Matienzo Caves Project

An ***Invitation*** *to* ***Student Caving Clubs*** *and* ***Individuals***

"Of course, the main reason for caving in Matienzo is to explore new stuff. This summer, I spent a fortnight in Matienzo, and as a family man, went caving only every other day - so in effect I had a week of caving. I explored more than 500 metres of new cave passage in total. And I mean, big stomping exciting passages with pitches and formations. I don't know of many expeditions in the world where you can expect to find so much."

"As for the caving, well that is spectacular. The first time I went, I was amazed by the size of the passages and the amount of huge formations, which are just everywhere."

"I learnt to survey, place bolts, place caps etc. there - all pretty useful things to take home. I really wish we had gone to Matienzo when I was a student, then I'd have known all these things sooner!"

"I know of people who have been to Mulu and been disappointed because they would have found more in Matienzo."

"The campsite is next to a pub that never closes. It serves food all day and a beer or glass of wine costs €1.50."

"The expedition stores have all the ropes and rigging equipment that is needed, so you just need to take personal caving gear."

Come caving with one of the longest-running caving expeditions: we celebrated 65 years in 2025!

Photo: Paul Dold

AIM?
The ***Matienzo Caves Project*** aims to explore and publicly document the caves, shafts and other sites of speleological interest in and around the Matienzo depression.

WHERE?
Cantabria, Northern Spain. Matienzo de Ruesga is a small village inside the largest enclosed karst depression in Spain. We explore around here and the surrounding areas. The headquarters is in the Bar-Restaurante *Casa Germán* where the expedition office is set up in the restaurant.

HOW to GET THERE?
Direct UK ferry to Santander or Bilbao; flights to Bilbao or Santander; drive through France.

WHEN?
Summer and Easter are the main expedition times.

WHO?
Cavers of all abilities and ages are welcome. Previous student groups have included SUSS, UBSS and MUSC. The latter club explored new passages in the 23km-long Cubija System.

ACCOMMODATION?
There is self-catering accommodation nearby or a campsite behind *Casa Germán* which also has toilets and showers, and the tackle store with fridge and charging facilities.

FOOD?
Self-catering and / or restaurant meals / sandwiches in *Casa Germán* or at various other locations. The nearest town, Ramales, has a number of supermarkets and other shops.

SOME CAVING DETAIL?

Typically, the previous evening will have been spent in preparation: researching, gathering and checking gear, and socialising.

The trip may involve some or all of digging draughting holes, SRT, exploring new passages, surveying and photography. Group tackle (ropes, bolts, etc) are provided but personal equipment is the responsibility of each individual. Cavers can expect to enjoy all the delights of UK caving plus world-class formations, pitches, chambers, boulders, avens, etc, etc.

The MCP has a small network of laptops set up in the office allowing survey data and photograph input and storage. The office facility is also used to research caves and previous trips, and process and draw up survey data. An online logbook entry is completed after every trip.

There is no pressure on inexperienced individuals to "leap in at the deep end". Throughout each expedition there are a variety of speleological activities to enjoy: hill walking to discover and document unknown entrances or digs, and exploring new caves and shafts. Everyone has something to contribute, whatever age or experience. Coaching in surveying, scientific recording, conservation and water tracing, as well as general caving techniques needed in newly found caves will be available. Student groups may wish to cave together although individual learning may be enhanced by caving with the more experienced.

REST TIME?
For "days off", the beaches are forty minutes away and Cantabria has many other attractions (including nearby *via ferratas* and show caves!)

MORE INFORMATION?
The MCP has a web site with details of more than 5500 sites of speleological interest – from digs to the Four Valleys System at more than 80km long. Some direct links to pages are shown here, although everything can be accessed from the front page.

Web site front page
http://www.matienzocaves.org.uk

Newcomer info
http://www.matienzocaves.org.uk/green.htm

https://www.facebook.com/groups/7517519559/

http://www.matienzocaves.org.uk/MatienzoCavesProject.htm

CONTACT? Phil Papard runs the major expeditions and will provide dates and answer queries: **phil@papard.uk**

Photo: Torben Redder