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Matienzo Caves Project — Easter 2026 Expedition Summary

Overview

Over 30 cavers attended, with partners and children bringing the total to 40+ visitors; many camped behind Casa Germán. Initial wet weather and high water levels restricted some work, particularly at Fuente Aguanaz. The expedition permit arrived late due to ongoing negotiations between Cultura and the Federation over the 112 call-out system, which remains in place.

Approximately 1,600 m of new cave passage was discovered and 38 new sites were recorded. Biologist Hollie London conducted authorised invertebrate sampling across multiple caves; a separate biological report will follow.

Key Discoveries

Cueva Rascavieja (0077) — El Naso — 800+ m new passage

The most productive site of the expedition. The Green String Choke was enlarged to allow access, and four trips explored and surveyed a complex, draughting area below the Endless Bedding Plane (EBP). New finds include Dead Pony Chamber, beautifully decorated calcite grottos, and the Scampi Lardos passage — a steeply descending route with a strongly draughting sandy-floored bedding plane opening into a larger passage. A draughting 8 m shaft (needing a ladder) was identified as a key lead. The main trunk passage choke at the NE end remains unpushed; the principal way on has not yet been found, with the main draught still believed to come from Pandemonium Chamber.

Cueva de Caravuezo — La Secada — 223 m new passage

Mark Smith dived the 50 m sump at the end of the Western Series, breaking through to a chamber and ongoing passages, one quite large. A follow-up trip surveyed 223 m; the main route heads west but north of Cueva de Bollón (0098), potentially bypassing it to reach an area with draughting digs. A short south passage before the sump ends at a T-junction whose western branch may be the expected link to Bollón — yet to be explored.

Fuente Aguanaz (0713) — San Antonio — 134 m new passage

High water delayed diving until early April. A small alcove near the sump 1 kit-up area was dug open, revealing a large chamber with multiple ways on and a cool draught. A fossil passage extends south, enlarging past small avens to a draughting sediment choke. A clean-washed rift with a strong upward draught was identified as the most promising lead for bolt-climbing to upper levels. A line survey of ‘Sarah Jean’ passage was also partially completed.

Cueva Vallina (0733) — Southern Sector — ~200 m new passage

Nine trips explored the area NE of Resistance Gallery. Finds include James’s Drive (a 20 m pitch), Dog Horizontal (a very tight but ongoing crawl), and a 20 m wet pitch with a phreatic passage heading east. New survey totalled just under 200 m, with significant leads still open including floor slots, an undescended aven, and a north-bound passage through a window.

Cueva de la Espada (0103) — Riaño — 97 m new passage

Four trips targeted the upper series connected to the top entrance found in summer 2025. A well-decorated chamber with a solid calcite choke and a tight squeeze back to known cave were among the finds. A draughting aven at the top of a slippery slope requires further work; the team ran out of rope before completing the push. Invertebrate sampling was also conducted. Dig 1801 between Cueva de la Espada and Fridge Door Cave (1800) confirmed an excellent draught.

Other Survey Work

- Cueva de la Puerta (0024), El Sedo: 85 m surveyed. Traverse bolted across pitch head into new meandering passage with further leads.
- Cueva del Selvijo (0028), Ozana: 42 m surveyed. New high-level passage found beyond a tufa crawl with ongoing leads heading NE.
- Invisible Cave (3283), San Antonio: Boulder moved to access continuation of known streamway passage.
- La Secada: 16 new sites (5530–5546) located on walk from above the ‘White House’ to the bar; site 5533 — a 4 m draughting hole in the same limestone bed as Cueva de los Tres Niños — is a priority for summer digging.

Notable Incident — Dog Rescue, Garzón

Local hunters asked for help rescuing a dog from an unknown 16 m shaft (now 5525 — Dog Hole) 1 km uphill from a farm in Garzón. Peter Eagan descended on two ladders, found the dog alive and tail-wagging at the bottom, and successfully hauled it out in a harness. Injuries were minor (cut above the eye, cut lip). The dog — previously unnamed — has been christened Peter. The new shaft confirms further unexplored caves exist in this jungle area; engaging local hunters is recommended for future prospecting.

Invertebrate Sampling (Hollie London)

Authorised sampling trips were made to Cueva-Cubio de la Reñada (0048), Cueva Vu0101(0733), Cueva de la Espada (0103), Cueva Oñite (0027), Caravuezo Western Series, El Camino Resurgence (2801) and Fuente Ramera (2800), among others. Species of note include Pseudoniphargus spp and Stenasellus sp. Samples have been taken to the UK for detailed analysis; a full biological report will follow.

Summer Priorities

- Find the main way on from Pandemonium Chamber in Rascavieja (0077).
- Extend diving finds beyond the Caravuezo sump; check the possible Bollón link.
- Bolt-climb the promising aven in Fuente Aguanaz (0713).
- Continue upper-series work in Cueva de la Espada (0103); push Dig 1801.
- Dig site 5533 in La Secada and follow up draughting digs north of the Matienzo road.
- Engage local hunters in Garzón area to locate further shaft entrances.