

Cueto Coventosa

Access Cueto:

From Arredondo head south towards Bustablado on the CA-261, turn left on the CA-655 Bustablado road. Go through Bustablado bearing left and take the road which goes East up towards the mounting. The road winds its way up switching back right and left until you reach a flat area after a while you will reach a track on the left and road slightly turns to the right, you should park here. Cueto is a good hour's walk from here.

Take the well-trodden track towards some huts, passing beside them and take the path which climbs up the hill. The path is hard to describe but has been way marked with pherecsent yellow dots (don't lose them). The path winds its way across several large dolines eventually arriving at a path from Socueva. Turn right and head up hill, the path rises until you reach an open grassy area and Cueto is marked on a stone on the path (Hard to miss), the entrance is slightly down on the left.

Coventosa:

To reach Coventosa we have to take the road in Arredondo which goes to Asón. Just before reaching a bridge over the Asón (not even 1km before Asón village) there's a right turn towards Socueva. We'll have to park in this village and walk to the cave. For that, we will cross the parking area and take a concrete path; we pass a first group of huts and turn right going up towards another group of huts. The path becomes horizontal and short after that it slightly goes down. 200m after the last hut and 5m above the path we will find the big entrance of Coventosa.

La Cuvera (resurgence) is located by the road between Asón and Arredondo, and it's the font of the system. There's a sump a few meters after the entrance which make the access to the system impossible without using cave-diving gear.

Description:

It's the most classic of all the through trips located in Asón valley. It's really interesting not only for the altitude difference between the entrances (695m) and it's long distance (more than 6km) but also for the variety of the technical difficulties that it involves, as the huge 300m entrance pitch rigged for pull through technique, the long series of pitches that sometimes involve pendulums and that reach a depth of -581m and the squeezes in the intermediate net of passages. All this unite with the big attractive galleries and lakes makes Cueto Coventosa a great trip.

Cueto's pitches:

After the small passage and the entrance gallery(20m long), after a short traverse we reach the P302 (Pozo Johué), which has, at -196m a big ledge. It's a big pitch with round section and clean walls in the area where the bolts are rigged which become narrower after the ledge. Despite it's a fossil pitch, in the last 100m there can be water dropping if it has been raining. Since 1992 this pitch can be descended using pull though technique divided in 8 sections (the bigger distance is 50m) and there are chains that allow a maximum of 4 cavers to hang in the middle of the wall.

Immediately after Pozo Juhué there's a series of pitches that bear no resemblance at all with the first one as they are not smooth and sometimes chaotic, it can be difficult to avoid the rope rubbing, moreover after the Juana de Arco pitch the pot becomes narrower and there's multiple pitches until we reach the big galleries.

At the bottom of the P302 a narrow pass gives way to pitch-head of the P55 (Pozo del Algodón-Cotton pitch) whose first part might be rigged with fixed rope to access the pitch-head and where we have to be fully aware of the rub points. It's followed by a narrow P7 and P8. Immediately after we reach the P69 (pozo del péndulo-pendulum), where it's needed at -25m a 5-6m pendulum to reach a window that gives way to a P46 (pozo de la muleta- crutch). With the help of a 7m fixed rope we reach the pitch-head. In this pitch we also have to do a pendulum 6m before the bottom that gives access to a gallery cut by a R4 between blocks and later a P28 (pozo Juana de Arco) in the rift. In the base, a small climb up leads us to a P30 (pozo del oso-bear) leaving on the other directions a series of blind pitches. After the P30 there's a P9 and through a window we reach the P42 (pozo de la marmita-marmite) where it's common to find water. A chaotic area where we go down about 15m between boulders, ends up in a P20 with a very narrow pitch-head which gives access to the big fossil galleries of Cueto. Approx. Time to go down using pull through technique: 6h. (map below)



Big fossil galleries of Cueto

Once in Juhué gallery and until Navidad pitch (the beginning of the intermediate net) there's no difficulty, there can only be small route finding problems in certain points like the 11hours chamber. Be careful while walking through the boulder areas.

From the point where the rope goes down the last of the entrance pitches and looking to the wall closer to the rope we have to take the path to the left which gives way after a big ramp to the "sala de las once horas" 11hours chamber (11800 m²). After that we go down by a big ramp (Gran Pedrera) with loose stones, with more than 60m of difference between the top and the bottom where we have to mind the possible pebble avalanches. We continue by El Chicarrón Gallery, a huge tube with circular section of about 40m whose floor is a continuous chaos and where walking can be even monotonous. Halfway through this gallery there's some droppings from the roof, that location is the Oasis, the only place where we can get good water. After having walked more than 1km since the big ramp (Gran Pedrera) we get to Pozo de la Navidad- Christmas pitch, where the gallery abruptly becomes narrower. Approx. time: 2h. (Map above)

The intermediate net

The intermediate net is a complicated net of conducts and pitches that superimposes and interweaves one to another and that eventually unites with Coventosa. These galleries are smaller in dimensions than the precedents, where there are narrow rifts in the areas closer to Coventosa (la Turbina, El Trou Souffleur o Agujero Soplador, etc) it's a succession of galleries in two different levels, interweaved by several pitches which shows how the system has evolved growing deeper towards the lower levels.

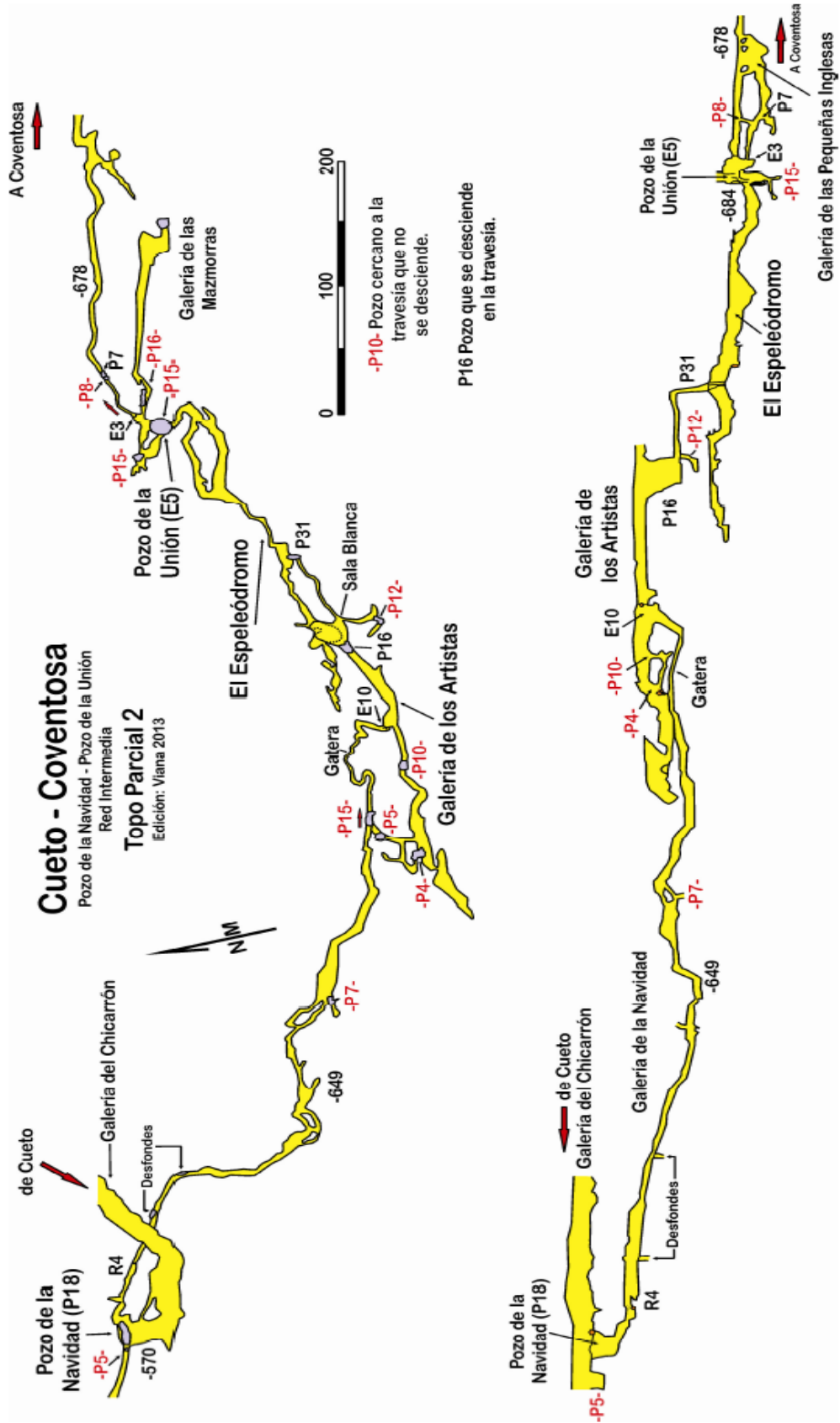
Despite the fact that it could be difficult to find the way, the path is really worn, the pitches are usually fix-rigged and just by being a bit careful we will be able to find the way without difficulties.

By a P18 (Pozo de la Navidad) we reach the Navidad Gallery which is straight and with several holes in the floor. Very close to the P18 there's a R4 followed by two areas where the floor abruptly which we have to avoid, being the first one rigged. Further away, the gallery goes down until a depth of 649, point where we have to climb up to get a gallery that goes up and down and which ends up in a more step ramp. In the highest point we have to take a pass between boulders to get to a chaotic chamber (galería de los artistas) here we continue by a shot passage followed by a ramp and a P16, in whose base we find the Sala blanca (white Chamber). The continuation is by a small gallery with rectangular section located in the right and which finishes in a P31. This pitch gives way to a big gallery: El Espeleodromo, where following East direction we have to climb some blocks to eventually reach the Pozo de la Unión (Union pitch). Estimated time from Pozo de la Navidad: 2hours

The union pitch is rigged. We have to go up 5m to a lateral gallery, we continue by it and later turn right following a descending conduct. By doing this we completely surround the pitch (we can get water in this point). We leave the gallery by a 3m climbing to the left, that passing by a small window gives access to the Galería de las pequeñas inglesas.

Further away there is a P7 after which the progression is very easy though there are a few climbs before we get to a P15, a few metres after leaving an upper gallery by the right. The gallery by which we continue is big and chaotic and cut by several really deep pitches (inc pozo

Josiane) later we reach a crossroads where we have to take the way to the right which leads to a 8m climb up and further away to a chamber with water. After a funny area where the floor goes down and with plenty of lateral ways we reach a narrow 90m long rift which ends up in a small chamber La Turbina, to which we arrive by abseiling a P6. La Turbina is followed is followed by a series of small passages until we get to the point where a big air current is noticeable and it becomes stronger as we progress, we then reach El Trou Souffleur or Agujero Soplador (Blowing Hole) it is a narrow P17 in a vertical rift where the walls are 40cm apart and where progress can be difficult. Approximate time from Pozo de la Unión 2-3 hrs.(map below)

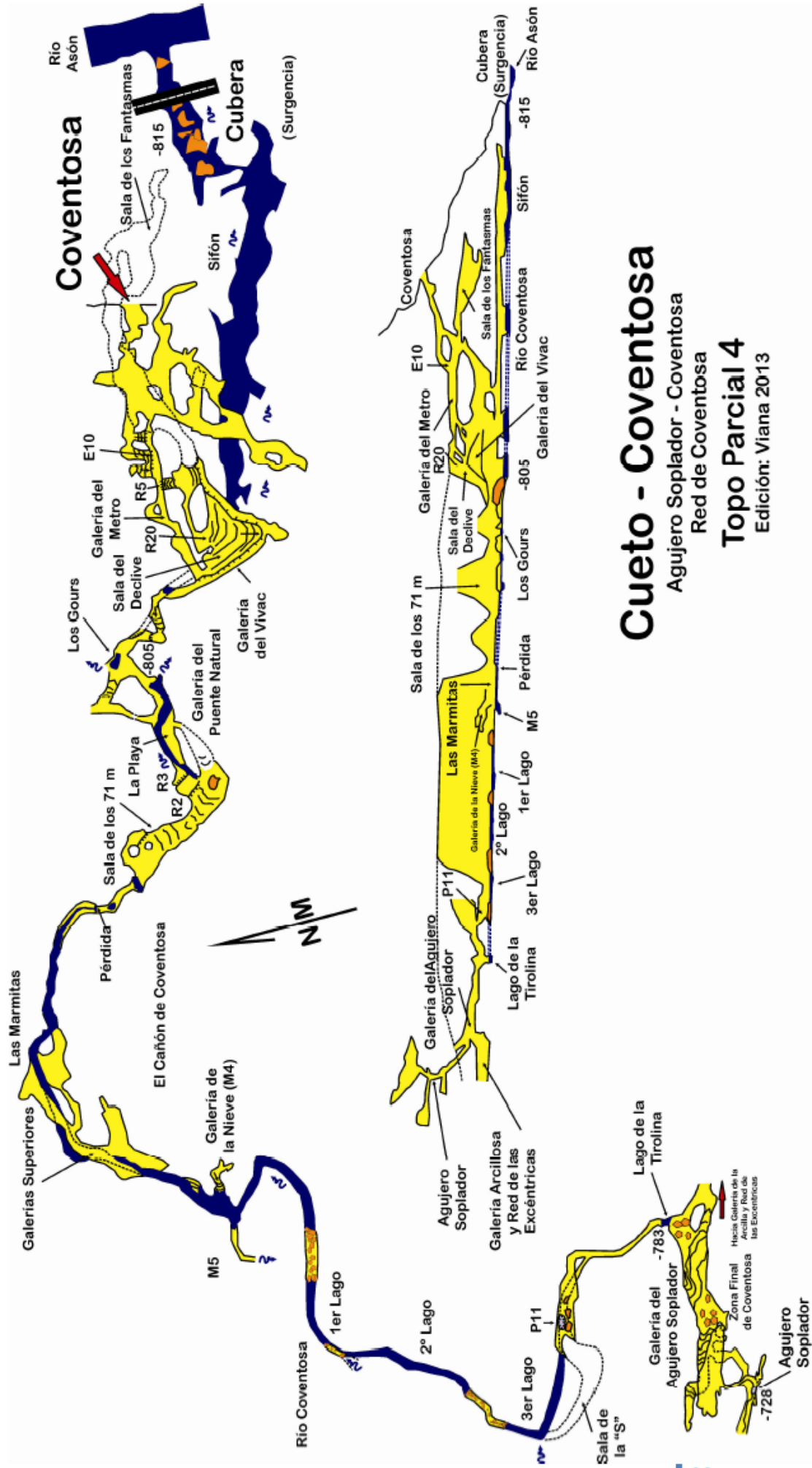


The Galleries of Coventosa

Under the small rift a big conduit opens, Galleria del Agujero Soplador, and descends by ramps sometime slippery and with big blocks. Thus, we reach a deep marmite at 853m deep in the cave, where there is a traverse to avoid the water. The water level in the marmite can reach the traverse and cover it when it rains so if we are using a boat for the lake we will need to leave the boat on the Cueto side of this marmite. We continue by a galley which goes up and eventually becomes bigger and we find a boulder chaos where we descend a P15 that leads us to the active galleries. We then reach three deep lakes of 150m, 120m and 100m length each lake is separated from the other by a boulder pile. To cross the lakes requires the use of a boat or wetsuits. (note that if it has been raining a lot the three lakes can become a very long and demanding one) After the lakes we continue by the Gran Cañón where the gallery is about 8m wide and 70m high.

We continue following the river which has on its final part an area where getting lost might be easy. We go up a gallery and we get to the Sala de 71m. We go up in this chamber by a boulder ramp where there is white slippery mud in the area where descend back to the river. After going up a small climb of about 3m over a big boulder and wading a flooded area we keep walking by a gallery that gets to a crossroads. To the right we reach an upper level after going up a boulder ramp, while if we decide to go by the lower gallery we have to continue towards a 3m climb up that leads to the river. When it is raining a lot this area is flooded so it is better to take the upper route.

A bit further away we reach the gours and to avoid them we have to climb up a 5m ramp, with a fixed rope and take a traverse rigged with steel wire. We come down by a rope and then ascend by a ramp with pebbles and later we have to go up a 6m climb followed by a traverse rigged with steel wire. By a white gallery Galeria del Vivac that is the beginning of the entrance series, we keep walking until a point 50m before its end where a big ramp on the left starts and leads us up to the ceiling of the Sala Declive. An area with crawling gives access to an upper tunnel either in a direct way or by an area where we have to climb down 5m. On the right and about 20m from the climb there will be a rope that we have to rig before attempting the through trip which goes up 10m. We continue by a ramp and pass by the side of several pitches on the right and we pass through el Tubo del Viento, to arrive at the big entrance porch of Cueva Coventosa. Approximate time for the Galleries of Coventosa 2-3hrs. (see map below)



Cueto - Coventosa

Agujero Soplador - Coventosa
Red de Coventosa

Topo Parcial 4

Edición: Viana 2013

Material and Rigging

All of Cueto's pitches including the P302 are perfectly equipped to use pull through technique. In the P302 every belay has a fixed chain and a ring to rig the abseil. This has been arranged for a maximum of 4 people. Until the ledge at -200m there are five hangs of 47m, 37m, 42m, 27m and 49m and on the first three hangs it is better to use an auxiliary footloop. From the ledge to the bottom of Pozo Juhué there are three more hangs 41m, 40m and 27m. In all of the other pitches of the cave the pitch heads only have two belays and in some of them we can have problems of recovering the rope. All of the pitches in the intermediate section of the cave have fixed ropes. The climbs up and traverses in the Coventosa area are also rigged. To do the through trip you need at least a 55m-60m rope and one or others that amount to the same in order to recover it. Because of possible damage to the rope it is also recommended to take a spare rope of about 50m. It would be better to take 9mm or 8mm rope to reduce the weight of our packs. To cross the lakes we can use either a boat or a full wetsuit. If we are using a boat it is best to take this in the bottom entrance before hand and leave it on the Cueto side of the lakes. We also may have to rig a couple of pitches near the entrance to Coventosa.

Recommendations

It is a through trip that requires a very high technical level, not only for the wide variety of difficulties to overcome but also for the duration of the trip. Therefore it is only recommended for cavers used to such trips and with a high level of technical competence. In Cueto and after the P302, the cave has additional difficulties like pendulums (and blind pits) , problems with recovering the rope and the appearance of water, so prudence is recommended.

Due the absence of water in most of the trip, it is recommended to fill water bottles at the few places that we can, the base of the entrance series of Cueto, at the Oasis and at the Pozo de la Union.

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it is recommended, before undertaking the traverse to enter Cueva Coventosa to equip the two pitches and deploy and boats /wetsuits at the far side of the lakes. (Or even in the Galeria de Soplodor where there is a deep marmite at -783m, where the water level can rise above the traverse line in times of flood). If the complicated Coventosa system is not know it is recommended that the team making the traverse has a trip to familiarise themselves with this area so that they recognise it at the end of the traverse.

Since the final part of the traverse is along an important water course it is important that we consider the time of year that we undertake the traverse. In times of rains or snowmelts the system can be subjected to large flash floods, which could stop us from passing the river in several places (Gran Canon, Marmites etc...) this can make the traverse very dangerous. So it is advised to pay close attention to the weather conditions and forecast, both for during the traverse and in the few days before making the traverse, it is also worth visiting the resurgence Cuvera, by the main road to observe the water levels in the system.