



Tresviso 2018 Summary Report

Overview:

The 2018 expedition was to continue with ongoing exploration in the *Cueva del Nacimiento* cave in the Urdon Gorge (Tresviso, Cantabria). Expeditions in the previous years have been slowly extending the cave up through the mountain range, with the intention of trying to connect the cave with the known deeper pot holes in the Andara region. A number of the caves higher on the mountain (*Sima 56, Sara*) have previously been dye tested and the water is known to resurge in *Cueva del Nacimiento*.

Cueva del Nacimiento is a large resurgence cave in the gorge below Tresviso. Originally explored in the 1970's and 80's it was pushed to a terminal chamber 'Death Race 2000', ~400m above the entrance. Interest was re-kindled in 2009 with a lot of work put into regaining the original route over the following years and climbs above Death Race 2000 began with the hope of finding further extensions to the cave and a connection with the surface.

In addition, a large contingent of Sheffield University Speleological Society (SUSS) members joined the expedition, working alongside the main group. The SUSS camp recreated the expeditions of Lancaster University Speleological Society (LUSS) in the 80s, staying high in the mountains at Vegas de Andara.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the 2018 expedition were:

1. exploration beyond *Death Race 2000* & radio location of key passages
2. exploration beyond Sump 2 in *Cueva de la Marniosa*
3. In conjunction with SUSS, several of the open leads in the deeper alpine potholes in the limestone plateau above the resurgence systems are to be re-visited. In particular exploration to concentrate on Flower Pot on the Pico Boro peak.

Results:

Cueva del Nacimiento – Jurassic World – Terror Firma

In 2017 the 'final' aven at the end of the cave was climbed to over 40m, a split in the aven was followed to a new height of 534m above the entrance, but closed down. The second aven remained unclimbed and this was climbed in 2018. Unfortunately, the aven closed down after only 14m of height gain. As this lead was at a lower level to the previous aven, no increase to the overall height of the cave was achieved.

Cueva del Nacimiento – Death Race – Silky Carpet

This was a short climb above Pi Chamber, after following a short calcite climb to a dead end, a calcite ramp was followed back over the main Death Race passage. This gave ~70m of high-level passage which eventually returned to the main passage around the boulder choke area. A lead remains, at the far end of the ramp is a broken pitch down to the main passage, halfway down the pitch is a passage heading in the opposite direction (away from the main route), about 20-30m of passage can be seen to a corner.

Cueva del Nacimiento – Death Race – Joes Crack

about 70-80m of descending rift passage. This ended in a small aven and inlet. This inlet appears to be at a gentler gradient than other in the area and may provide some entertaining exploration. The aven was dry. We assumed this inlet was the upstream of the water seen at the base of the death race pitches.

Cueva del Nacimiento – Death Race – Pina Colada



The large Pina Colada sump was crossed to give access to an ascending rift / climb that led to another 150m of passage, an aven at the end remains unclimbed. This area is of particular interest, given the ramp like nature of Nacimiento, because it has dropped back down to stream-level and is now heading back up.

Cueva del La Marniosa

Sump 2 was dived again to the previous limit of exploration. Another 150m of cave was explored over a 3-hour trip by 2 cavers and was stopped after encountering a 5m pitch into the continuing streamway. Logistics for diving at such a remote site (with full SRT and rigging equipment requirements) prevented further exploration.

T20A Silvestre Pot

An unexpected discovery was a surface sink in the Sobra Valley. Sites have been known in this area since the early 70's exploration but with no real systematic exploration occurring. One site in particular provided a series of pitches into an active stream. The location and direction of the cave pointed to an obvious connection to *Cueva de la Marniosa*. The cave was explored over 4 trips reaching over -230m depth and 780m long. Finally, on the last trip a connection with *Cueva de la Marniosa* was achieved. This has created a through trip of -463m, a 5.5km system and the 7th deepest cave in the Andara range

Flower Pot

The *BEN Series* was resurveyed to a depth of -304m. Various aven climbs were also pushed and added to the survey, although none led anywhere. *Boulder Bluff*, which follows the water upstream from the *Rock Garden*, was pushed through a ~25m and ~10m pitch before becoming too tight. An alternative route onwards was discovered at around -260m and followed through fossil passage, down to new pitches to an ongoing but narrow rift with the sound of a waterfall, potentially leading back into the main system.

The *BILL series* was re-explored finding a new 15m x 15m chamber, *Deflowered Chamber* and from the previous limit of 80's exploration, an alternative route was found through a tight rift to a new 35m pitch and followed by the discovery of a large and impressive 87m deep shaft (*Invasive Species*). At the bottom further awkward streamway rift is ongoing.

Other exploration

Pozo Del Castillo

The snow plug that has prevented access to the main cave for the last 30 years had receding over the hot summer in Spain. A 5m pitch was dropped to tight rifts against the remaining snow. Unexpectedly the passage popped out to connect to the lower section of *FT16 (explored in 2017)*. This now suggests that the snow plug is the centre of a very large entrance chamber / shaft, at least 60m deep, with the snow plug almost 30-40m high. The way on into *Castillo* proper remains elusive and is probably still beneath the centre of the snow plug. Further work in the chamber next year may be successful.

The SUSS team also passed the undescended 20m pitch at the bottom of the *Natacha Series*, this was followed to another 5m pitch with a final impassable tight constriction.

Fallen Bear

The expedition provided support to Daniel Ballesteros (respected Spanish caver, working in the area on scientific discoveries) to rig *Fallen Bear* and show him the 'fallen bear' skeleton. A good relationship has been formed with Daniel and other Asturian based cavers who helped.



Summary:

In total over 3km of new cave was surveyed in 2018, a further 2km of existing cave was resurveyed, largely in *Cueva del Nacimiento* in order to correct known errors and incorrect passages in the entrance series.

Exploration in *Cueva del Nacimiento* still remains a challenge. The distance and nature of the cave has prevented numerous cavers from reaching the end and this year thunderstorms produced some unexpected reactions at the far end. Although it did not produce new passage, the re-rigging of the *Death Race* traverse and other climbs opens up the possibility of increased success next year as the time to the end of the cave from the *Death Race* camp has been reduced from 3-4 hours to a mere hour.

The connecting of *Silvestre Pot* to *Cueva de la Marniosa* is also a major achievement for the team. Although not the deep through trip that the expedition is striving for, it highlights the possibilities and hopefully encourages the expedition is on the right track.....!

SUSS found a number of new leads including potential ways on in *Flower Pot* and undertook valuable resurveying work around the *SARA* system, that could form the basis of future work for their team. The SUSS camp worked very well, although taking any more than the ~25 people would be a logistical challenge in terms of maintaining supplies.

