

Cueva del Becerral (crossing Los Santos)

The Cueva del Becerral opens right in the middle of the reef lens at the foot of which the Gandara River originates. The beautiful entrance porch and its ideal position relative to the source attracted the attention of early explorers, but to this day, this likely tributary of the Gandara system has not yet been connected to the main system.

The cave has two entrances:

- Cueva de la Becerall (SCD no.: 79): $x=442.595$; $y=4782.58$; $z=695m$
- Torca del Sol (SCD no.: 780): $x=452.34$; $y=4782.77$; $z=808m$

Municipality: Soba

Total length: 490 m

Elevation difference: 113 m



History of explorations

Exploration of this underground stream began in 1930 by Spanish speleologists. In 1959, the Dijon Speleological Club (SC Dijon) visited the cave and created an initial survey. Three years later, the same club returned, this time accompanied by speleologists from the Barcelona Speleological Group (GES Barcelona). Together, they revisited the Cueva de los Santos and explored several sinkholes on the heights of Peña Becerall and La Brena. In 1974, the Dijon Speleological Club (SCD) produced a new survey of the cave (Sous le Plancher 1973, Volume XII). All these explorations were primarily directed upstream, where a strong air current originates. In the following years, a few side passages were added (SC Paris and Lombrics 1977, SGCAF 1994), and a climb was even attempted by the Madrid Speleological Club (STD Madrid) in 1986, in a significant chimney located approximately 350 meters from the entrance. The downstream section, however, remains impenetrable (a very narrow meander), although there is a real possibility of connecting it to the underlying Gandara cave system. In December 1994, during a survey on the Peña Becerall, the SCDijon (P. and S. Degouve) discovered a narrow chasm with a strong air current (torca del Sol). In July 1995, the same team descended the shaft and reached the top of the ascent begun by the STD Madrid.

Crossing Los Santos

Crossing Los Santos is child's play, and this ease perfectly reflects the cave's morphology. Here, fracturing (NW-SE) played a dominant role in the cavity's formation. The dip seems to have had less influence, unlike the cave systems located further upstream in the Gandara catchment basin. The result is a meander, in places ten meters high, with only a few tributaries as offshoots. Torca del Sol opens directly above this meander, following the same pattern of joints which, on the surface, have favored the formation of a series of sinkholes. The chasm opens on the side of one of these sinkholes. It is accessed via a poorly marked path that winds along the north face of Peña Becerall before reaching a superb viewpoint overlooking the entire Gandara cirque. As the crow flies, we are only 300 meters from the Becerall cave entrance. The entrance (0.80m), hidden by a boulder and vegetation, leads to a first shaft 27 meters deep. At -10m, it intersects a joint that gradually widens to join the Becerall River 80 meters below. However, at -27m, a scree almost completely blocks this fracture, and it is necessary to cross a short vertical squeeze to reach the second drop (53m). The descent then proceeds without difficulty through a passage that is initially narrow but quickly widens (2.00 x 6.00 m) as it reaches the terminal chamber of the Becerall cave. From there, simply follow the stream for about 300 meters to a junction. To the right, the stream disappears into a meander that soon becomes impenetrable. To the left, the now-fossilized meander leads to the lower entrance of the cave system, after passing through several widenings. It should be noted that for some years now, the stream has been diverted to supply water to the village. To this end, development work has significantly altered the profile of the entrance area. Before leaving the cave, and if you look closely, you can discover some rock carvings depicting horses (?). Outside, a path quickly leads to the Gandara road, directly above the spring.

Notes on the Becerall catchment area

The Becerall cave now has two entrances, but this new access has shed little light on the origin of the underground stream. At most, our surveys on the Peña allowed us to make the following observations.

On the surface, the course of the underground river is marked by well-defined sinkholes. The largest are aligned along a north-south fracture and open below a small sandstone outcrop that locally acts as an impermeable barrier. A few diffuse springs appear at this level and then disappear upon contact with the limestone to join the underground course of the Becerall. But the main source is probably to be found a little further north (approximately 700 to 800 meters), following the sandstone outcrop mentioned earlier. In this area, we find perennial springs giving rise to short rivulets that also disappear and could well constitute the origin of the underground stream.

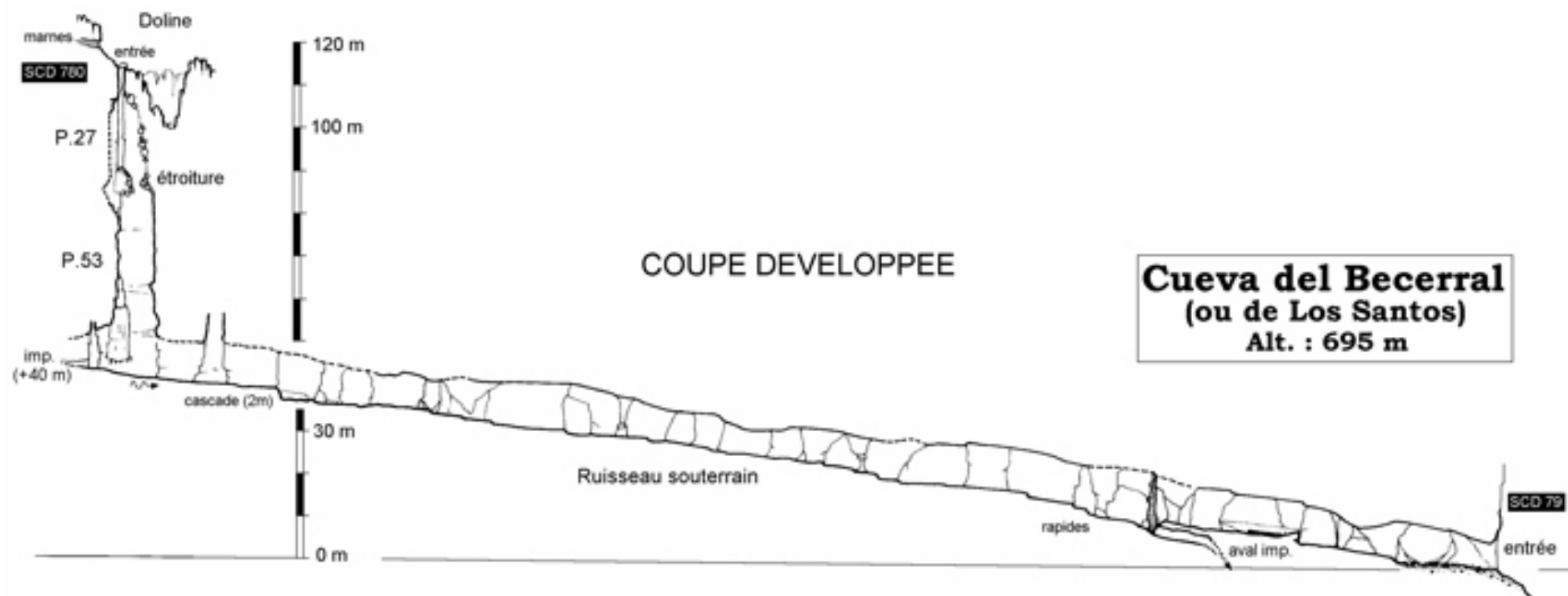
Traversée de Los Santos

Soba - Province de Santander

Dév.: 490 m

Déniv.: 113 m

Torca del Sol
Alt. : 808 m



Topographie : S.C.Dijon 1995 (P. et S. Degouve); Atlas 1988 (C.Puch)