

CUEVA DEL COMELLANTES, South Vega, Matienzo, Cantabria

VN50794 95751

Diver: D Ryall

10:04:09

The diver had been warned that bad visibility in this resurgence had hampered previous exploration attempts which currently end at 187 m from base. Entering the water at the water pump pool (pump running) the vis was found to be a reasonable 3-4 m using a hand mounted LED light. Switching to helmet mounted lights reduced the apparent vis considerably due to backscatter from suspended particles.

The diver proceeded to the top of the slope up from the current deep point, -28.5 at around 170 m from base where the line is belayed to a lead weight at around 12 m depth. Diving on a pair of 7 litre tanks the diver turned here mindful of potential poor vis from disturbance of the silt floor and wall deposits. In reality the vis was almost as good as on the way in. The line was tidied in places on the way out. Heavy rain was now falling outside after a period of settled dry weather, and the diver planned a push dive the following day hoping the rain would not destroy the good visibility.

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The heavy rain had fallen all night and most of the morning, reducing visibility considerably to less than 1 m. The strong current flowing out of the cave took one of the diver's fins with gloves inside for an unscheduled swim downstream. After a long search the missing items were located under a boulder. The diver struggled inwards against a strong flow until reaching the ascent from the deep point where the flow was lost. Ascending beyond the lead block a large line reel was found at the top of a small silty pot; this was the end of the line. Given the strong flow in the cave, the fact that the line reel had stayed in place un-belayed, and the small, silty nature of the passage convinced the diver this was not the way on. Descending the pot a silt avalanche reduced visibility to zero and a careful reversal was required. Back in the 'main' passage a fruitless search in poor visibility was made before an effortless, rapid exit was made. The diver noted a number of large black spaces in the right wall (travelling outwards) which seemed silt free and may be the way on?

Back on the surface heavy rain had returned, meaning this was to be the last dive at this site on this trip.

Many thanks to Jim Lister and Clive Westlake for filling tanks in the rain.