caving Expedition - Condensed Summary

Introduction

Fifty cavers explored Matienzo over five weeks, including many younger cavers from Sheffield and Bristol university clubs. Weather was generally dry but extremely hot in early August, with some drizzle and thunderstorms later. On August 9th, a successful fiesta celebrated 65 years of cave exploration in the valley, featuring football, competitions, barbecue, and entertainment supported by 40 litres of sangria from Catalan friends.

Major Projects

Diving Operations

The diving team planned to explore Renada II sumps and climb avens in Fuente Aguanaz. However, Mark Smith's rebreather was detained by security in Milan - while the oxygen cylinder was eventually released, the critical "head unit" was permanently confiscated, forcing abandonment of the Renada II project after extensive preparation.

Fuente Aguanaz Climbing Project

Jim Lister's climbing work involved moving cylinders and installing scaffolding through sumps for safety. One shorter aven was climbed to closure; another was partially climbed with extensive surveying remaining for 2026. Intensive solo work included ferrying equipment through multiple sumps to climb GH Aven to 35m height, with the top still not visible. A smaller nearby aven was climbed to 11m before ending in boulder choke.

Exploration Results

Overall Statistics

- **Cueva de Rascavieja (0077)**: Major breakthrough added 0.7km, extending total length from 614m to 1714m
- **Four Valleys System**: Grew to nearly 79km with finds in Cueva de Riaño and Carcavuezo
- **Nine new caves/digs** found and recorded
- **64 sites visited**, **130 trips made**
- **Nearly 1.4km of new passage surveyed**

New Cave Survey Summary

Cave	Name	Area	New Length (m)	Extra Length (m)
0077	Cueva de Rascavieja	El Naso	2150	663
0713	Fuente Aguanaz	San Antonio	5587	288
0025	Sima-Cueva del Risco	El Sedo	12773	148
0081	Cueva de Carcavuezo	La Secada*	78718	135
0105	Cueva de Riaño	Riaño*	-	39

Cave	Name	Area	New Length (m)	Extra Length (m)
Total for new caves and passages not previously surveyed				**1396**

*part of the Four Valleys System

Key Discoveries by Sector

Southern Sector (Arredondo/South Vega)

Work continued in Cueva Vallina with high-level exploration and potential connections. Multiple dig sites checked with varying prospects. Five trips to Cueva-Cubio de la Reñada for planned diving operations (gear carrying due to equipment issues).

Cubija and El Naso

Extensive work across twelve sites, including significant exploration in Cueva de Rascavieja where complex chamber systems were discovered 40-50m below the pitch head, including "Carousel Chamber" and "Maximum Breakdown Chamber" with numerous leads requiring future investigation.

Northeast Sector (Four Valleys System)

Major work in Cueva de Riaño included climbing a 21.5m aven and discovering new passage systems. Several ongoing digs show good potential but require substantial work. Work continued on Cueva de Carcavuezo checking routes to Western Series.

Northwest Sector

Focused on Fuente Aguanaz climbing project. Cave 5353 worked on over six visits to open tight sections for access to potential 50m deep rift.

Northern Sector

Limited work in El Rincón and Ribamontán al Monte areas, including exploration of Fuente de Villanueva.

Scientific Work

Hollie London conducted extensive biological surveys for "cave beasties" across multiple sites including Cueva Vallina, Sima-Cueva del Risco, Cueva Oñite, Cueva Reñada, and resurgences. Planning to seek collecting permits for 2026 to enable detailed specimen identification.

Conclusion

The expedition achieved substantial exploration progress despite equipment setbacks, with nearly 1.4km of new survey added across the valley. Major projects in Rascavieja and Aguanaz have opened significant new areas for future exploration, while the Four Valleys System continues to grow toward 79km total length. Multiple ongoing digs and leads provide excellent prospects for future expeditions.