

Tonio-Cañuela

INTRODUCTION

The Tonio-Cañuela traverse is one of the great classics of the Asón Valley, and undoubtedly the most frequently climbed traverse in Spain. It has everything going for it: easy approach, good equipment, a moderate technical level, a dry route, and the incomparable beauty of Cañuela, which have rightfully made it one of the cornerstones of Spanish caving.

In 2016, the Piezo Collective of Madrid and the Viana Club of Guadalajara, led by Ángel San Juan and assisted by GAEM and other groups, completely re-equipped the traverse due to the deterioration of the existing installations, which dated back to the early 1990s. Within the framework of the conservation plan for classic caves promoted by the Spanish Caving Federation (F.C.E.), but financed by the participating groups themselves, this important undertaking was carried out using only stainless-steel equipment.

All of this has been carried out maintaining high standards of respect for our beloved underground environment and with the expertise of professionals with proven track records. This significant financial and professional effort is made exclusively for the enjoyment of the entire Spanish caving community and as proof that with everyone's goodwill, we all benefit. Please do not add maillons to the rise anchors; the stainless-steel rings provided at each one are the safest and most durable option. All access handrails are fixed, so if they deteriorate due to the high volume of use of the traverse, do not duplicate the installations; replace them. The major work has been done; maintenance is a minor matter if all Spanish caving groups take ownership of this treasure.

ACCESS TO THE TONIO SINKHOLE

The Tonio sinkhole has two possible access routes: the classic one from Socueva and the new one from Bustablado. I will omit the access from Socueva because it is very difficult and has fallen into disuse since the construction of a paved road that climbs to the Bucebrón pass towards Calseca. Furthermore, the new road, partially paved with concrete (2022), which connects the Buzulucueva cabins to this paved road, makes access even easier. Tonio can be reached by car, any vehicle, right up to the entrance. Nowadays, the traditional strenuous climb up the zigzagging path from Socueva to the Buzulucueva pass, with an elevation gain of over 300 meters, is just a fond memory of my youth. In Bustablado, we take the paved road that leads to the Bucebrón pass. From there, we continue for about 550 meters and take a left turn. About 3.4 kilometers later, we take a left turn at a sharp right-hand bend, where the partially paved track begins. This track climbs to the Buzulucueva cabins, and we continue along it to its highest point, from where we can see the cabins. We find a closed wire gate for livestock; we open it, go through, and take care to leave it as we found it.

From the gate, we descend to the first cabin on the path, where we will park the vehicle. Behind the cabin, we see a gate leading to some meadows, which we will descend,

turning left for the final stretch. There, we will see the sinkhole where, halfway up, the Torca de Tonio is located.



Accediendo a los prados desde la primera cabaña



Boca de Torca de Tonio

ACCESS TO CAÑUELA CAVE

We leave Arredondo heading towards Bustablado. 900 meters past the Alisas pass, we find a left turn onto a farm track that leads to a bridge over the Bustablado River. We park the car right next to the stone wall, without obstructing traffic. We cross the river via the bridge and follow a well-marked path to some meadows. The trail begins at a small gate in these meadows, gaining altitude and leading to the cave entrance. It's easy to lose the trail or not find the gate where it begins, so the best approach is to follow the GPS track, which you can download from the Viana Club website.



Parquing Cañuela

COORDENADAS ACCESO

TONIO
(WGS84) 30T 0449123 4790396

CAÑUELA
(WGS 84) 30 T 0449548 4791501

Desvío y parking Cañuela

(WGS 84) 30T 0449096 4791916

DESCENT OF TONIO'S

Its small entrance, which surprises visitors, usually draws in a continuous current of air during low water, keeping its first three shafts dry and creating a perfect habitat for a curious spider that inhabits its recesses from 0 to -32 meters.

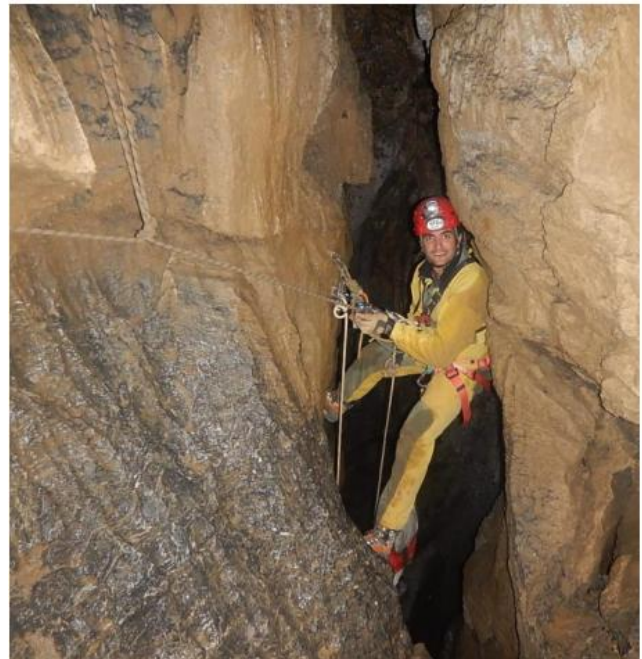
After entering its small entrance, we find a comfortable ledge from which to work on the top of the first pitch (P15), while discussing the situation with those still outside. The shaft, whose first few meters are quite narrow, gradually widens to the base, where only a few meters separate us from the next pitch (P18), which we descend using a free-hanging technique.

Also, near its base, we find the anchor for the next pitch (P9), which will leave us next to the descending handrail leading to the top of the formidable pitch (P48). This shaft, approximately 15 meters in diameter and with its distinctive head at -2 meters, opens a descent route that ends at -228 meters, and another that will lead us to Cañuela, after making a simple guided pendulum 13 meters from its base. The handrail for accessing the ledge is located directly above our rope, and using it, we can approach without difficulty. There, we will find an installation with fixed ropes to easily overcome an E5 pitch that connects to a simple free-climb R3 that leads to the next P10 pitch.

Once we descend this last shaft, we'll encounter the legendary Vertical Diaclase, which consists of a narrow, jointed P13, between 35 and 45 cm wide at its most critical points (a caveman/women PC of 1.80m and 90kg can pass through without problems). The anchor point isn't at the start, but rather a horizontal traverse, secured by a fixed handrail, will bring us closer to the descent point. From experience, I know it can be down climbed, although it's best to use the descender on the short cowstail end to avoid trapping our fingers during the rappel. We'll descend by moving along the wall in search of the widest area. It's worth guiding our belay bag to avoid annoying snags.



Base del P5 tras P55



Cabecera del P15

The base of the fissure consists of a narrow ramp (R8) with a fixed rope for its double descent. Next to this ramp, we will see the stone blocks stacked by members of the Dijon S.C. during the clearing of the passage. After this ramp, a narrow fixed rope (E4) will lead us to a traverse drop, which we will cross (fixed ropes) and from which we will exit, using our fists, via a ascending passage that will leave us in a gallery with two small, linked fixed ropes, P6 and P4. P4 leads us to a beautiful balcony above P55.

A spectacular 15-meter diameter shaft which we will rig from the balcony itself without any problem. At 36 meters of descent, we will perform another pendulum swing using a guide rope and enter a window that connects to a new series of shafts (P5, P6, P33, P15, P18, and P22).

We will retrieve the ropes from P55 from the top of the access window to the next P5, a kind of ridge from which we will have no problem. From here, the rappels will follow one another continuously, with the only notable exceptions being that P33 has a diverter at -20m and a fixed anchor at -30m from where we will have to retrieve the ropes. After the last P22, we will progress through a narrow meander, the **Meandro de la Borrasca**, with a couple of equipped ledges, through which a small stream flows. The meander's name comes from the force with which the wind occasionally blows through it. Our meander eventually becomes craggy, and a fixed handrail warns us of the proximity of the last shaft of the sinkhole, P20, which, with easy access, will allow us to descend in a free-hanging freefall from the vault of the **Sala Olivier Guillaume**. The anchor for this impressive final rappel is located on the roof of the meander and secured to the access handrail. This will take us to the -280 m level, where we will emerge onto solid ground at **Cañuela Cave**.

CUEVA CAÑUELA

Having reached the base of the shafts, it's a good time to rest and have a drink. The chamber we're in, one of the largest in Spain (350m long x 120m wide), is on a ramp, covered in boulders, and has a vertical drop of over one hundred meters. The rope anchor point is close to one of its walls and relatively near the lower section of the chamber (80m), where the exit is located. **It is worth a climb to the top of the chamber to have a look around before returning to base the final pitch once again.**

To descend, we'll take a sandy path to the left on a steep descending ramp, interrupted in sections by a boulder field which, marked with reflectors and following a N-NE direction, leads us to the area where the floor and ceiling meet. Once at the lower section of the chamber, we'll walk over large boulders looking for the reflector that, slightly to the right, indicates the chamber's exit.

We'll know we're at the right spot if we find the fixed ropes of P4, which lower a large block that almost completely obstructs the exit, revealing the entrance to the **Antechamber Gallery**. This gallery, which begins as a very steep ramp, gradually becomes less steep as it displays the gigantic stalactites hanging from its ceiling, until we reach the **August 10th Gallery**, where the enormous stalactites continue, some of them saw-like.

On our now gentle route, we will begin to hear the roar of a river, which will guide us toward it. Once we reach the active channel, which consists of a central depression (P23) that connects with the Cañuela River, we will cross it via a clearly marked sandy path that passes over the active meander via a rock bridge.



Galería del 10 de Agosto



Espectacular pasamanos de salida de Cueva

If we look over the small bridge, we will see the water roaring more than 20 meters below. After a comfortable walk of just over 60 meters, the passage ends in a flat area suspended like a balcony, 18 meters above the Bivouac Chamber—a chamber we can see by carefully peering over the edge. The route to follow is to our left and about ten meters before P18.

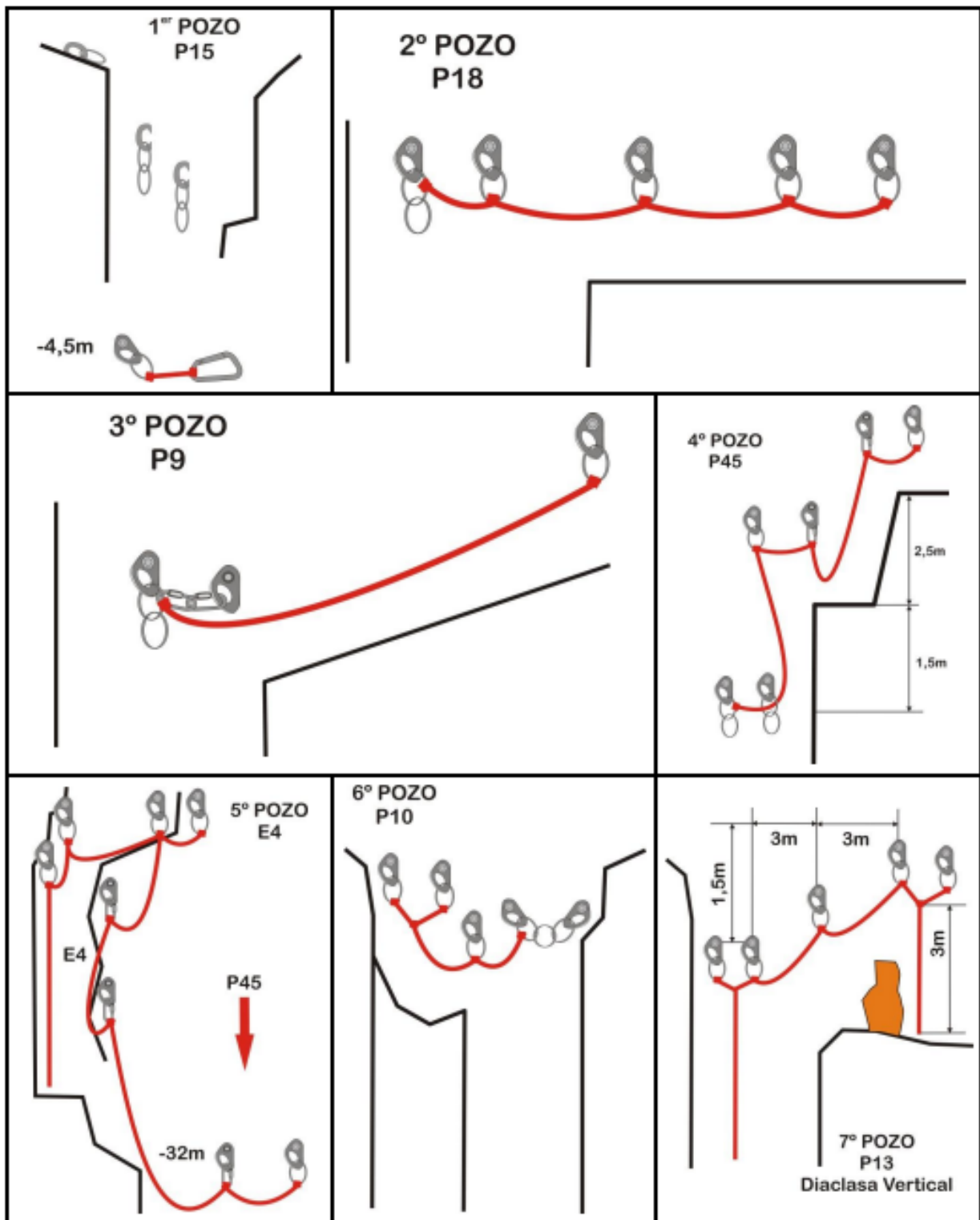
It begins with an ascending ramp that turns right after 10 meters, leaving a drop of about 15 meters to our left. A fixed anchor secures the E8 section, the most exposed part. We have climbed it without a rope on more than one occasion, and it is not difficult, but due to the exposed nature of the passage, it is advisable that if there are no ropes available, the lead climber should install one for the rest of the group. At the top, we will find a low-ceilinged gallery with a garden of thick formations, which we will follow to the left until we reach, passing through some slightly lower areas, a final climb (E.6) between boulders, for which it is not necessary to install a rope. This climb opens us into a large gallery, from which a fork branches off to the right towards the Gallery of the Mountains and the Bivouac Room, but we will continue to the left until we reach the **Slippery Gallery**, whose name indicates the slippery terrain.

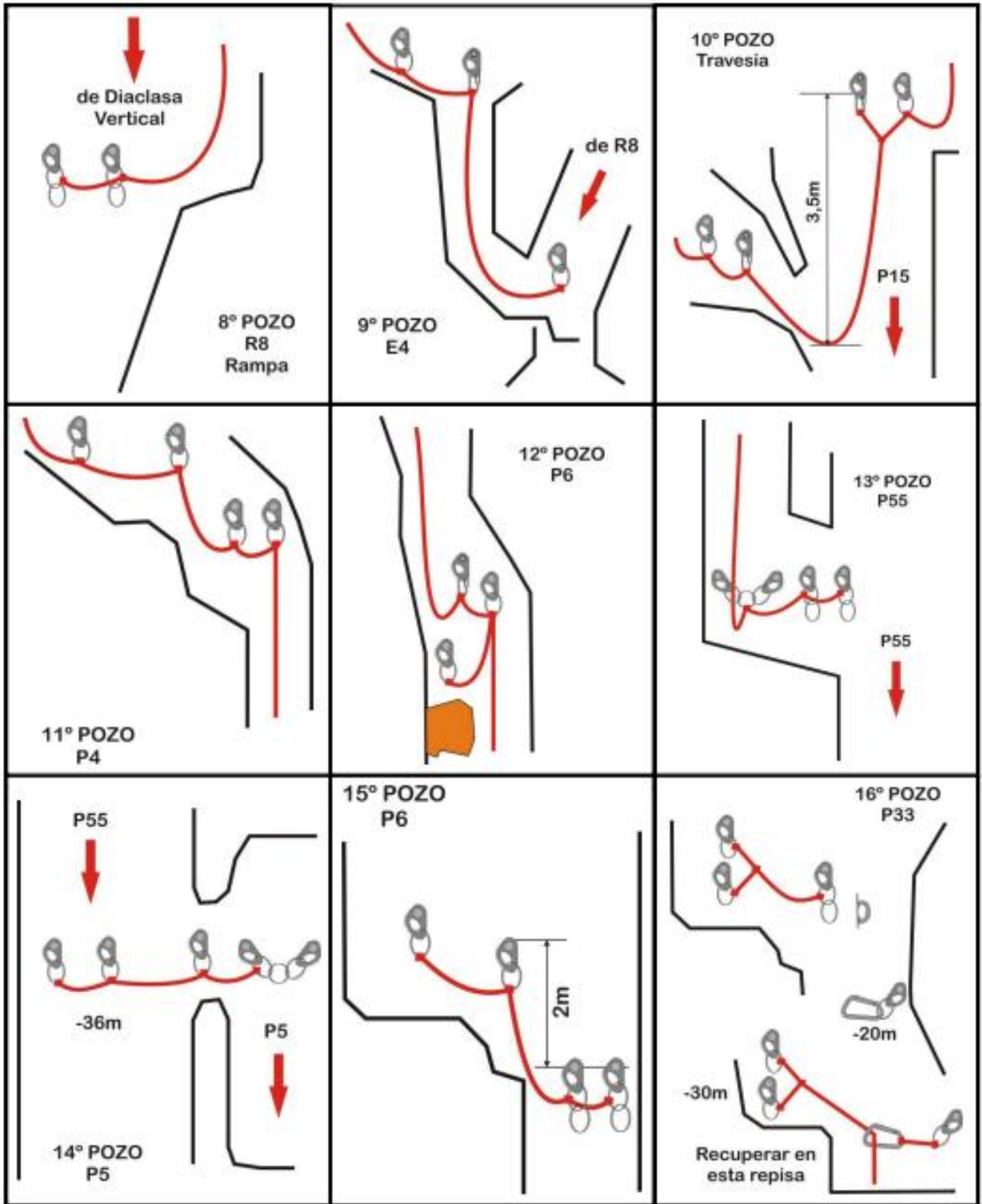
This gallery, which continues north, ends in the Crossroads Room. This room is lower than the path we came from, and we will know we have reached it because we will be forced to downclimb a R.4 (to the right). From this room, two routes lead to the exit: one through the lower passages, and the other, the best. This option involves accessing the Boulevard Gallery. This gallery hangs approximately 15 meters above the base of the chamber (E15 with fixed ropes), and access to it begins from a gully to the right of our downclimb. The gully, which we will climb without any risk, is dark in colour at its end and contains a small trickle of water that accompanies us for the last six meters.

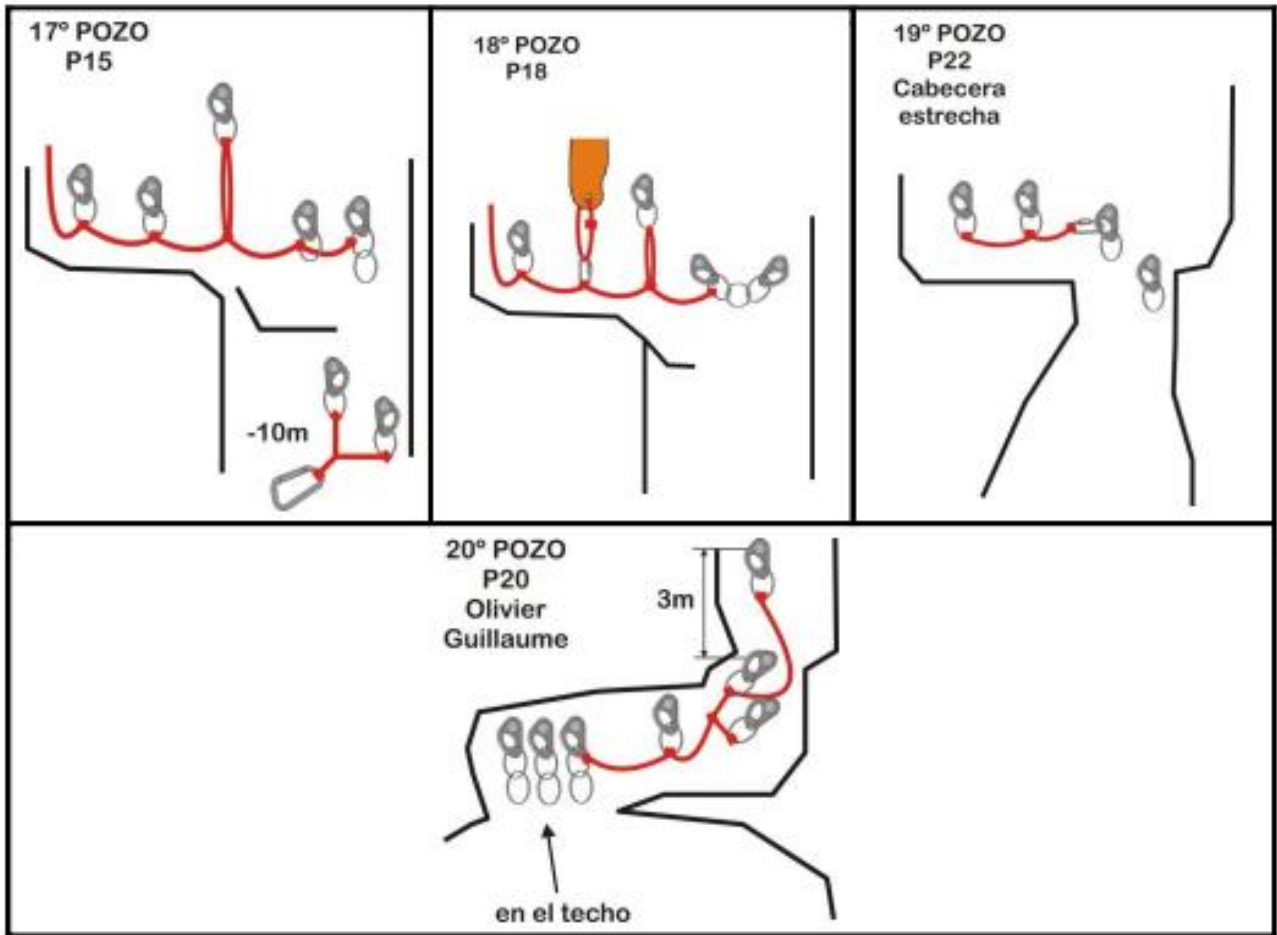
This formidable and comfortable gallery, with a flat floor almost entirely, will easily lead us to its junction with the West Canyon via a P15 that resembles a side balcony overlooking the canyon. The P15, known as the **Arch Pit**, is named for the majestic rock arch located above the West Canyon and to the left of our rappel, which is equipped for

a double rope. The path continues to our right, that is, along the side of the canyon where the arch is not located. We walked through the canyon towards the exit and found a fixed rope with knots to slide down a very slippery block.

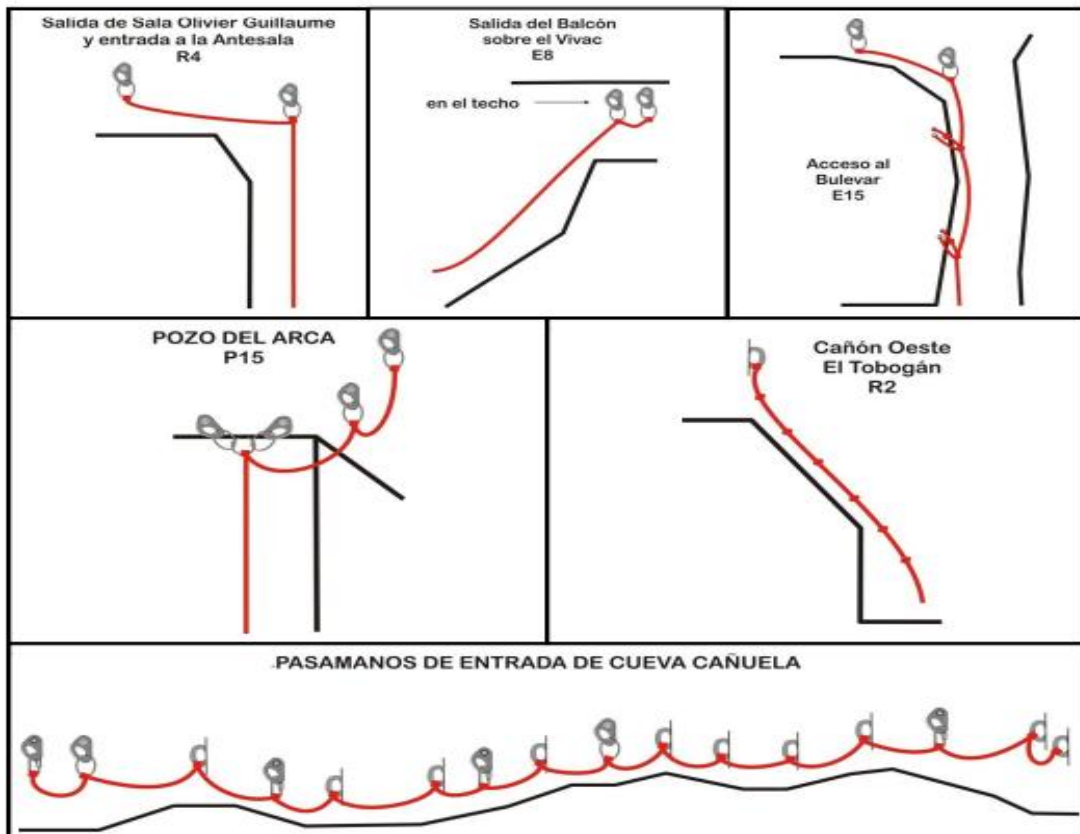
About 50 meters further on, we came across the 30-meter handrail, which follows a right-hand traverse and avoids a 12-meter drop in the gallery. The end of the handrail led us to the entrance gallery, from where we could finally see the sunlight.







ESQUEMA REEQUIPACIÓN CAÑUELA 2016

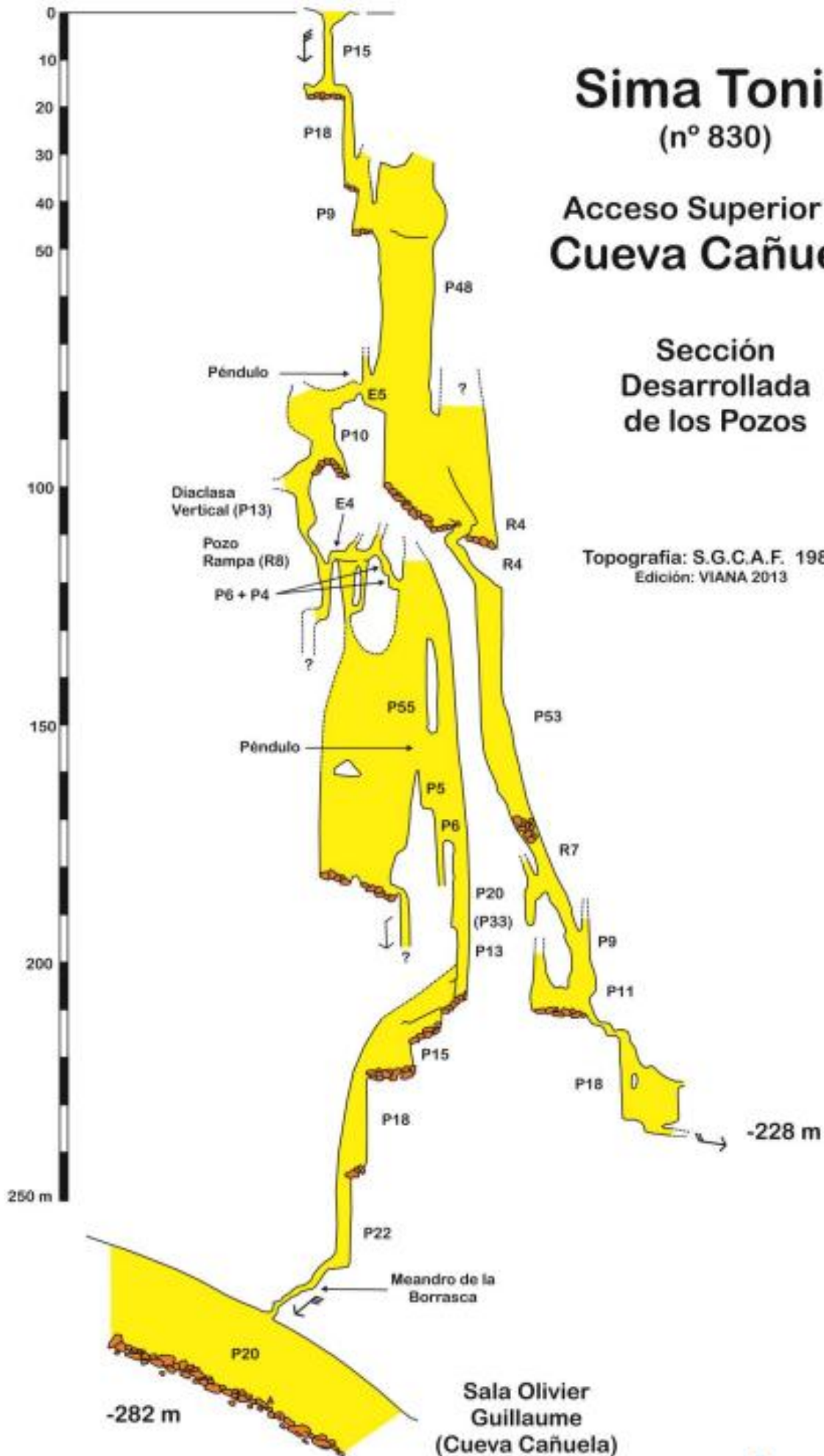


Sima Tonio (n° 830)

Acceso Superior de Cueva Cañuela

Sección Desarrollada de los Pozos

Topografía: S.G.C.A.F. 1987
Edición: VIANA 2013



CUEVA CAÑUELA

Bustablado (Cantabria)
-España-

Topo S.C.D. - G.S.H.S.
Edición: Viana 2013



