

CUEVAS SOPLADORAS – CUEVA DEL AGUA

ACCESS

To reach Cuevas Sopladoras, you must climb about 300 m from the village of Asón towards the Puerto de los Collados pass, from where you descend to the river. After crossing a couple of bridges, continue along a well-marked path that climbs up the right bank of the Canal de Rolacía ravine. Further up, the path narrows, eventually running along the left bank until you reach the Chumino cabins (spring). From here, keeping the ravine coming from the Cueva de Munío cave to your right, continue across some very steep meadows towards the Cuesta del Avellano waterfall, which can be seen in the distance. (Time: 1 hour).

After passing some cabins, the meadows soon end and a dense forest begins. To avoid it, you must gain altitude quickly before reaching it and then climb over the Cuesta del Avellano waterfall on the left. This way, you access the suspended Barranco de la Sota ravine, at the beginning of which the lower entrance of the Torca del Prado de la Llana de Berezal system opens. This is the spring of the Cuesta del Avellano River, which gives rise to the waterfall. The spring is left to the right, and you ascend the ravine. About 100 meters further on, and suspended about 3 meters above the ground, are the three upper entrances of the system (Cuevas Sopladoras), which appear aligned with the direction of the ravine and spaced about 10 meters apart (ascent time: 2 to 2.5 hours).

The Cueva del Agua, perched about 300 meters above the Asón River, is located above the village of Asón, which is reached by a path that descends from the road at kilometre marker 5.4. After traversing the cave, one must descend diagonally to the right to avoid the steep drops of the waterfall, which originates from the resurgence of the system a few meters below the cave entrance. Further on, one reaches an area of extremely steep ferns (with no defined path), which leads to the beech forest and finally to the river, which is crossed near the church.

DESCRIPTION

A short and easy climb to the central entrance of the three mouths of Cuevas Sopladoras (Blow-Blow Caves) leads to a wide gallery that can be traversed without difficulty, except for a section of boulders that gradually narrows while increasing considerably in height. This leads to the area known as El Derrumbe (The Collapse) or La Unión (The Union). After this, water appears, and the passage continues without problems until reaching the only existing technical difficulty: a precarious and incomplete handrail that spans a 3-meter drop. Below this, a wide and deep pothole opens, followed by others, wadable with some difficulty, and where installing a safety rope would be very helpful.

Later, after some downclimbing, the route continues through a wider and taller gallery than the previous one. Quite muddy at its beginning, this gallery becomes meandering, while its width narrows until a point where one must climb to a higher level and continue close to the ceiling. In this way, one reaches the gallery where the river flows again, descending to it via a 3-meter escarpment. Upstream, the river reaches a siphon and a fossilized meander begins, accessed by a slippery climb to the right.

The other access route to the river goes through wide galleries and joins it about 100 m further downstream than the first, although in its initial section it is not as obvious as the other route. Continuing along the river, whose bed appears covered with pebbles, one reaches an area of wide conduits suspended above it, which are sometimes impossible or very difficult to follow.

Later, the so-called Meanders appear. This is a comfortable, high-ceilinged gallery, where one progresses quickly across a sandy and gravelly floor. After this, finally, one reaches El Bulevar (The Boulevard), at an elevation of -81 m, a very straight gallery about 600 m long, through which the river flows. Later, it narrows, From the -152 m mark, a zone with a phreatic morphology appears, where the river presents numerous rapids, and sandstone bed is visible. In its final section, a passage with waist-deep water appears, present even during periods of low water. With a low ceiling and an approximate length of 25 m, this passage can become very dangerous, forming a siphon during periods of high water.

Further on, the spectacular Entrance Chamber (300 x 50 x 10 m) appears. At its end, a climb among large boulders leads to the exit at the -192 m mark, while the river disappears, resurfacing at -225 m.

MATERIALS AND INSTALLATION

Only a harness or safety belt and anchor lines are needed to cross the pothole handrail. The existing anchors and fixed rope are not secure, so it would be advisable to re-equip it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the steep slope, the sheer drops in the waterfall area, and the dense vegetation, it is preferable to descend from the Cueva del Agua (Water Cave) to the river during the day. In any case, a prior visit to the cave is recommended. The traverse can be dangerous during periods of high water, as the river can become very strong in some areas (potholes), potentially causing the passage to be siphoned in some places, especially near the lower section.

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