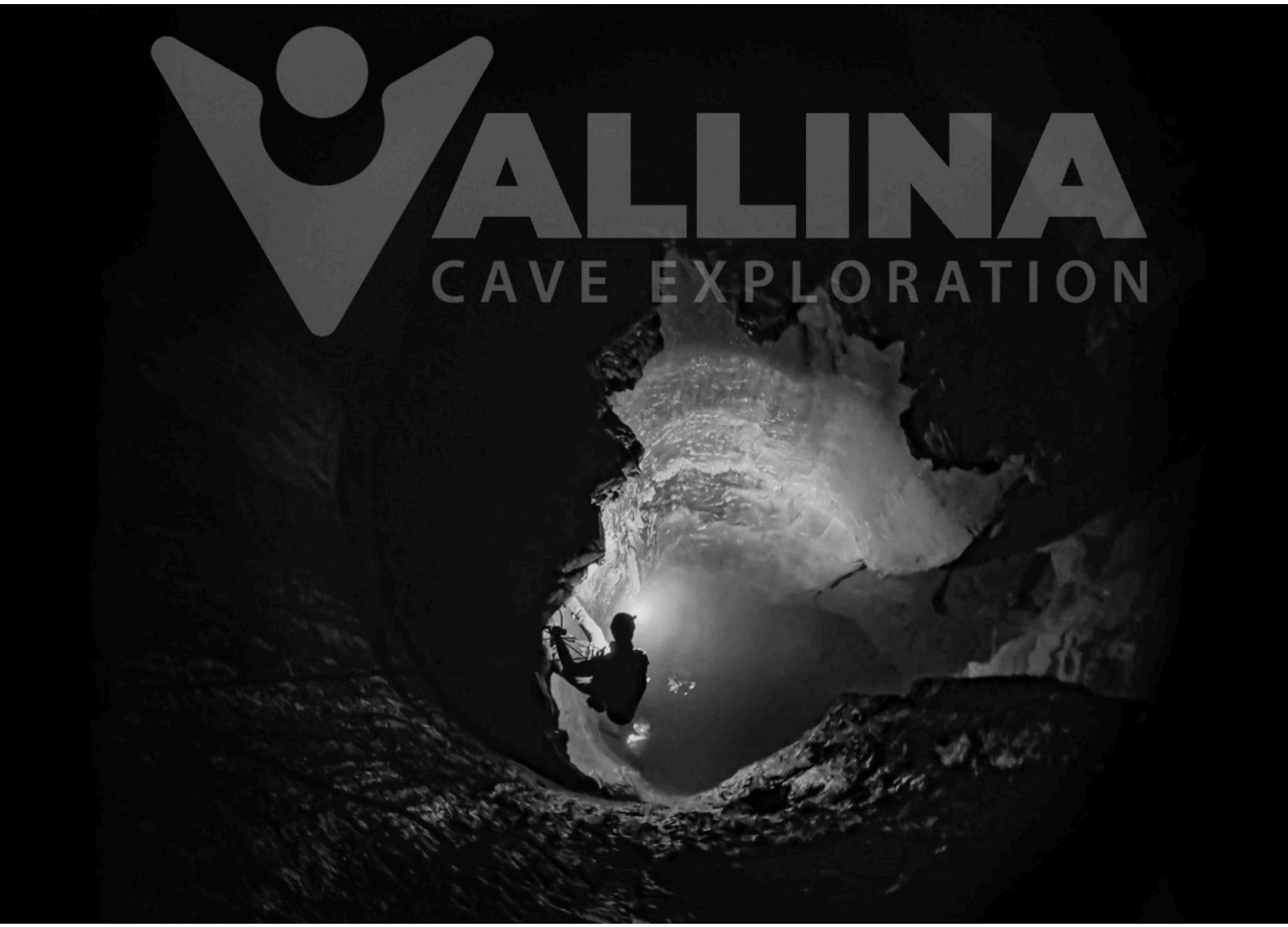


EXPLORATION REPORT
2024

‘Thanks to all our companions who, with all their enthusiasm and motivation, invest time in exploring this fantastic system.

Vallina is special thanks to you’

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

WORK IN THE SYSTEM 4

RESULTS 2024 34

INTRODUCTION:



This report covers the speleological exploration work carried out by the explorers of the Grupo de Exploración Vallina (Vallina Exploration Group) in 2024 in the Vallina System and in caves that could potentially connect to it.

The Grupo de Exploración Vallina is made up of explorers from clubs and federations in different geographical areas.

Throughout this year we have continued the exploration work carried out by the Espeleo Club Tortosa in the municipality of Arredondo between 1984 and 2007. We are continuing within the same framework of collaboration with the Matienzo Caves Project, and to that end we have renewed the collaboration agreement.

We have also signed collaboration agreements with the La Cambera group, A.M. Transmiera and Club Ozono.

This year work began in February. Thanks to the turnout of explorers, their motivation and their teamwork, we have been able to meet many of the objectives set out in our work plan.

WORK IN THE SYSTEM

1. 29 February to 4 March. Check of Galería Blanca and beyond the Second Abyss. Climb of an inlet near the confluence of Río Blanco and Río Grande. Major flood in the system.
2. June. Work in Vallina 1, 600 Pesetas.
3. Summer Campaign 2024.
4. October. 600 Pesetas and La Pita.
5. December long weekend. 600 Pesetas and La Pita. Torca del Grajo.

1. 29/02 - 4/03. Judith, Isra, Isma, Hector, Gila, Jose, Josian

29/02:

Preparation for the trip. The first group, made up of Judith (Madrid), Isma (Catalonia) and Israel, Gila and Hèctor (País Valencià), entered the cave at 12:15.



At the start of the Riu Rioja a traverse line is rigged to avoid the deepest part of a pool.

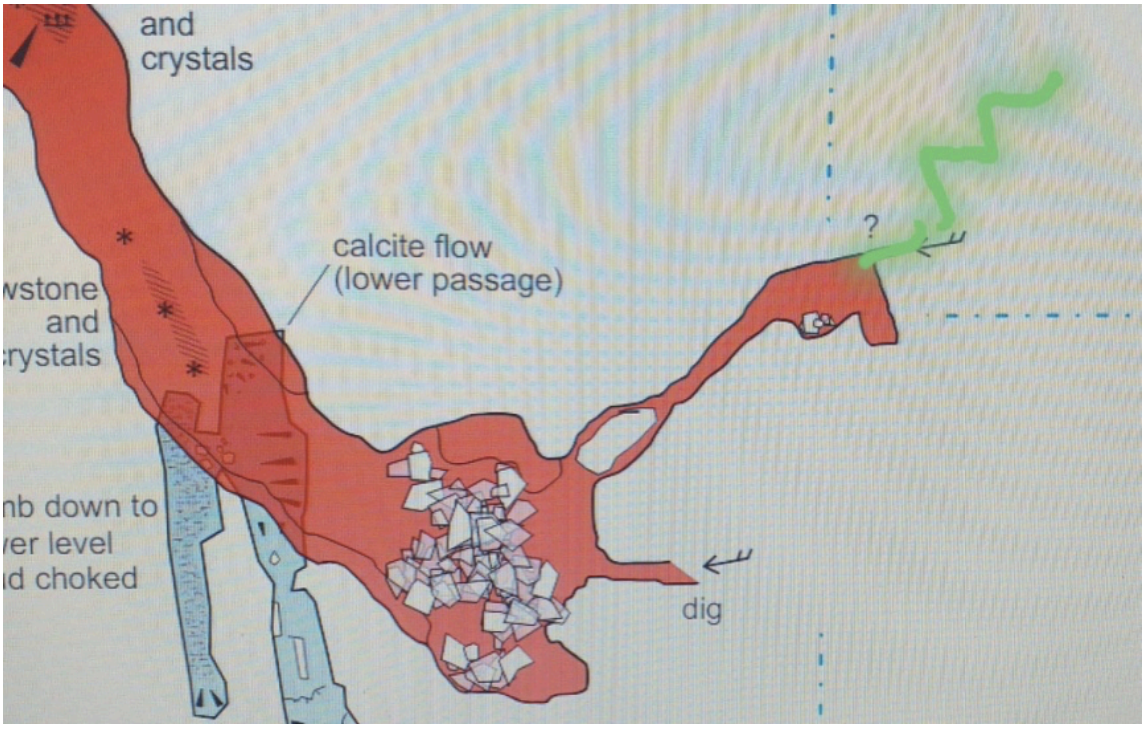
We then reach the camp in the Galeria dels Elefants via the Riu Blanc, where possible leads are checked, with nothing new.

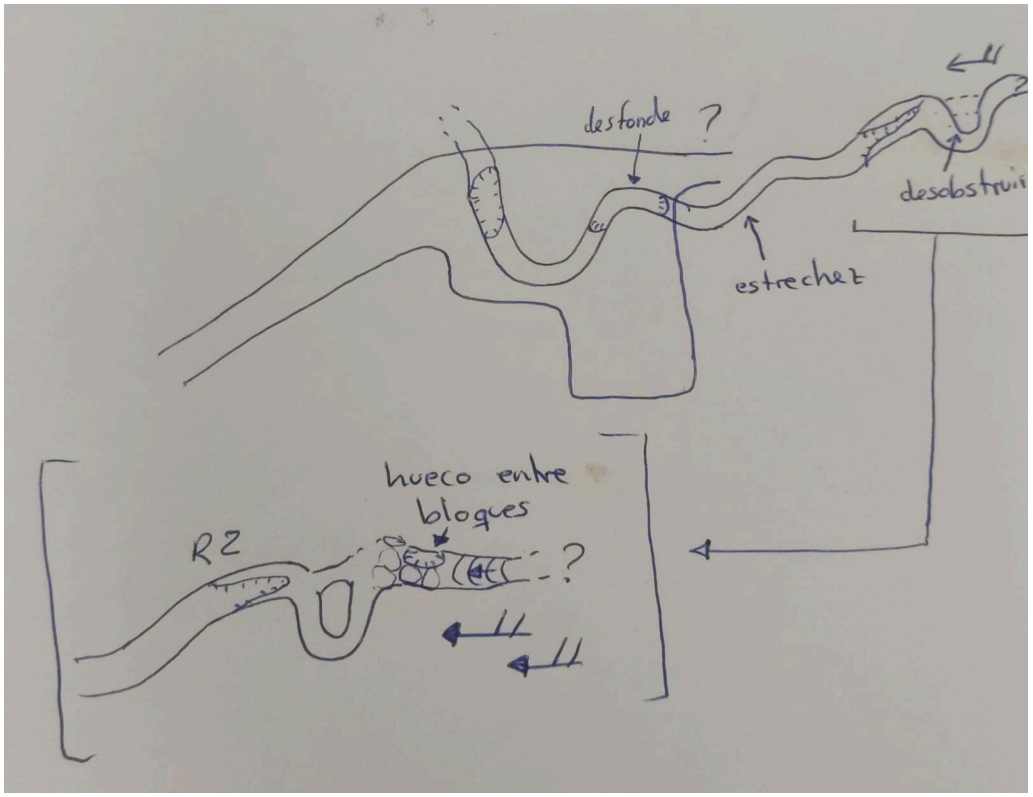
1/03:

As the system is carrying a lot of water and rain is forecast, we decide against derigging the Novadome and the active Twin Avens, and against going up to the upper level. The first group splits up: some derig one route in the Tocadome, and the others explore beyond the Second Abyss:

- Judith, Gila and Hèctor derig the ropes on the wall route up to the roof of the Tocadome, as they are no longer needed now the climb is finished; a free-hanging rope has been left to reach the upper inlet. The rope is rigged double and all the gear is recovered except two rigging points: the first on the upper ledge, with two maillons on a Multi-Monti and a Dyneema sling on a natural anchor, and the second with two maillons on Multi-Montis on the vertical section.

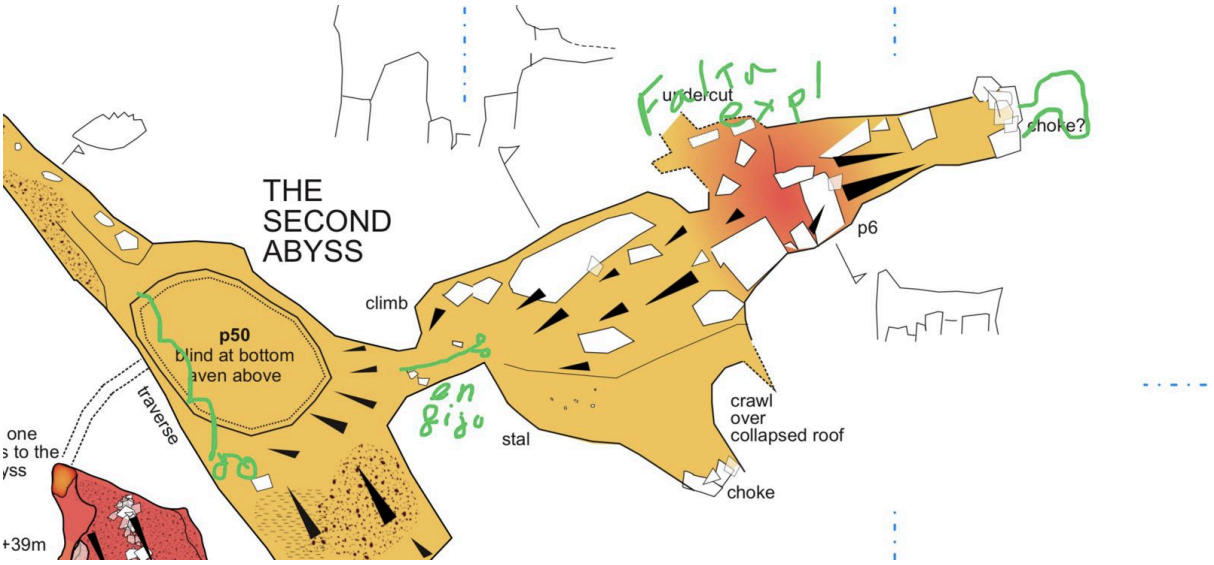
Afterwards we visit the Galeria Blanca and check possible continuations at the end of the gallery, first on the right among boulders, where everything closes down, and then on the left. Here we reach a meander that becomes too tight, but by climbing up to a higher, floorless level of it from further back, Judith manages to get a little further than the surveyed section. A draught can be felt up to a point where digging would be needed, but it has potential.





Judith's sketch

Israel and Isma re-rig the traverse to cross the Second Abyss and re-explore the area beyond it. They rig a climbing rope of about 10 m and check the whole area without finding anything noteworthy, except a drop in the floor at the end.



- Once back together at camp, we decide to return to the galleries beyond the Second Abyss to finish checking them. Judith, Gila, Israel and Hèctor reach the final drop and rig a descent rope of about 10 m to check this area. In the end everything closes down, and the two 10 m ropes are derigged, leaving the traverse in place.

- The second group, made up of Josian (Cantabria) and José (Aragón), enters Vallina at 10:20. They stop at the squeeze at the end of the Riu Rioja (“el 4”) and enlarge it, reaching the Galeria dels Elefants camp in the afternoon.

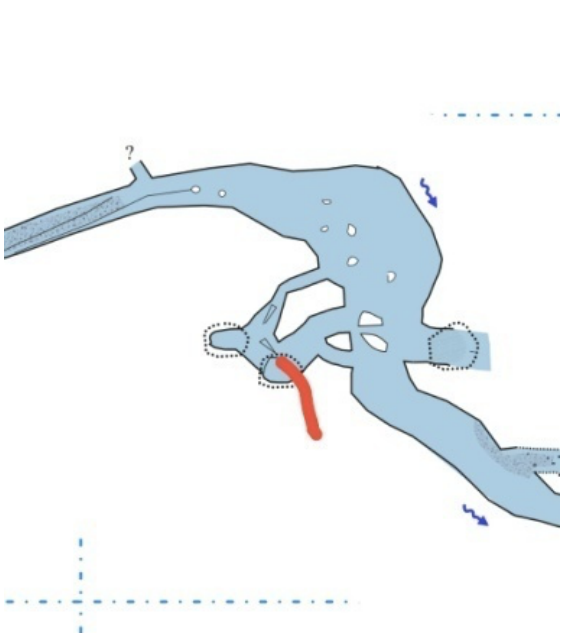


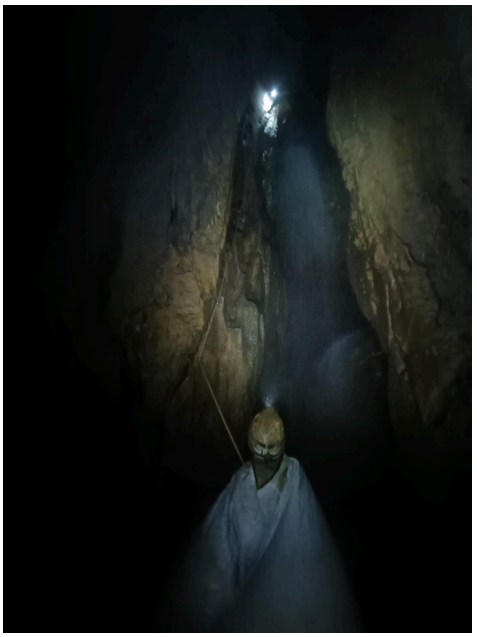


2/03:

Camp is packed up and we head out at midday, planning to stop on the way to do some work before leaving. The group splits in two to avoid waiting at the Tocadome:

- Judith, Israel and Hèctor go out first, aiming to climb an inlet about 10 m high in the Riu Blanc, going up on the left, a little above the junction with the Riu Gran. Israel climbs up to the opening, but the water coming out stops him from entering the passage.





- Isma, José, Josian and Gila finish the inventory and leave half an hour later.

When the climb is finished, we notice a sudden rise of the Río Blanco, although the Río TOC is not carrying much water for winter.



On reaching the sump-like passage, we see it is full of water to the roof and impassable, so we set up a bivouac in the previous chamber and check the water level regularly. We also explore a crawl that might serve as a way to bypass the sump, but it becomes too tight. A passage is dug with a small pick, since the digging gear had been left on the other side of the sump, at the “el 4” squeeze, but it too becomes impassable.

We also check upper windows to see whether any of them might connect with the other side of the sump, but nothing of interest is found.

At 21:00 we see that the water has dropped about two hand-spans and the roof of the sump-like passage is visible, so it looks as if it will be passable. Josian and Hèctor go to have a look, but there is no air space to get through.

We decide to split the group in two:

- José, Israel and Isma will stay at the bivouac monitoring the water level all night, so they can get out quickly if the level drops, before the emergency is triggered for not coming out on time.
- Judith, Gila, Josian and Hèctor return to the Elefantes camp to spend the night, dry off and come back the following day.

3/03:

At 4:00 the level has dropped enough for the first group, Israel, Isma and José, to pass the sump. They then struggle up the Riu Rioja, which is quite high, and come out at 9:30, by which time the rescue command post had already been set up in a pre-emergency situation.



The second group leaves camp in the morning and reaches the sump, where they find the note left by the first group. They pass it with about 0.4 m of air space, but when they reach the Riu Rioja it is in full flood.

They try to make their way upstream with the water chest-deep in many places, until they reach a pool that is very difficult to get past, so they decide to turn back and wait for the water to drop, setting up another bivouac

in the chamber before the vertical crawl. Here a specimen of the cave millipede Cantabrodesmus lorioli is found.

The whole day is spent here watching the water level, which drops slowly.

At 14:30 Israel and Ángel from Cantabria go in to try to locate and help the second group. They reach this second bivouac, find everyone is fine and bring in space blankets, ethanol fuel and food.

They come back out quickly (as agreed with the command post), reaching the surface at 19:25.

The second group waits for the water to drop a little further so they can get out with all the weight of the gear being carried.

Monday, 4 March:

At 0:40 the second group comes out, stops at the emergency command post to report, and spends the night at the Coventosa hostel.

Mid-morning, everyone heads home.



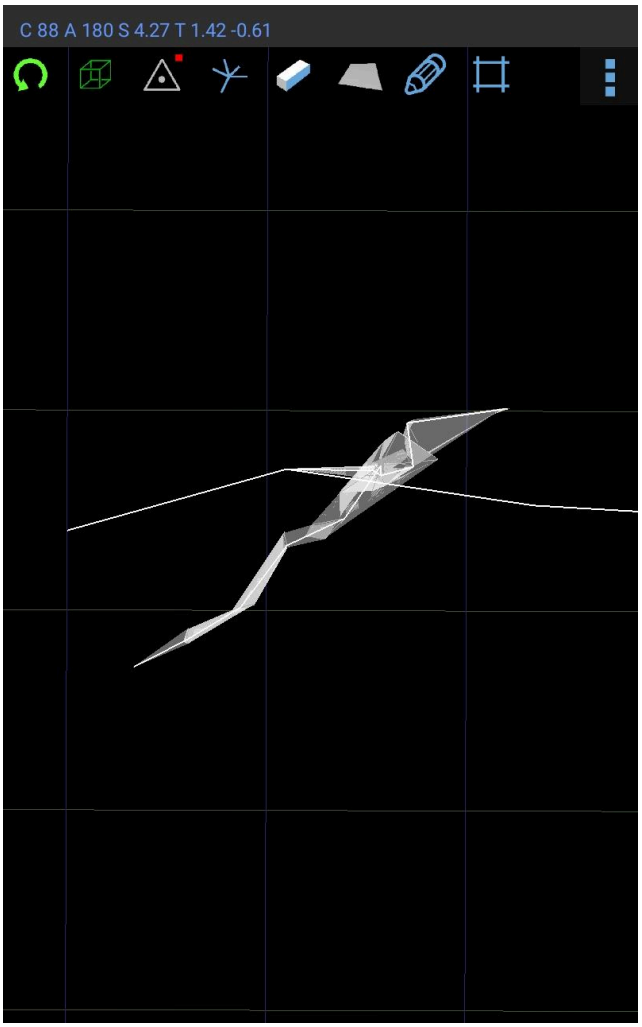
2. 08/06. Rebecca and Josian

Work in the 600 Pesetas gallery.

The P8 is rigged near the climb up the transverse tube, which ends in an impenetrable fissure with no draught.

Sediment is dug out of the transverse tube parallel to the 600 Pesetas, gaining about 2 metres, for a total dig of about 6 metres.

A survey line of the whole gallery was started to add new areas, unfinished because the Disto broke.





3. Summer Campaign 2024. 29/07 -> 3/08. Josean, Gila and Alexis, Vicent, Artur, Xavier, Marc, Alicia, Victor, Isra, Miriam, Isma, Lee, Judit, Fer, Marina, Adolfo, Carlos, Andreu, Lluis Cabedo, Jordi Gual.

29/07-30/07: Josean, Gila and Alexis.

The ropes on the P4 and P6 leading to the Double Dutch Pitches are replaced, and a rope is rigged on an existing resin anchor to reach it.

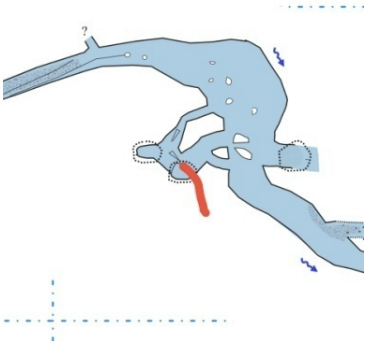
All the gear left in March at the two bivouacs set up during the Río Rioja flood is collected.

30/07: Marc, Vicent, Xavi, Isra, Isma, Miriam, Judit.

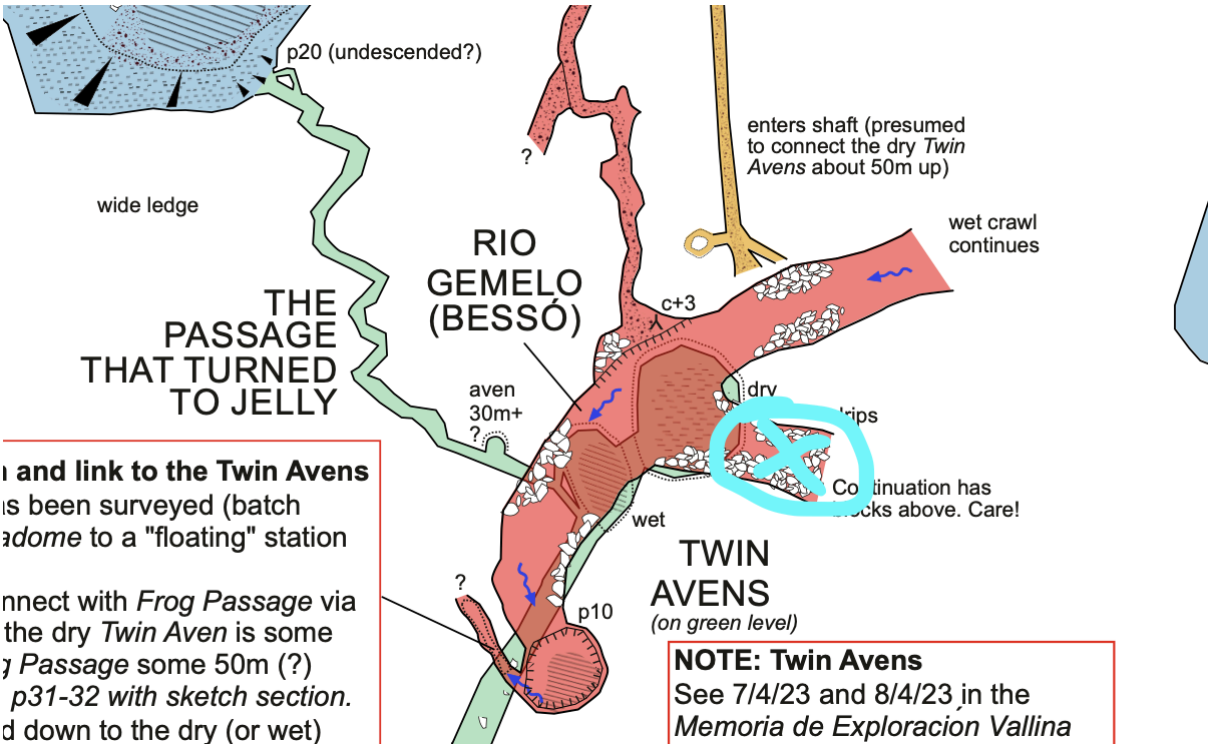
The group splits into 2 subgroups for a staggered entry. Isra, Miriam, Isma and Judit go in first, and Vicent, Marc and Xavi 30 minutes later.



The first group goes straight to the hanging meander in one of the three avens of the Río Grande. The climb had already been done, so two approach points are rigged and they reach the meander, which winds upward for about 50 metres until it ends, choked with boulders that block the way. It is considered finished, with the survey and gear recovery still to be done. They then head to the bivouac, leaving a 30 m rope in the Stream Passage.



The second group heads to camp, takes a short break to eat and drop things off, and via the Frog Passage climbs up to the upper level of the Novadome through the Twin Avens, already rigged in 2023. We conclude that the access rigging through the dry Twin Aven needs improving, and a rope on the P10 above the Twin Avens is changed. The boulder choke in the Río Gemelo is checked and the lead is ruled out.



01/08

Victor, Alicia, Fer, Artur, Marina



Into the system and straight to camp. Once there, Victor, Artur and Fer went down to the water collection point to install a 2 x 2.5 m clear tarp to increase the amount of water collected.

Marc and Xavier

We work in the Twin Avens. Xavier goes down to the base of the avens to climb up the wet one and recover the gear from the wet pitch. Marc derigs the dry aven from below to restructure the line of progression from the pitch head. A traverse and a new, more comfortable and faster pitch head are rigged at the exit of the Frog Passage. There is no time to continue up the Río Gemelo.

Judit and Vicent (+Isma)



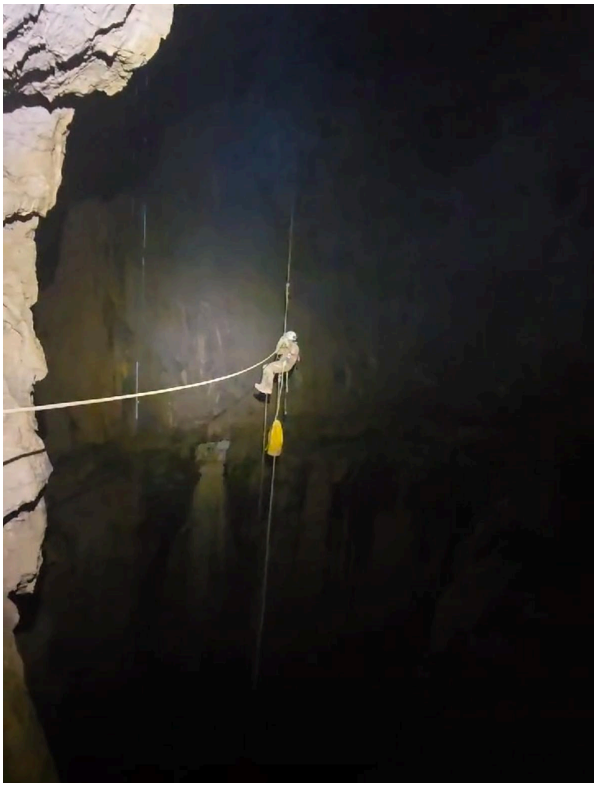
In February Judit was able to get a little further into the draughting lead in the Galería Blanca, squeezing into a very restrictive meander where she could see there might be potential to keep going. A dig was therefore carried out at the end of that meander, opening the way into a new area of large volume with abundant formations.

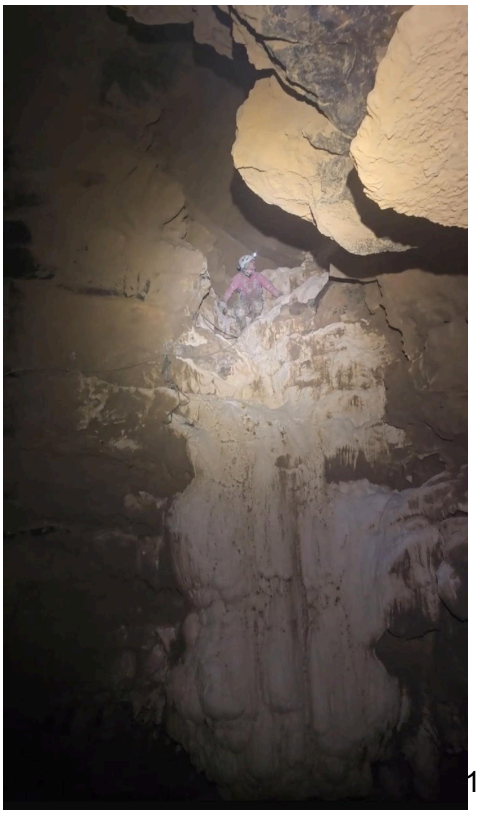
This area begins with a sizeable pitch, which they start to descend after returning to C2 for gear and for Isma, who was at camp doing cleaning jobs (because of his build he cannot get through the meander, but he waits for us for safety). A 15-metre pitch leads to a large ledge that gives onto two horizontal galleries heading north and east. As it is getting late they return to C2, leaving the checking of these galleries and the descent from the ledge for later.



Isra and Miriam

They continue exploring in the upper part of the Tocadome. The pitch heads are repaired and the progression rope on the pendulum is replaced. A second rope is added at the second rebelay (“it gives more confidence”). Once at the top they climb to the Kuki Lake window, opening a new gallery (Galería Jerry) and checking its leads. It is getting late, so they return to camp to carry on the next day.





02/08

Vicent, Xavier, Marc, Judit, Alicia, Isma, Artur, Fer.

It is the last day of exploration, and we decide to form one large group with different jobs assigned. On the one hand, Vicent, Xavi, Alicia and Fer go into the new area first as an advance team to continue rigging down from where he and Judit had stopped the day before and to keep checking the outstanding leads. On the other hand, Marc and Judit survey, linking the Galería Blanca with the new area, supported by Isma and Artur.

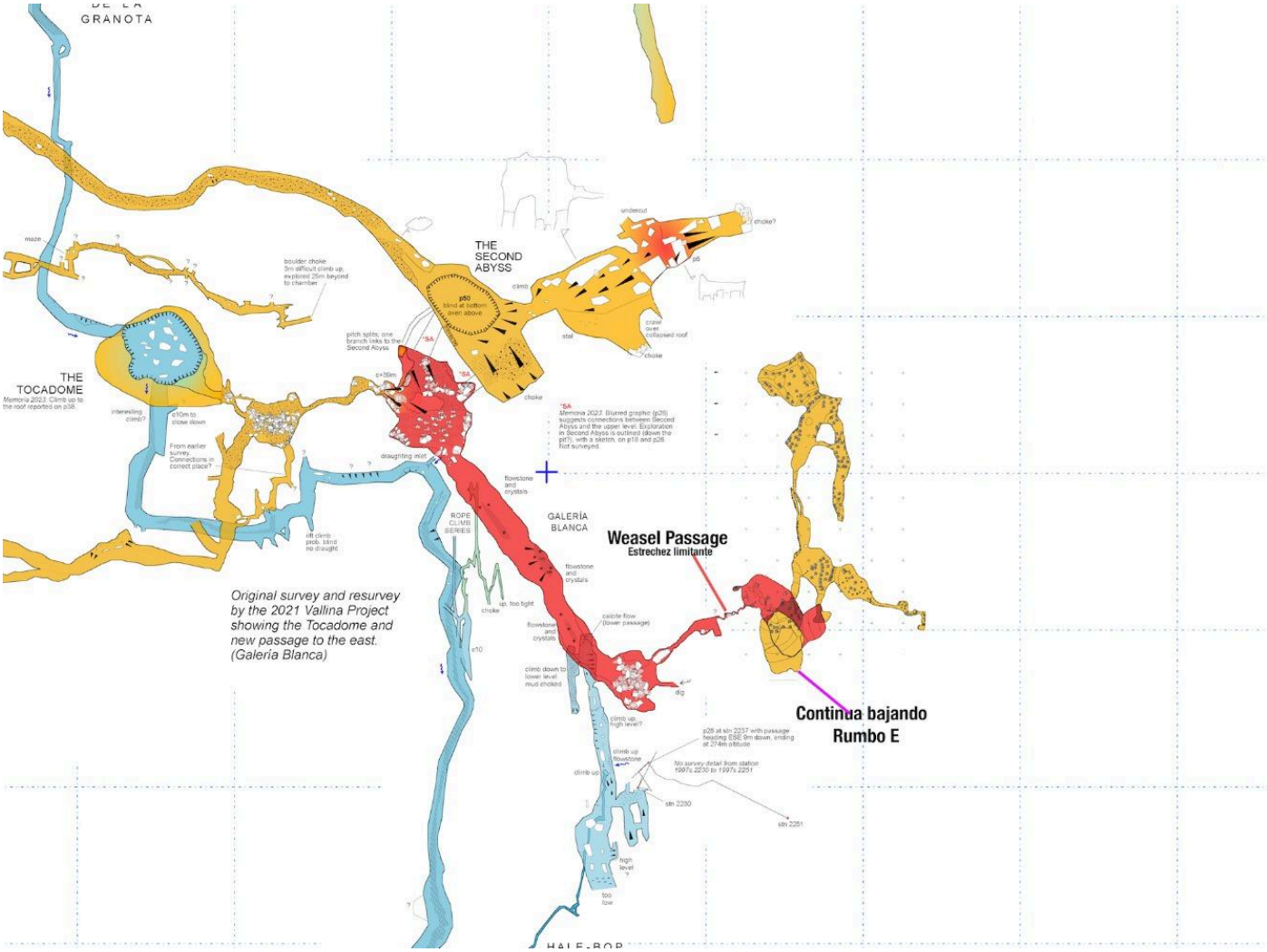
The Weasel Passage (Paso de la Comadreja) is quite restrictive, and Artur decides to return to camp to continue with the jobs of tidying and logging the camp gear.

The advance team keeps descending to the bottom of the large chamber in the new area, where at its base they run out of gear. The shaft continues along a small watercourse, losing volume through a vertical active meander down which it is possible to keep descending, heading E.

When the survey team reaches the ledge below the P15, we regroup with the advance team and together we enter the horizontal galleries heading N. All the leads are checked and surveyed.






GRANOTA
THE SECOND ABYSS
THE TOCADOME
GALERÍA BLANCA
Weasel Passage
Estrechez limitante
Continúa bajando
Rumbo E
ROPE CLIMB SERIES
Original survey and resurvey by the 2021 Vallina Project showing the Tocadome and new passage to the east. (Galería Blanca)

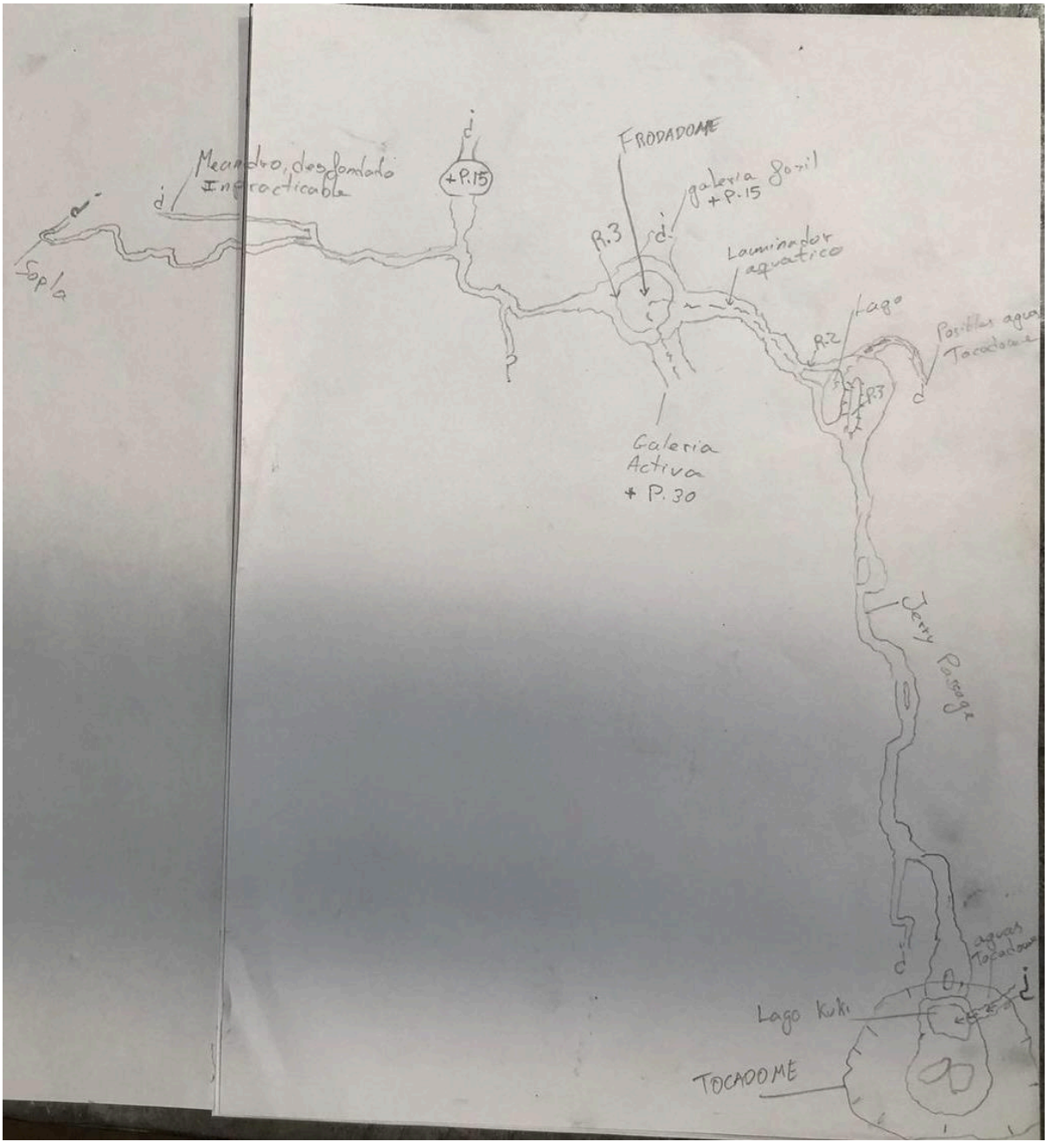




Victor, Israel and Miriam

Work continues at the top of the Tocadome. They keep advancing along Galería Jerry; after 25 m it turns left, followed by a small gallery with a sandy floor on its left that probably connects with the dome of the Tocadome.

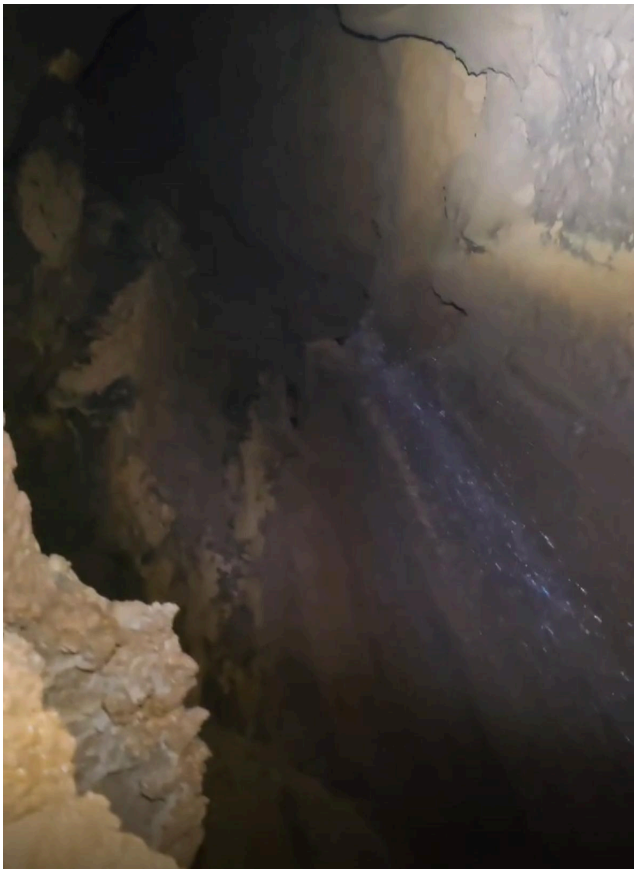
They continue and reach the Sala Tom, with some formations at its entrance. At the back of the chamber is a small lake forming an active stream that disappears, but reappears at one side of the chamber as a small waterfall. It probably feeds the active stream that flows into Kuki Lake, above the Tocadome. They climb to the top of the chamber and protect an exposed step to reach a watery flat-out crawl that leads to another 25 m high dome with a waterfall, named the Frodadome. The water falls through a large window, and directly opposite it the possible fossil continuation of the river can be seen. At the back of the Frodadome there is a ring 3 metres above the floor, where a fossil gallery opens; it branches right to another +15 aven with a very interesting gallery at the top. In the left-hand branch there are floorless meanders on the right, and on the left a low-roofed gallery with a slight draught.











03/08

Inventory is taken, the camp is tidied and cleaned, and we start to come out to the surface in a staggered way.







03/08-07/08 Surface prospecting

Surface prospecting was carried out, and the caves found and located were checked. Torca del Grajo could not be checked, but it is left pending exploration as it is the most promising one.











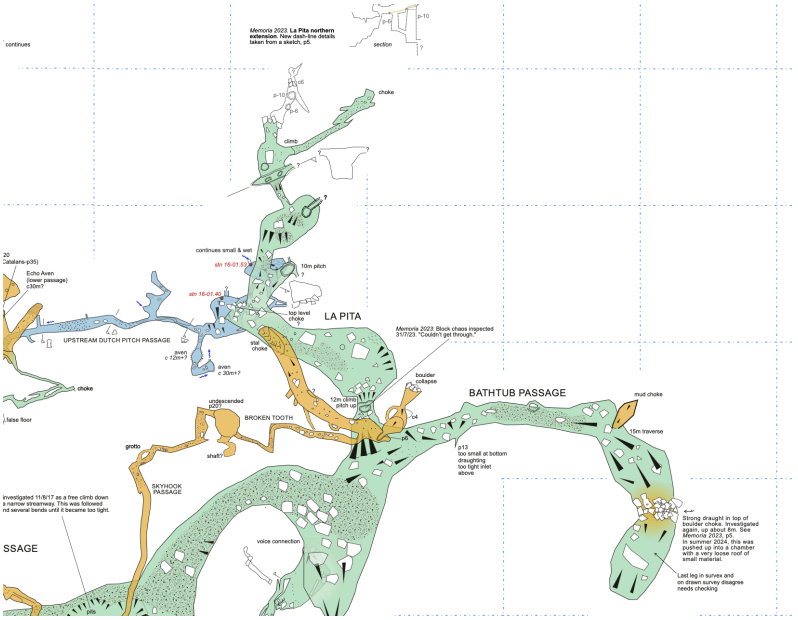






4. 5/10. 600 Pesetas. Josean, Rebeca and Maribel

They go in around 12:00 and head straight from Nospotentra to the 600 Pesetas to work on the plug, which is starting to change from damp ground to something harder, with small rounded stones like river pebbles in the compacted sand. They manage another couple of metres of digging, although when surveying they realise the total is less, as the dug tunnel is 6 metres long in total.



They had a moment of excitement when they found a bubble of about 20 cm that a hand could fit into and that seemed to be draughting, but it closed again straight away and we left it there.

The gours were full of water.

We came out around 8 pm with nothing new.

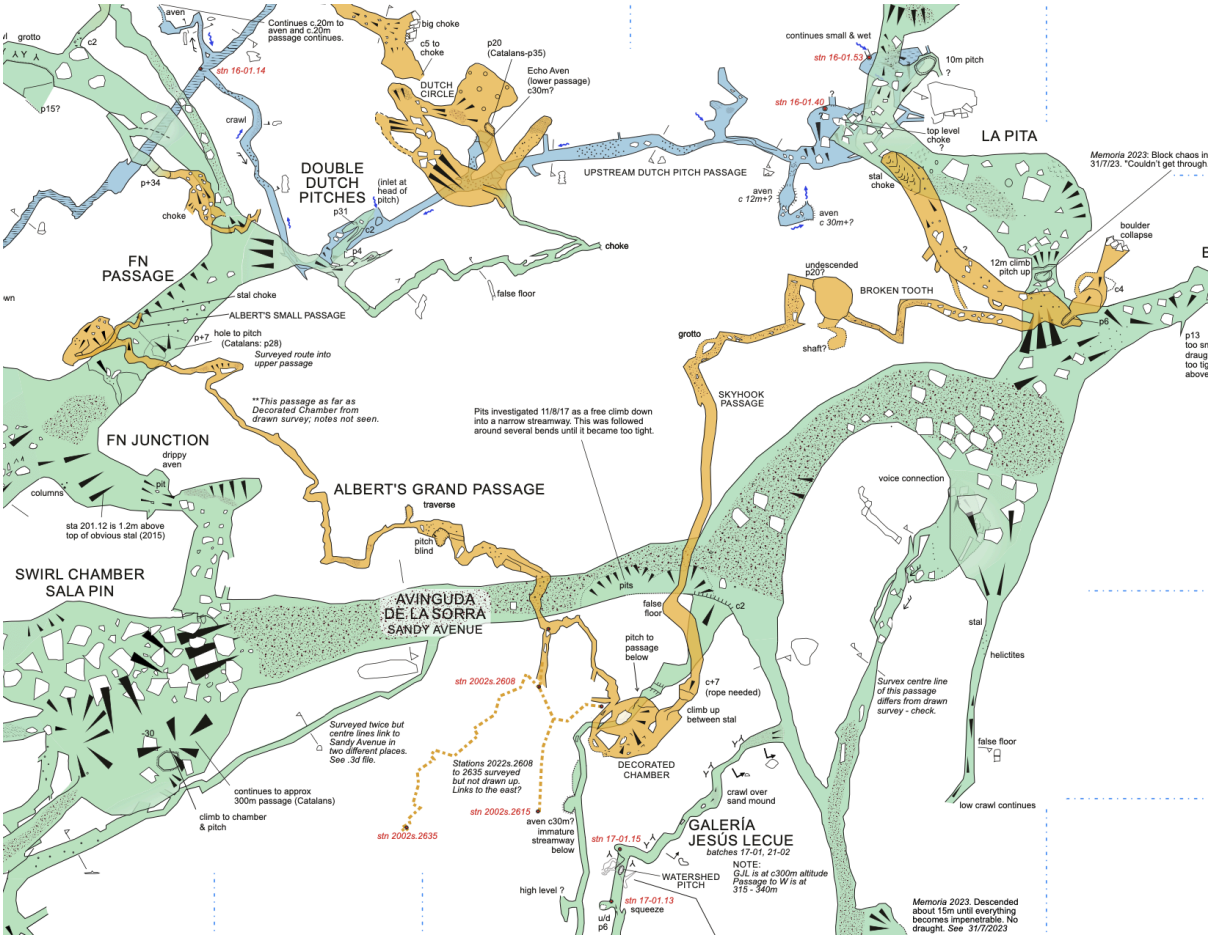
5. 5/12-7/12 December long weekend



5/12 Lee and Gila

Check of Alberts Passage.





6/12

Gila, Lee, Javi, José, Josian, Rebeca and Hèctor enter Vallina in the morning. At the junction of Galería de la Pita / Avg. de la Sorra, we split into 3 groups:

- Gila, Lee and José go to the La Pita area to dig.

- Josian and Rebecca go to the top of the Galería de les 600 pts to dig.

- Javi and Hèctor go to the end of the Galería de les 600 pts to do a climb. It turns out that at the end there is a small, very wet chamber with only 2 options: a horizontal continuation between loose rocks, and a climb.



Javi and Hèctor:

The horizontal gallery turns out to go only about 4 m before closing down. It is also full of half-loose rocks that cannot even be touched.

The climb turns out to be a first scramble of about 4 m that can be free-climbed, reaching a balcony that closes down. From there, a vertical climb of about 4 m more remains, up to a hole in the roof.

We aid-climb it and, once at the top, it is possible to get into the hole, revealing a chamber made of boulders with no continuation, and very delicate because of the loose rocks around the entrance.

The climb is derigged and the job is considered finished.

In the afternoon all the groups meet up and come out with nothing new.

Marc, Victor, Javimir and Fer: Check of Torca del Grajo.

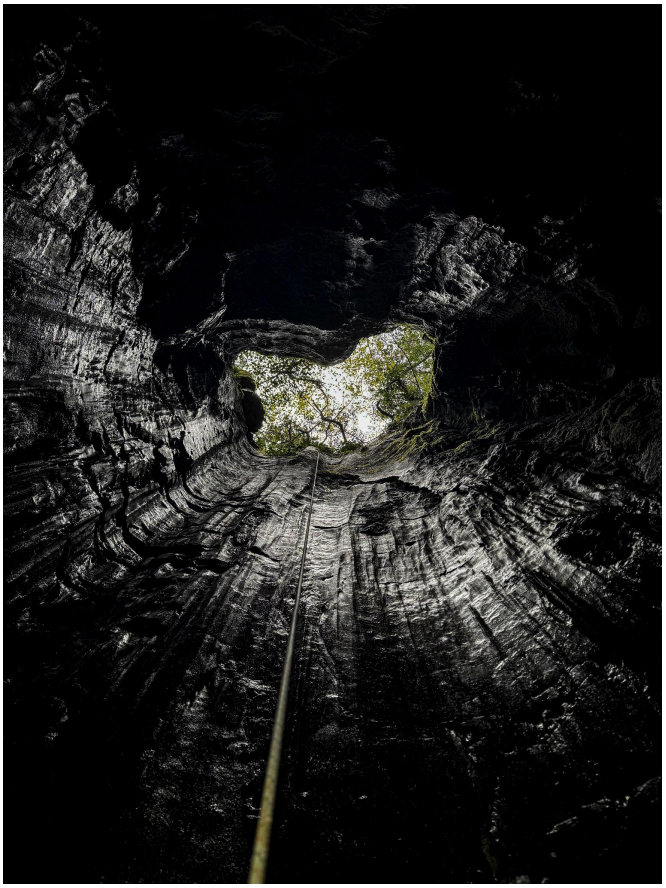
This summer a new shaft was located near the entrance of La Rasa.

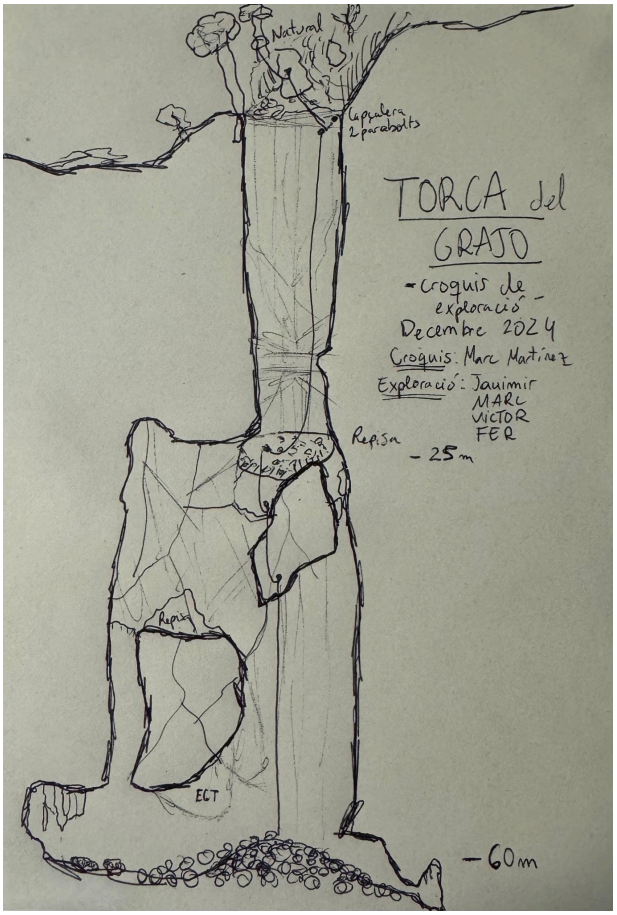


This shaft has an entrance pitch about 5 metres wide. When it was found (with no sign of previous exploration), the stones thrown in seemed to fall a good many metres. So, after overlaying the La Rasa survey on the map and calculating the altitude of each entrance and the depth of the large chambers in La Rasa, it was thought there could be a high probability of a connection.

Javi starts rigging, setting up a pitch head with 2 × 10 mm Parabolts and descending about 25 metres to a ledge. There Marc takes over and continues rigging with Multi-Montis down to the bottom of the shaft. After descending about 60 metres, the bottom is choked with rocks and earth. There are many skeletons of various animals, a few formations in one corner and, in the other, a small chamber with a trickle of water running through it.






Natural
Capulera
2 parabolts
TORCA del
GRAJO
- croquis de
exploració -
Desembre 2024
Croquis: Marc Martínez
Exploració: Jauimir
MARC
VICTOR
FER
Rep.5m
- 25m
Rep.5m
ECT
- 60m

After checking all the options, we derig the cave and at 3 pm we are back outside the shaft. A pity, as the shaft has a very beautiful pitch. Had it connected, it would have been a spectacular entrance to the system.

To make the most of the rest of the day we decide to prospect the area. Next to El Grajo we find a fissure covered with large stones. We decide to dig, as a shaft can be seen beneath the boulders.

The dig was complicated by the size of the stones; one of them easily weighed more than 200 kg. Once the entrance was opened and made safe, we set up a pitch head with Multi-Montis and Marc descends. A 15-20 metre shaft, choked with rocks at the bottom. We derig and head back to the car.





7/12

The same people enter Vallina again in the morning, in the rain. On reaching the same junction as yesterday, groups are formed:

- José and Gila go to do a climb in the Avg. de la Sorra.

- Josian and Rebeca go to continue yesterday's work.

- Lee, Javi and Hèctor go to the La Pita dig. After a while of work it is left; Lee goes with Josian and Rebeca, and Javi and Hèctor go to finish a climb in La Pita.



Javi and Hèctor:

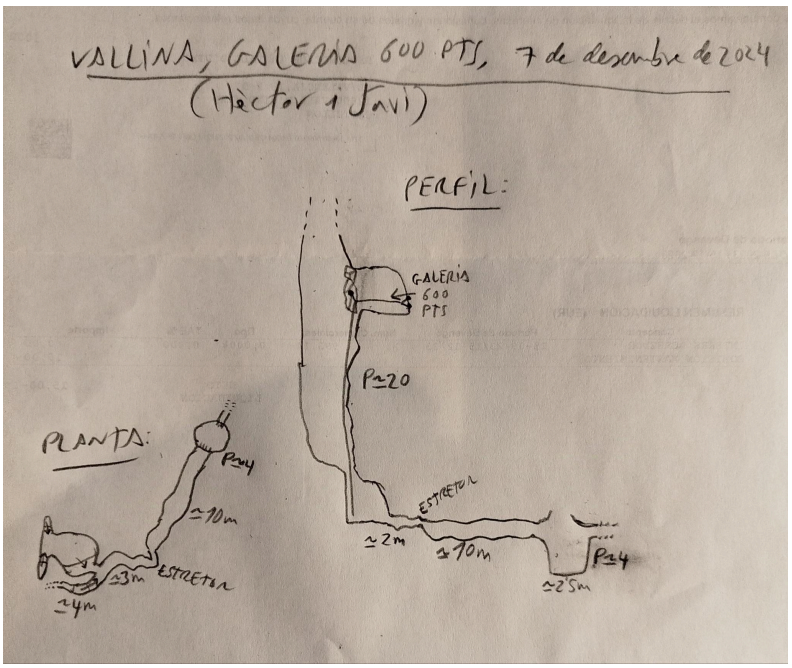
This is the climb at the end of La Pita that has been left unfinished for some time. We reach the rope and go up, but it turns out that the area where the climb continues is very wet and, after yesterday's experience, we decide to leave it for the summer. On the way back a specimen of Cantabrodesmus lorioli is seen.

We go back to the Galería de les 600 pts and descend a shaft on the left before the gours.

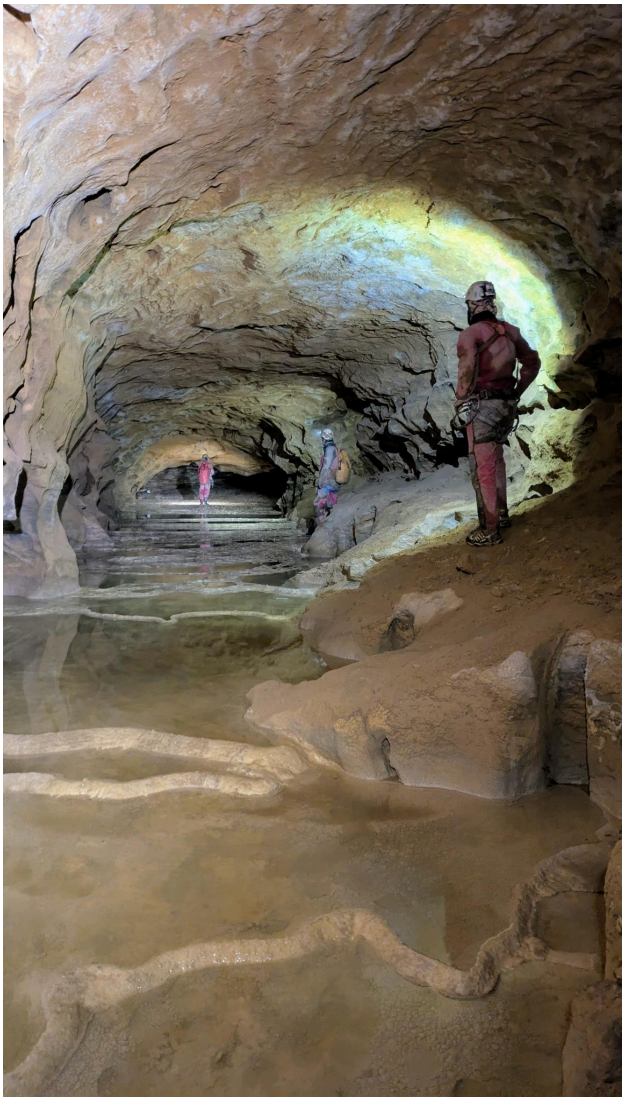
It is about 20 m deep and ends in a narrow meander that leads into a chamber connecting with a narrow passage where the water drains away.

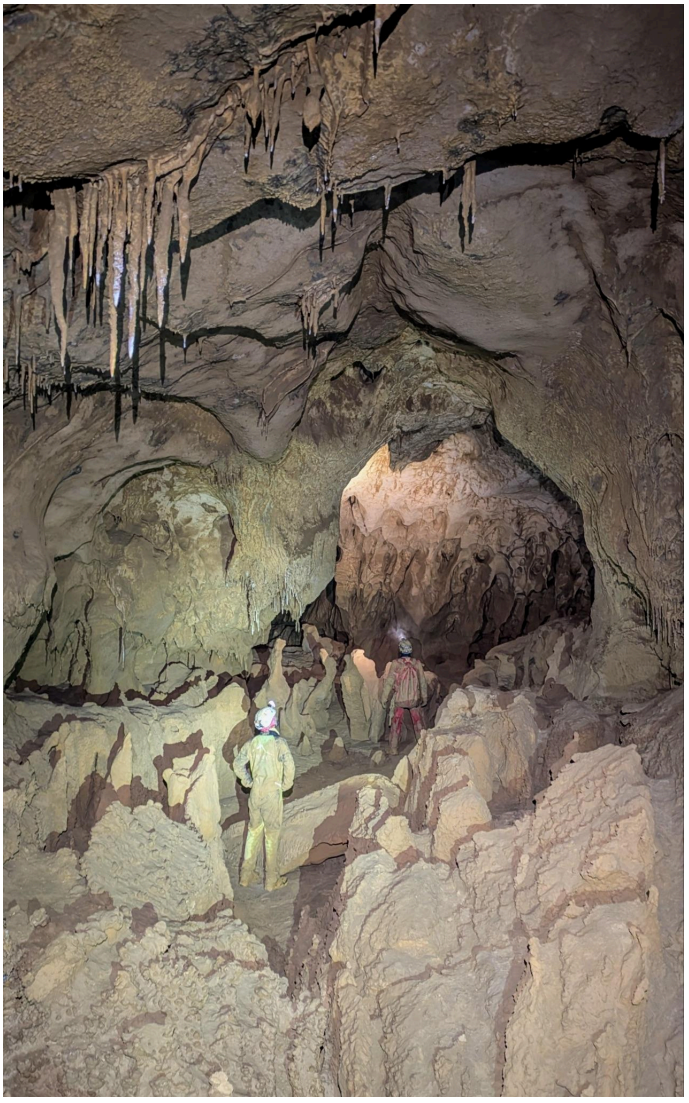
Once inside, you can go right, upwards, for about 4 m until it gets too narrow. Also left, downwards, for about 3 m to a squeeze, beyond which the passage continues for about 10 m to a small 4 m deep pitch. It was not descended for lack of gear, but it seems to continue (by eye) in the same direction as the Galeria de les 600 pts.

Footprints can be seen in the mud up to the squeeze, but not beyond it.









RESULTS 2024

- The ropes on the P4 and P6 leading to the Double Dutch Pitches are replaced, and a rope is rigged on an existing resin anchor to reach it. The ropes up to the Tocadome pitch head were also changed.
- At the Novadome front, leads have been closed and a safe, more direct access to the upper level has been secured. A couple of interesting leads remain pending.
- At the top of the Tocadome, metres of passage are gained and a good number of very promising leads found.
- At the Galería Blanca front, a dig succeeds in opening the way into a new area of large volume. It is an exploration front heading E, which makes it very interesting and a possible access to the Vallina 3 area.
- Work continues in La Pita and the 600 Pesetas.
- Surface work is carried out, locating and checking new caves and shafts. The most striking of these is Torca del Grajo.