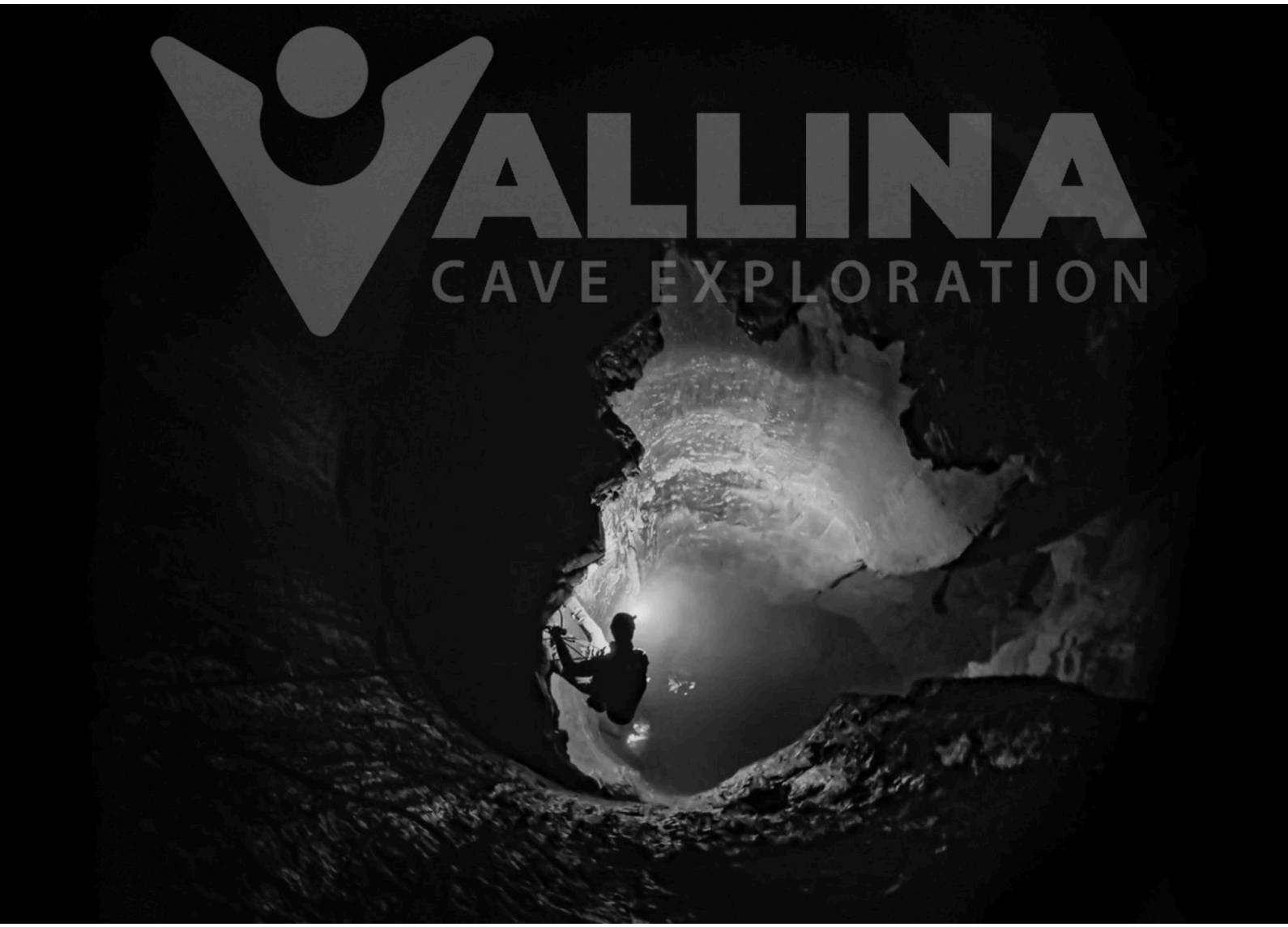


# EXPLORATION REPORT

# 2025

*'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'***

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# INTRODUCTION:




This report covers the speleological exploration work carried out by the explorers of the Grupo de Exploración Vallina (Vallina Exploration Group) in 2025 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, as we have done since 2020, 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.

# WORK IN THE SYSTEM

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# 1. 1 to 3 May:

## 1 May:

Sara, Andrés, Joanmi, Josean, Laura and Héctor, Israel, Miryam, Alejandro, Jose

We meet at 9 am in Arredondo and go in as three separate groups to avoid too much waiting.



We go in at around 12:00 and reach the Galería dels Elefants camp via the Riu Blanc without incident at around 18:00.

On the way we meet up with the first group, and José finds some crustaceans in the Riu Blanc that are different from the isopods (pill bugs) Cantabroniscus primitivus that are abundant in the Riu Rioja. These are more pigmented and look like “shrimps”. They are the same ones Sarai saw in the Novadome lake last year.

At the base of the Novadome, where we had already found several kinds of fossils in previous years, José finds a sea urchin of the Cidaris type, which we had not seen before.



Once at camp, we go through the Frog Passage, descend the Twin Avens and derig some ropes rigged on previous trips in the Pou dels Penya and the Trillizo. A small climb is also checked, and a downclimb just behind it leaves us in a dead end choked with sand. We derig everything and clean the ropes. We recover three ropes of roughly 10, 20 and 40 m and about six hangers with maillons and Multi-Montis, and return to camp at around 21:00.



## 2 May:

Sara, Andrés, Joanmi, Josean, Laura and Héctor.

After breakfast at camp, Sara, Andrés, Joanmi, Josean, Laura and Héctor set off at around 12:00 to explore at the end of the Weasel Passage.

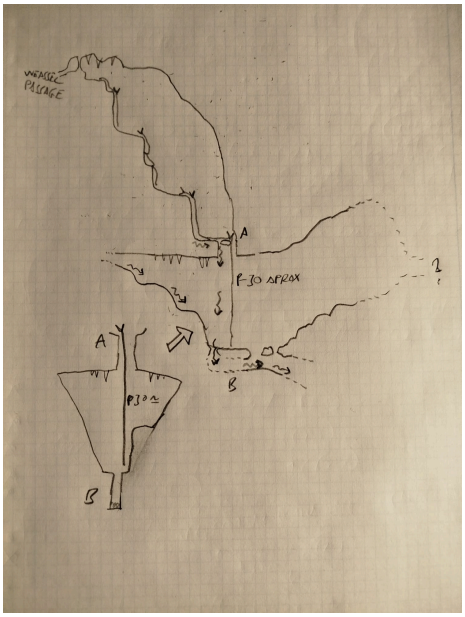
The first dug squeeze in the meander is still too narrow for everyone to get through, so we attack a crack in the wall with a lump hammer and chisel until we bring down a slab about a metre across, the top of which we break off so we can get through.

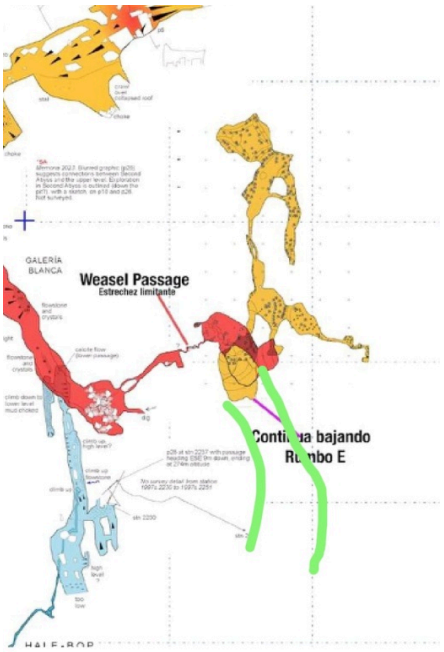


Once inside the new chambers, we go down to the last pitch, rig the pitch head and Hèctor descends. It turns out to be a descent of about 30 m into a large, canyon-like chamber, along the bottom of which a small stream flows through a meander about 4 m deep and 0.5 m wide. By eye, it seems to continue heading SE.

Behind us, the canyon climbs quickly beneath the chamber we came from, and an inlet seems to come from there. Ahead, it opens out, also rises and turns slightly right, and we cannot see whether the gallery closes down at the end or continues.

As it is now late, we leave the exploration for next time and return to camp, arriving at around 22:00.



Israel, Miryam, Alejandro, Jose

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We set out to climb the Frodadome and to move forward with the jobs in the Tocadome. We go up and find Galería Jerry sumped with standing water, since this gallery acts as an overflow, filled up during the storms and, having a layer of impermeable clay, is slow to drain! As we cannot continue, we decide to repair the rigging at Kuki Lake and the exit to the pendulum from the window! At Kuki Lake, an approach point, a double pitch head, a small pendulum and another double rebelay take us down to the lake.

At the Tocadome window, all the rigging has been overhauled and the pendulum has been made independent, now placed on the vertical, which makes progression more comfortable and safer.



Starting from the window pitch head, 4 comfortable traverse points lead to the vertical, and a double pitch head 5 metres above the window means the pendulum is now taken with enough height to make it comfortable. At the window, the rigging from the last rebelay to the window is fixed, removing excess gear and leaving the line more comfortable and safer.

## 3 May:

Andrés, Sara, Joanmi, Hèctor, Laura, Israel, Miriam, José, Alejandro and Josean

We get up, pack up camp, take inventory and head out in two groups, taking out the rubbish and the sleeping bags to wash them. The Espeleo Club La Vall d'Uixó leaves 18 maillons and 10 steel hangers with Multi-Montis at the bivouac as exploration gear. We reach the surface at 19:30.



## 4 May:

Journey home.

The next day we show the crustacean to Ferran Palero, a researcher at the Universitat de València and an expert in stygobitic crustaceans, who tells us it looks like Echinogammarus cf. berilloni ("cf." means it looks like this species but is not certain, as it belongs to a very widely distributed lineage that probably comprises several species not yet distinguished for lack of study). It is not a strictly stygobitic crustacean but one found in springs, which is supported by its pigmented eyes, although it appears able to live in the cave.



## 2. 21 to 23 June: Re-rigging of Torca de la Rasa

### 21 June:

Javi, Sarai and Vicent

We enter through Torca de la Rasa with 200 m of rope and plenty of stainless-steel Parabolts. We start re-rigging all the pitches until we reach roughly the middle of the cave, and come back out through Torca de la Rasa.



### 22 June:

Javi, Josian, Sarai and Vicent

We go in again through Torca de la Rasa with 100 m of rope and more stainless-steel Parabolts and carry on re-rigging.

### 23 June:

Javi, Sarai and Vicent

Once again we enter through Torca de la Rasa and carry on re-rigging the rest of the pitches until we reach the second-to-last one, where we run out of Parabolts.

From here we head to the Elefants bivouac, where we load the tackle bags with rubbish and unneeded items, and come out through Nospotentrà.

# 3. Summer Campaign

## - Work inside the system:

## 1 August:

Gila, Andrés and Hèctor

We enter through the Sima de la Rasa with half the gear to leave it in the Break Through Chamber for tomorrow.

We follow the route and the ropes, but there are few markers and at times we get lost, although we have a diagram of the 13 ropes we have to descend.

We reach the 12th rope; there we get lost at a fork and go left, following the water, and take the wrong rope, which goes down a meander with water in it.

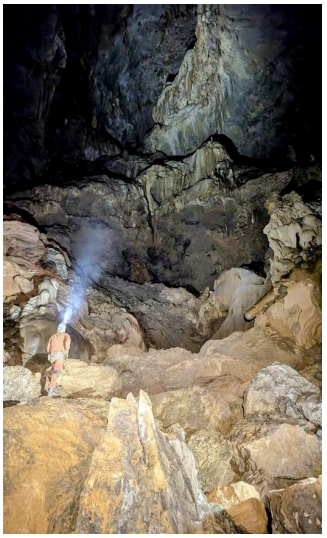
Then another downclimb, this time without a rope, and then a squeeze where we have to take off our gear and struggle to get through. Once past it, there is a long, narrow but not restrictive crawl with water. We crawl for a long way until we come out through a hole at water level right between the Riu Blanc and the Riu Gran.

We then leave the gear and come out empty-handed through Nospotentrà.

Today Joel arrives in Arredondo.



## 2 August:



Andrés, Gila, Joel and Hèctor

Gila, Joel, Andrés and Hèctor enter through the Sima de la Rasa at 11:00 with the other half of the gear, after asking Vicent about the 13th rope.

Today we do find this last rope and descend to the Riu Gran without any problem. Then, heavily loaded, we head to camp, arriving at around 18:00.

## 3 August:

Gila, Joel, Andrés and Hèctor

We leave camp at around 12:00 and go to Cagandre ("the Weasel"), descend all the abseils, reach the pitch from the last exploration and go down it.

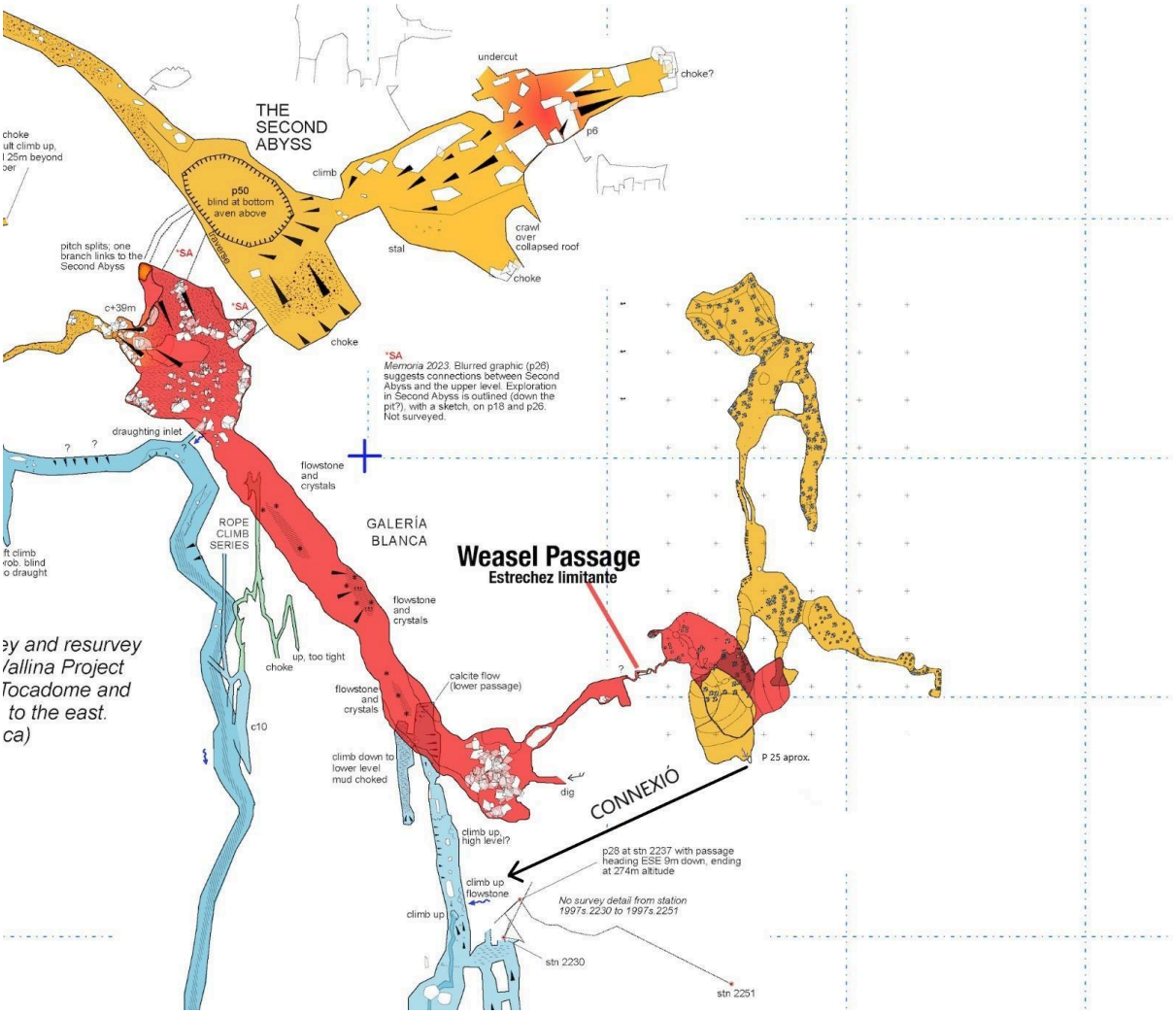
Gila and Hèctor explore upstream, and Joel and Andrés go down the meander following the water. But on climbing a step and reaching a chamber, we find boot prints in the mud. What a letdown, we are in an area that has already been explored!!! A while later Joel and Andrés come back and tell us they have followed the meander down to the Riu TOC.

It turns out that we have reached the Hale-Bop Trail, although on the survey it is quite far offset from the area recently discovered behind the Galería Blanca.

Since we are there and have not discovered anything new, we check the survey and see a point in the area where the survey is not closed but ends in an open survey leg, so we go to see whether we can continue the exploration. We reach a very exposed step that needs a traverse line to get across, and it is very hard work because the walls are very soft white clay and the Multi-Montis sit very loose.

In the end we manage to get past the step, but once up we again see boot prints, which follow a ledge that is also very exposed, and the way on is through a conduit that opens onto the shaft. It seems they climbed up here without gear. We call off the exploration without having reached the end of the survey leg and leave it pending to check the reports from that exploration to see whether there really is anything left to look at.

We return to camp at 21:00 and go to fill all the water containers for when the others arrive.




## 4 August:

Gila, Joel, Andrés and Hèctor.

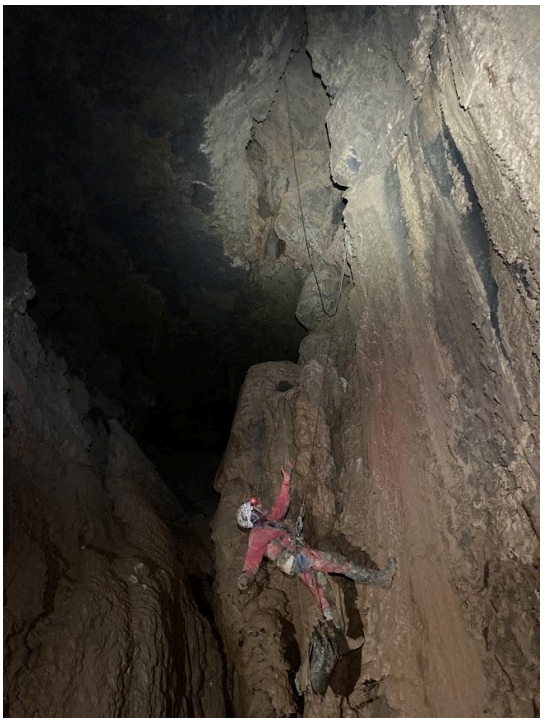
Today we leave camp at about 11:30 and go via the Frog Passage to the Twin Avens to climb up to the Riu Bessó. We head towards the Riu Alt checking the leads along the way, and on entering the big chamber Joel goes down among the fallen boulders and finds a new gallery, which is left as a lead. Andrés and Héctor go along the Riu Alt to derig the ropes in the Novadome, and Joel and Gila will do a climb in the area, specifically a window about 5 metres up that has no water and is not the one with white formations.

Andrés and Héctor go down the Novadome to the 1st rebelay and climb back up, dismantling all the anchors, but we do not take them off the rope as they are very rusty and it is not easy. When we are nearly at the pitch head, we hear voices and see lights below. Great, the rest of the people are finally arriving, it's Vicent and Sarai!!! We tell them to move away from the bottom and wait, because we are going to throw the rope down, but we realise that the same rope continues along the traverse to the entrance of the Riu Alt and that, in addition, it then links to a traverse giving access to a gallery opposite, and we do not know whether this should be derigged or whether there is something left to survey. Also, we would keep the

people below waiting too long. So we decide to cut the rope, throw it into the water of the lake below and leave the traverses rigged.

Joel and Gila do the climb and see that the gallery closes down after 2 or 3 metres, so they derig and come down.

Once all 4 of us are together, we return to camp at 20:00, but when we arrive we are disappointed to find nobody there, only a note from Vicente and Sarai telling us that nobody else is coming in and that they have gone out, and could not wait to see us because they are not staying the night. They have brought all the ropes and hardware from the Novadome to camp, coiled them, opened all the maillons and left everything tidy. They have also sorted the camp gear, separating what is useful from what is to be thrown away, and have gone out loaded with rubbish, leaving another pile for us.



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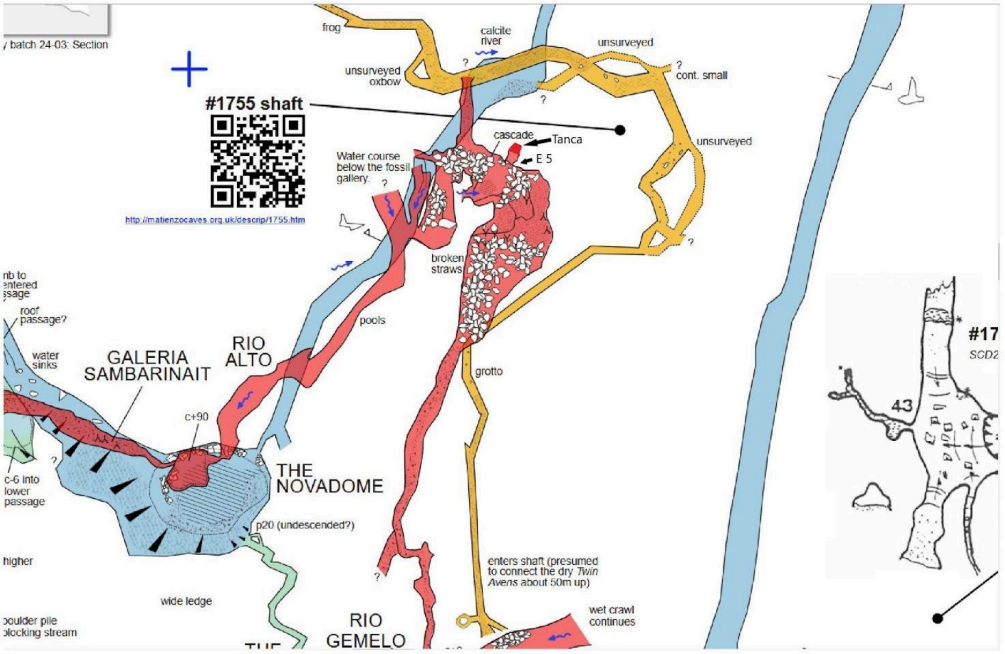


Sarai and Vicente

We enter through Torca de la Rasa, surveying the direct route to the connection with the system. Once in the system we head to the Novadome, where we see our companions derigging it, and wait for them to pass us some ropes, which we carry to the bivouac.

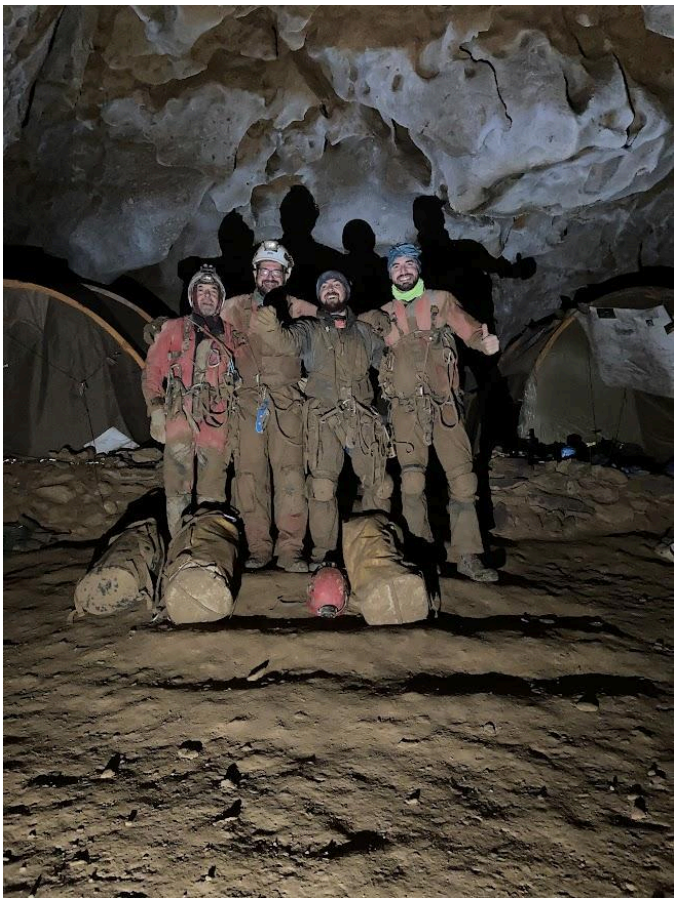
We leave a note with information, load the tackle bags with rubbish and come out through Nospotentrà.

## 5 August:

Gila, Joel, Andrés and Hèctor

Today it is time to pack up and clean the camp, take inventory and go out.

We leave all the water containers full and iodised and take a photographic inventory. In the end we leave at around 14:00 with all the remaining rubbish, reaching the surface through Nospotentrà at around 20:00.



## - Work by the surface team:

## Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 August:

Adolfo, Andreu, LLuís, Carlos and Pepe

The La Azuela area is prospected with the aim of finding the Torca de la Azuela. Many holes are located, one of them very promising, Torca Pusi. La Azuela is also located.

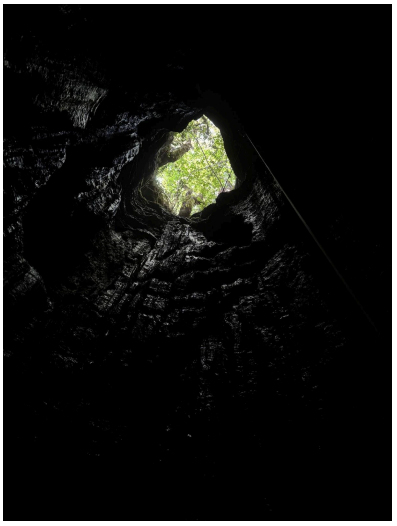
## 4 August:

Adolfo, Carlos, Pepe, Lluís, Marc, Pau, Arnau, Victor, Alícia, Joana, Artur, Fer.

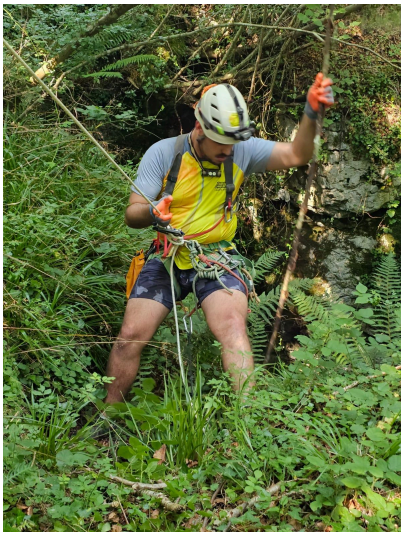
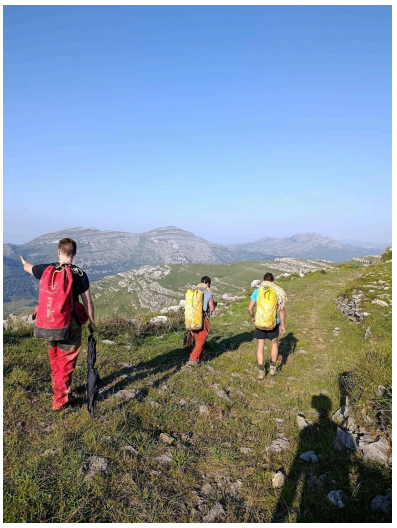
2 teams are formed: 1 to check and explore Torca Pusi, and another to prospect the upper part of the sierra, in the El Somo area.

The first group, made up of Pau, Victor, Marc and Arnau, checks Torca Pusi. After descending a wide 25-metre pitch, a ledge leads to another pitch of about 10 metres; at the base of this second pitch no draught or possible continuation can be found.



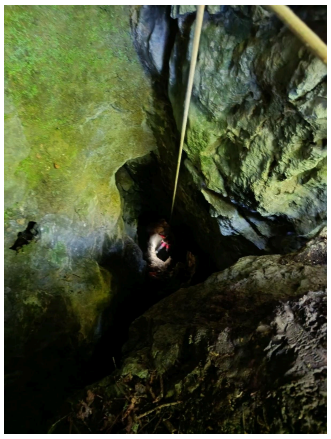


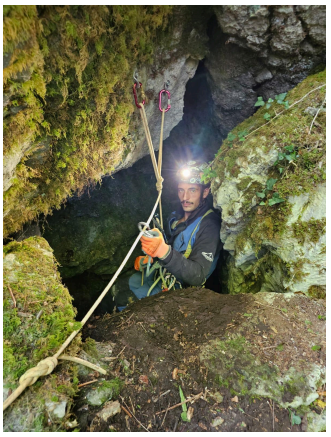
The rest of the group goes to the upper El Somo area to prospect and check new caves. 3 caves located in this area are explored, none of them of interest once checked.

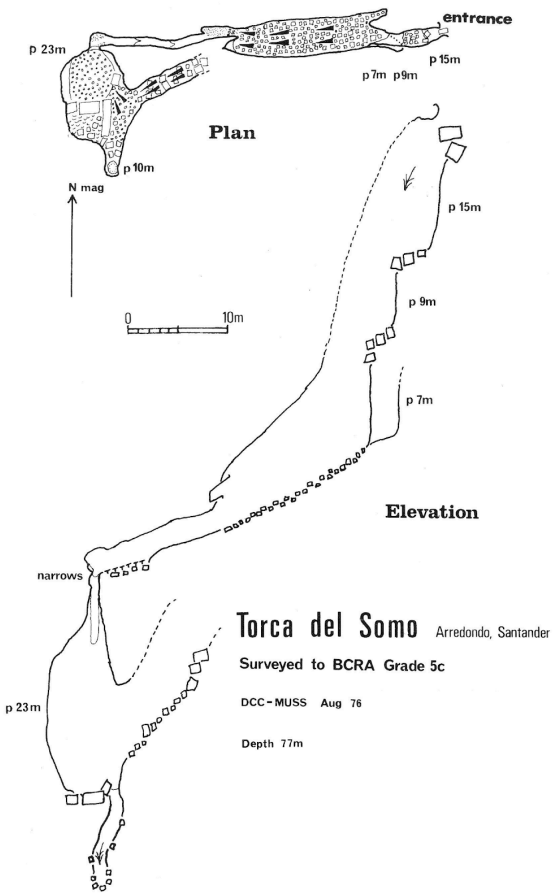



The Torca Pusi group goes up to El Somo to join the other group and prospect further, as it is still quite early. In a doline a hole with a fairly deep shaft is found. We look for signs of exploration or any kind of caving mark and decide to go in, very excited because it looks unexplored. The other group joins us at the doline.

A 30 m pitch leads to a fossil meander where, at the end, a small descending fissure gives onto another 25-metre pitch into a chamber of considerable size. At the base of this chamber there is another small pitch that is choked at the bottom. We pack up and leave. Even though we had finished exploring it, when we come out our companions tell us that the veterans looked up the location of the doline and that the cave had already been explored and surveyed in 1976: it is the Torca del Somo. A disappointment, as we had at least believed we had explored and found something new.





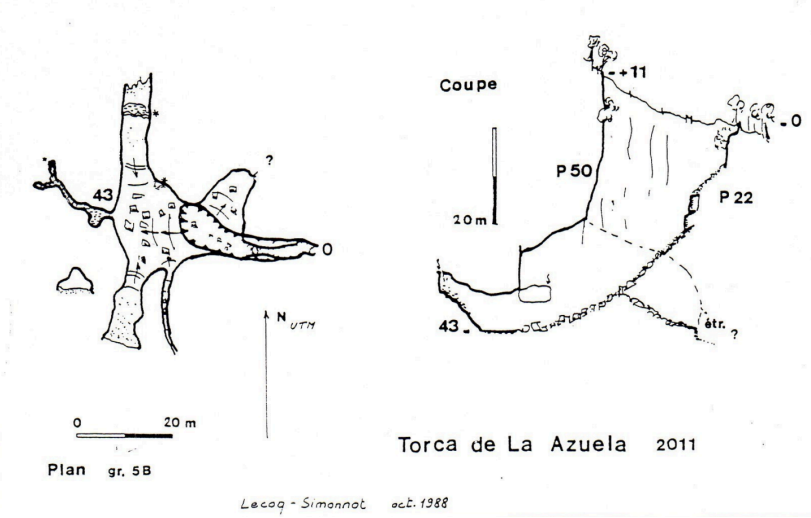



That ends the day of surface prospecting.

## 5 August:

Lluís, Andreu, Adolfo

Check of Torca de la Azuela. No draughts or possible continuations are found.



## 7 August:

Adolfo, Andreu, Lluís, Gual

Check of Hoyo de Llaneces. Interesting because it is in the area of the possible Vallina 3. A pretty cave with lots of formations. We find no possible continuations.



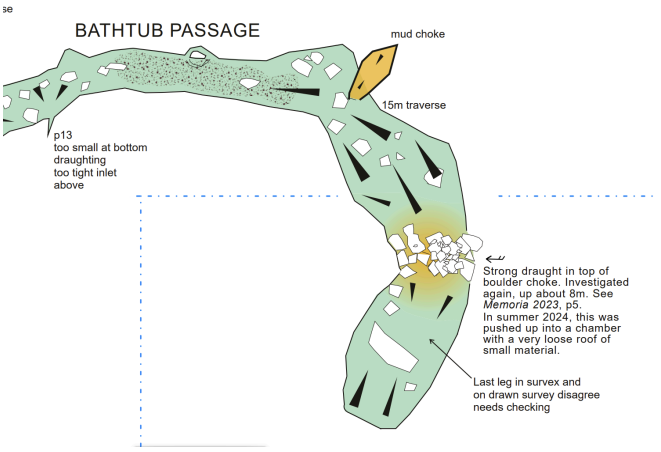


## 8 August

Adolfo, Andre, Pau, Joana, Lee

Entry to Vallina through Nospotentra to go to the Bathtub Passage to continue the digging work. Progress is made by removing some boulders, but there is still a lot of work to do to open up this boulder choke.



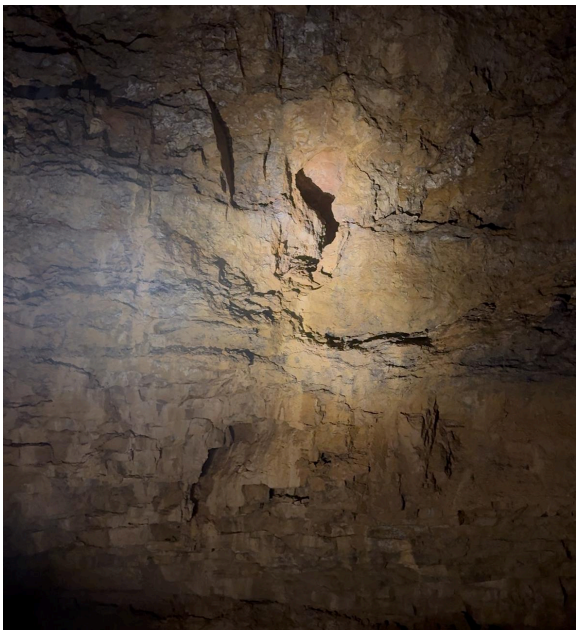


## 4. December long weekend:

### 5 December:

Isra, Myriam, Sergio, Joel, Xiu, Marc, Javi, Jose, Alejandro

We all enter together through La Rasa with the aim of reaching camp. During the descent of the shaft, possible leads are checked so they can be tackled in future. The only thing found is a window in the big chamber, about 15 metres up, with the shape of a fossil meander. The shaft should be checked more thoroughly.





Part of the group goes via the Río Blanco and the other via the Tocadome. Climbing the Tocadome, we notice that the karabiners on the progression line from the base to the window are in very poor condition. We reach camp at 7 pm.



## 6 December:



In the morning two teams are formed: one will go to explore at the Tocadome front and the other will head for the New York crawl.

Marc, Jose, Javi, Alejandro

We leave camp at 12 noon and head for the draughting lead in the Galería New York, which members of the group were working on until 2022.

On the way we take the opportunity to replace the karabiners in poor condition with maillons.

The lifelines from the 4/4 to the Galería NY are in quite poor condition.

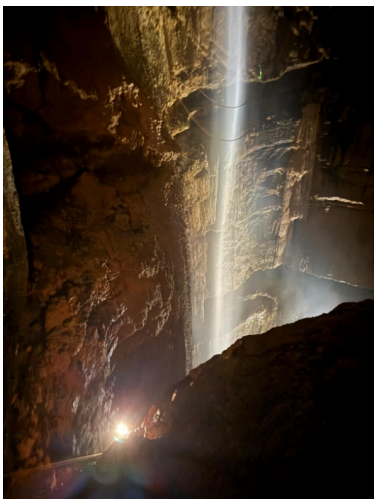
Once in NY we go into the E branch and a few metres further on we find the crawl on the left. Marc goes in to the end to assess the job and, as described in the 2022 report, at the end of it, after about 30-40 metres of crawling, there is a chamber that comfortably fits 3 people. There is a fissure there that blows air, and the sound of a waterfall can also be heard. This passage needs to be opened.

Javi and Marc go in and get to work digging out the passage, while Jose and Alejandro check other leads in the NY gallery. Later Jose also goes in to the lead to lend a hand.

By the end of the day the passage is opened and Marc manages to get out the other side of the fissure without a harness. It is a hanging window about 7 metres above the floor, where a waterfall can be heard and a river runs at its base. Because of the time we decide to leave it here, but the passage needs widening a bit more, as you have to exit that narrow squeeze on belay.

We reach camp at 21:30 and go to fetch water for the camp.

Sergio, Miryam, Joel, Silvia and Israel

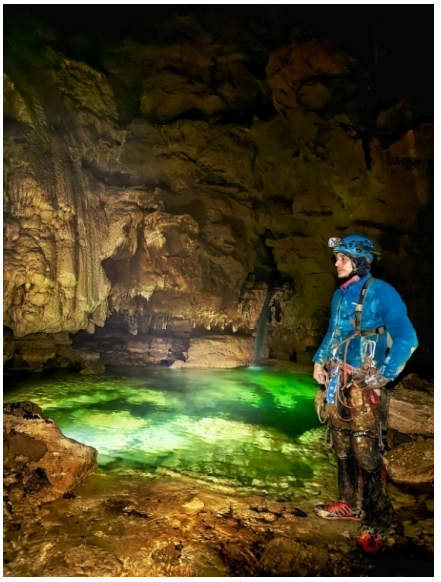


The Tocadome team climbs it and we go straight to check whether Galería Jerry is sumped, and this time it isn't! This shows that it was sumped because of exceptionally bad weather, which is not usual, was the conclusion.

We carry on and soon reach Galería Tom, go up it and reach the Frodadome through the watery flat-out crawl before it. Once there, a traverse is rigged at the first ring to protect the way to the comfortable galleries, and once there the team splits up.

Two team members go to push the final leads in the fossil galleries on the lower level of the Frodadome. One of them is dug open and ends in a narrow meander; from there we advance about 13 m with great difficulty, hammer in hand. No draught is apparent in this area.

A few metres back, a 3 m climb is made to assess whether there might be a hanging gallery, but nothing is found. The team then heads to the other lead, where there is a crawly gallery that disappears into the darkness; some kind of shovel or trowel is needed to remove sand, and a bucket-like container to clear it away. Finally a large cairn is left at the base of a small pitch, which we think can be reached from above once the Frodadome climb is finished.



The rest of the team stays in the Frodadome and starts the climb up the meander that looks as if it will connect with the fossil chamber at the top. On reaching the upper corner of the meander we realise it does not look as if it will let us up. We decide to downclimb part of what we have climbed and make a lateral traverse to reach the vertical section that leads straight to the gallery.

The last 15 m are a slope of stones and a 5 m vertical section with very poor rock where we cannot place anything. We reach the top and place a pitch head and two rebelays, one with a Parabolt and one with a Multi-Monti. Once at the top, we secure the progression line, rig a traverse around the shaft to reach the river and derig the climb.



We all regroup at the top of the Frodadome and start exploring the upper level. We follow the fossil gallery and within a few metres find a large drop in the floor, which turns out to be one of the avens our mates had marked on the lower level. From here the gallery heads SE and runs for about 300 m along a very comfortable and pretty gallery, with some spots of beautiful formations.

This gallery ends in a large flying-saucer-shaped chamber full of formations: clusters of transparent straws, large flowstones descending throughout the chamber, helictites and some of the largest prism-shaped crystals we have seen. The chamber seems to leave no leads. We had the feeling that any possible continuation has been blocked by so much formation.

Back at the Frodadome, a traverse is rigged to cross to the river. Once across we head upstream, and soon the river splits into two branches, right and left.

## 7 December:

Two groups are formed: while some carry on exploring NY, the rest stay behind sorting out the camp.



Marc, Javi and Jose

We leave camp at 10:30 to head back to the NY lead, with the aim of finishing opening the passage and descending from the window to see what opens up at the base of the chamber.

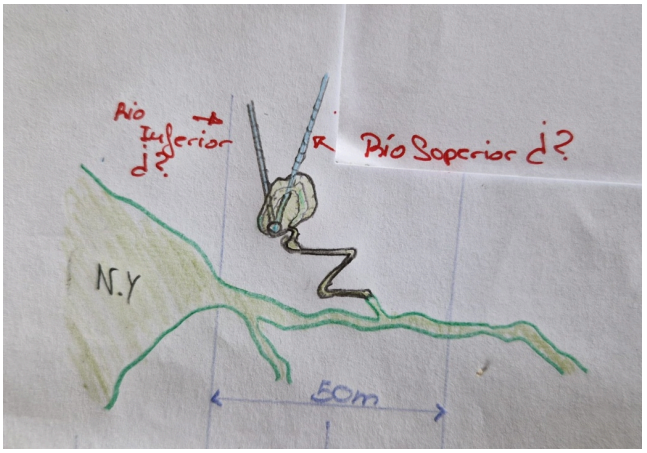
On the way we replace a dodgy Multi-Monti protecting a step in the Meandre de la Granota from above. We reckon at least 11 Parabolts will be needed to replace the access rigging to NY, as the Multi-Montis are starting to degrade.

Once in NY we go into the crawl and carry on digging until it is comfortable to get through with progression gear. A line is rigged with 2 Multi-Montis and we descend.



In the chamber we find a waterfall of about 10 metres coming down from the W, which turns right at the base of the chamber, joining another inlet from the NE. At their junction there is a small 2-metre step, and the meander continues slightly NW, narrowing at the bottom, so it is possible to progress by bridging above. Because of the time we turn back, as we had set ourselves a 3 pm deadline to head out. In the antechamber of the dug passage we leave 2 ropes (35 m and 7 m) and 4 Multi-Montis with hangers and maillons. In NY we leave another 2 Multi-Montis with hangers and maillons and one loose maillon.

At 7:30 pm we are coming out of the Nospotentra entrance.



Isra, Myriam, Sergio, Joel, Xiu and Alejandro

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We gather up and check all the bags and bivouac items and, because of the excess of useless items and expired things, two full bags of rubbish are collected to take out. Another check should be done to reduce the camp gear even further, as there are still many things that are unnecessary or in excess.

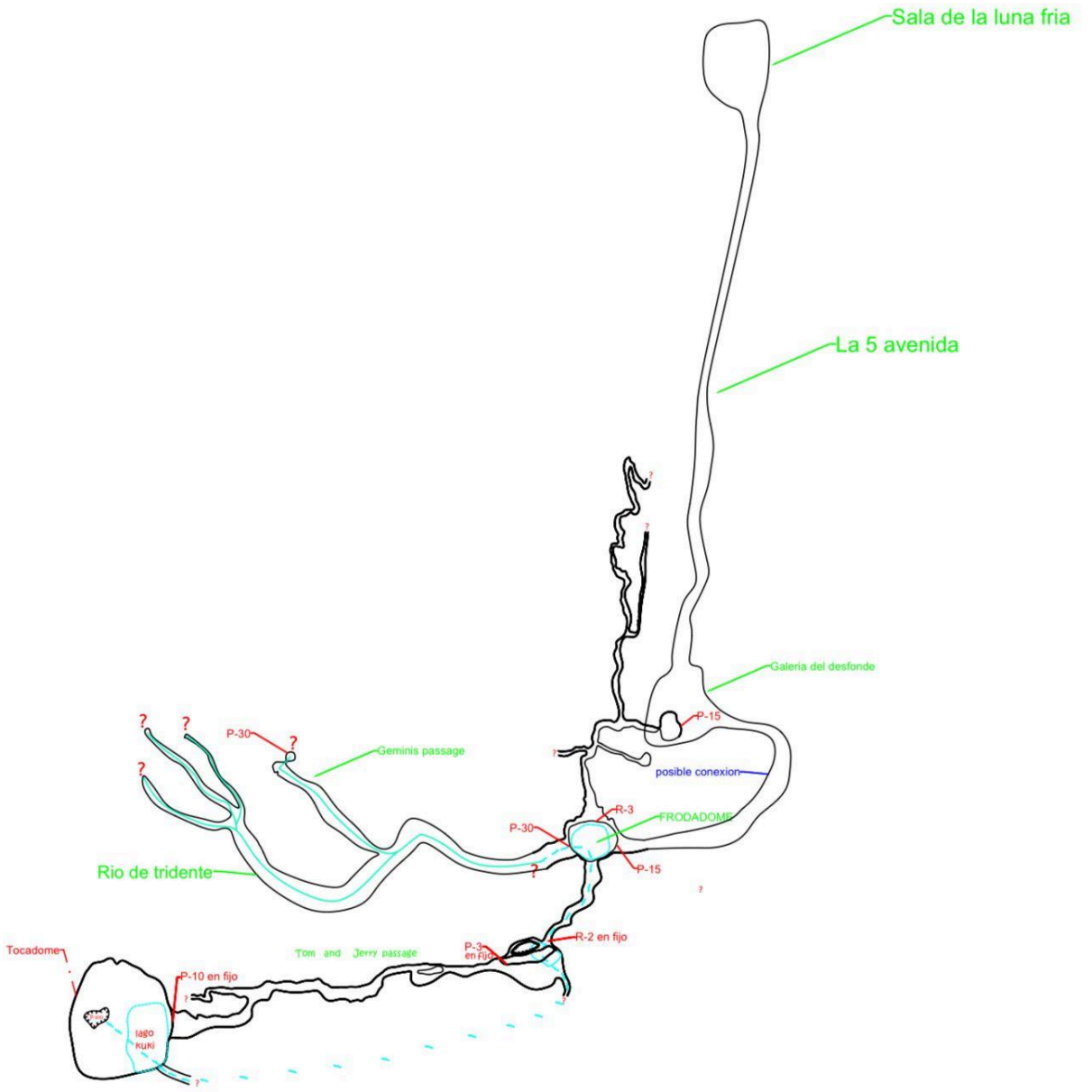
At 3 pm, with the whole group together, we head out, and at 7:30 pm we are coming out of the Nospotentrà entrance.



## NOTES ON THE UPPER LEVEL OF THE TOCADOME:

- In the Frodadome, two pitch-head points are rigged with 10 mm stainless Parabolts with hangers and maillons, one rebelay with a 6 mm Multi-Monti with hanger and maillon, and another with a 10 mm stainless Parabolt with hanger and maillon.
- At the first ring of the Frodadome, two points are rigged with 6 mm Multi-Montis with hangers and maillons to protect the way to the fossil area.
- At the top of the Frodadome, on the river side, another 10 mm stainless Parabolt with hanger and maillon is added, and a redirect to a natural anchor is set up as a safety traverse to reach the shaft.
- At the top of the Frodadome, 3 offcuts of 15 m rope have been left, plus the leftover rope from the climb, which may be another 10 m.
- The lower and upper traverses giving access to the river and to the Galería de Géminis are rigged to exploration standard; if more work is to be done there, they should be reinforced.
- At the end of the Galería de Géminis, between two very large white stalagmites, is the access to the aven of about 30 m that needs climbing.
- The lower fossil galleries can still be pushed further; a Catalan trowel or similar should be taken, as sand has to be cleared.
- As for the 4 active river leads, they should be checked again after surveying, establishing the exact position and direction of each to assess which could be the most obvious continuation.

# FRODADOME SKETCH:



| BIVOUAC GEAR INVENTORY: |
| --- |
| 14 × 10 mm stainless Parabolts<br>11 × 8 mm Parabolts (6 stainless, 5 not)<br>2 × 8 mm Multi-Montis<br>18 × 6 mm Multi-Montis<br>7 double-hole climbing hangers<br>24 maillons with hangers<br>19 loose maillons<br>3 loose hangers<br>1 Multi-Monti with hanger and maillon<br>1 adjustable spanner<br>13 × 400 $cm^3$ gas canisters, 1/4” thread<br>3 Camping Gaz canisters<br>2 × 40 l tackle bags<br>4 Dyneema slings with 6 maillons<br>1 × 60 m 9 mm rope<br>1 × 50 m 10 mm rope<br>5 × 10 m rope offcuts<br>4 × 20 m rope offcuts |

## RESULTS 2025

- Work is done in the triangle formed by the Novadome, Twin Avens and Riu Gran, checking leads. The Novadome and the Trillizo are derigged, recovering gear for use at other active fronts.
- The area beyond the Cagandre passage, after the Galería Blanca, has been linked with the already known Hale-Bop Trail area, although some leads remain to be resolved here and the survey needs to be tied into the general Vallina survey.
- The upper level of the Tocadome has been explored, with several climbs, and about 1 km of new galleries has been discovered; surveying and checking of leads remain for future trips. In the Tocadome itself, the progression line in the upper part and at Kuki Lake is fixed to make passage more comfortable and safer.
- Work resumes in the Galería New York, and one of the leads with a strong draught is dug open, revealing a very interesting new river descending northwards.
- Leads are checked on the upper level of the Novadome, without significant progress.
- Work continues at the Vallina 1 fronts, without notable results.
- Finally, surface prospecting continues, locating and exploring new shafts. So far none has been found that connects with the system.