



Main river passage in Tham Pla, Wiang Sa district, Surat Thani province (Thailand), International Expedition to Surat Thani 2020.

Photo:  
Thierry Masson



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ISSN 2418-4500

## Editorial

The FSE Bureau hopes that this Newsletter will find you, your family and friends all well during the ongoing pandemic crisis, with all its postponements or cancellations of expeditions and speleo conferences. Nevertheless, we like to share some recently received information with you.

## European borders will open again for cavers

Most European countries, and especially the so-called Schengen countries, will open their borders for foreigners during the months of June and July. This also means that cavers can go caving outside their own country again. In most countries caving activities are only possible under certain conditions, either due to government regulations or protocols agreed on between national caving organisations and their government.

Due to circumstances the 2020 EuroSpeleo Forum, planned to be organized in Burgos/Spain, had to be postponed to 2022 (see page 5).

Please share this Newsletter as widely as possible amongst caving clubs and individual cavers.

### The FSE Bureau

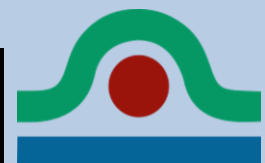
It is impossible to give an overview of all the restrictions and regulations in each individual country as they change very often depending on the developments of the pandemic in each country. We therefore urge cavers to check these regulations on the websites of the national caving organisations, which can be found here:

<https://www.eurospeleo.eu/images/stories/docs/FSE-Directory-2019-10-23.pdf>

**Please respect all regulations, protocols etc. in each individual country as you are a guest.**



## FSE Partners





The main gallery of Tham Leuk Khao Kha (photograph: Thierry Masson).



## International expedition to Surat Thani province, southern Thailand 2020

An international team of speleologists from Russian (Irina Ermakova), China (Xinnan Zhao and Ting Wang), France (Thierry Masson and Bertrand Valentin) as well as Germany (Helmut Steiner and Michael Laumanns) conducted a speleological reconnaissance expedition to Surat Thani province in southern Thailand between 4th and 24th of January 2020. The purpose of the trip was to investigate the cave potential for possible future continued investigations.

The team was based in Surat Thani city and conducted daytrips with a hired minibus. One day was spent to get an impression of the limestone occurrences in the Khao Sok National Park. The work focused on caves outside of the boundaries of the various National Parks in Surat Thani (Thai Rom Yen, Khao Sok). Only Tham Khamin, a show cave in the Thai Rom Yen N.P., was visited on a touristic trip.

29 caves with a total of 8.7 km of cave passages were surveyed during the expedition in various districts. Tham Plup Pla Ta Yom is now the longest cave of Surat Thani province at 2,110 m - the cave is ongoing and a total length of 3 km appears to be within reach. Also, Tham Sila Tiab (1,825 m) could not be pushed to a conclusion.

A few caves, already mapped by previous explorers, were re-surveyed, namely Tham Yai (mapped by the French biospeleologist Louis Deharveng in 1988).

With a few exceptions, virtually all caves visited were already listed in Martin Ellis' Surat Thani cave registry, with many of the caves having been visited already either by Louis Deharveng or by US caver Page Ashwell, who conducted solo cave reconnaissance in the area in the years 2012 and 2015. Consequently, most of the work done by the 2020 international expedition was based on existing information and no systematic prospecting for new caves has been done in 2020. Biospeleological observations completed the survey work of the team.

For more details see:

<https://www.thailandcaves.shepton.org.uk/surat-thani-expedition-2020>

Tham Sing Khon (Spider River) (photo: Thierry Masson).





## Cave and Karst related events

Only limited information for the last months in 2020 and for 2021 is provided below, as most of the conferences and speleological camps planned for summer/autumn 2020 have been cancelled or postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For more detailed information please consult the list of European caving events at the FSE website:

<https://eurospeleo.eu/images/stories/docs/bureau/European%20agenda%20of%20speleological%20events%2027-05-2020.pdf>

No reliable information on 2020 events outside Europe can currently be provided.

**12-15 November 2020**

**European Cave Rescue Meeting** – Ramales de la Victoria, Cantabria, Spain – <https://caverescue.eu/ecra-meeting-2020-cantabria-spain/>.

**NEW DATES: 5-8 December 2020**

**International Symposium on History of Speleology and Karstology "ALCADI 2020"** – Gorizia, Italy – [www.seppenhofer.it](http://www.seppenhofer.it)

**22-24 June 2021**

**Eurokarst 2021** – University of Malaga, Spain – <http://www.eurokarst.org/>

**25 July - 1 August 2021**

**18th International Congress of Speleology** – University of Savoie Mont Blanc, France – <http://uis2021.speleos.fr/>

**NEW DATES: 28 August – 3 September 2020**

**19th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology** – Catania, Sicily, Italy – <http://www.19isvetna.com/>

**September 2020 (date to be determined)**

**Virtual General Assembly Meeting of the European Speleological Federation** – National delegates will receive a convocation by e-mail.

**NEW DATES: 30 September – 3 October 2020**

**26th International Cave Bear Symposium** – Mannheim, Germany – <https://www.facebook.com/events/541122783159395/>

**NEW DATES: 26-30 October 2021**

**6th EuroSpeleo Protection Symposium "Assessing, monitoring and protecting cave biotopes and geotopes through Natura 2000 or similar programs in Europe"** – Vilm Island/Baltic Sea, Germany – information at <https://www.facebook.com/events/438983103449721/>



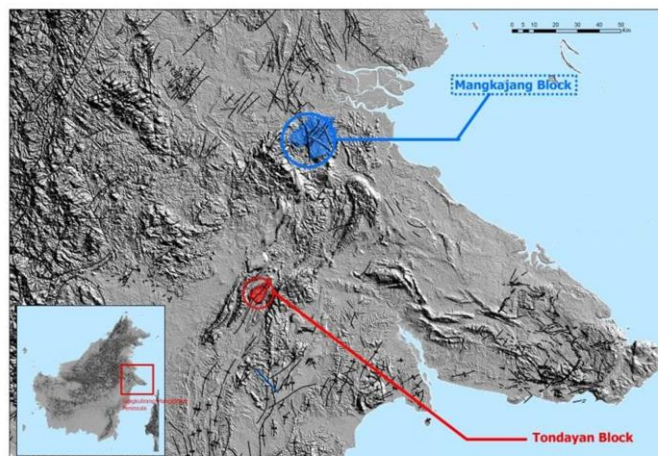
**Please send info on all your international events (expeditions, congresses, symposia etc.) to [contact@eurospeleo.org](mailto:contact@eurospeleo.org)**

## Invitation to Kalimantan (Indonesia)

The Karst Research Group of Gadjah Mada University (Yogyakarta, Indonesia) invites speleologists to join their planned expedition to the Sangkulirang-Mangkalihat karst in eastern Kalimantan (Borneo), which will be one of the Indonesian contributions to the International Year of Caves and Karst 2021. The expedition will be organized under the patronage of UIS, the Asian Union of Speleology as well as Gadjah Mada University.

The objectives of the investigations will be speleological and karst documentation, hydrogeological studies, biospeleology and archaeological observations.

The expedition will be focused on two remote locations (see the area map below), both of which are composed of Oligo-Miocene Lembak Limestone.



**Tondayan karst massif:** this anticlinal structure is bounded by ridges, with a plain polje in between. Lubang Dunia (Hole of the World) is one of the main caves known in Tondayan, with only a few passages of the cave having been mapped. Most of this area remains unexplored yet. The Jelai River emerges the southern part of Tondayan; it is one of the main rivers in Berau Regency.

**Mangkajang karst massif:** this area is located 30 km from Tanjung Redeb City. Several caves have already been discovered and explored, but previous expeditions have only touched the outer part of the limestone block. Large underground rivers (e.g. Selung Cave) are known. Nearest airport is Kalimarau Airport at Tanjung Redeb, Berau Regency. Our Indonesian partners will provide camp appliances and a generator for our electric power supply.

For further information please visit

<http://speleo.geo.ugm.ac.id/speleonesia-expedition/>

or contact Prof. Eko Haryono [e.haryono@ugm.ac.id](mailto:e.haryono@ugm.ac.id)

## Karstlink is moving forward

The project supported by the FSE aims at organizing the sharing of information on the underground world.

A set of basic elements have been defined. Suggestions and proposals can be made until July 19, when a first vote will be held.

Here is the address for those interested in taking part:

<http://uisic.uis-speleo.org/wiki/karstlink/>



New passage in Tham Lom 3 (photograph: K. Polanski).

## EuroSpeleo Project 2019-12: Expedition Dao 2020

Cavers from Belgium, France, Poland, and the UK continued the explorations in Dao district of northern Thailand from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The team managed to extend the Tham Lom-Tham Nam System from 12,260 m to 13,541 m. The vertical range of 176 m remains unchanged.

Seven new caves were found (and four of them surveyed) in Tham Klang Muang hill, yielding almost one km of passages. Surface prospection on the karst plateau above the Khun Nam Ru resurgence proved the existence of an underground drainage, but access to the supposed river cave still needs further exploration.

The expedition received EuroSpeleo Project status and was supported by a financial grant of FSE as well as from the Belgian federation UBS.

## International expedition to Taiwan 2020

The island of Taiwan (Republic of China) was visited by a team of German, Dutch and US speleologists in February 2020. During a round trip, 48 caves were visited and 46 of them have been surveyed, with a resulting total of about 2.2 km of passages. Apart from a 1996 Japanese expedition to the famous Taroko limestone gorge in eastern Taiwan the 2020 investigations were the first of a more comprehensive nature regarding the speleology of whole Taiwan.

Biospeleological observations were also made.

Apart from being a very convenient country for travelling (excellent service for money, good public transport and many people who speak reasonable English), the caves were found to be very diverse including karst caves, sandstone caves, granite caves and caves in volcanic rocks. Many caves were formed by wave erosion along the coast line.

Most of the Taiwan caves are relatively short (longest ones found so far were in the range of 250 m) but some caves found were over -60 m and require full SRT gear.



## The International Year of Caves and Karst 2021

Next year will be the International Year of Caves and Karst. The European Speleological Federation FSE fully supports this initiative. This will be the biggest and most important speleological event ever. Your participation as part of the global cave and karst community is crucial. The purpose of the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) is to teach the world about the importance of caves and karst. Public understanding and support of caves and karst is currently very limited. As a result, funding, protective regulations, and opportunities for exploration, research, and management are also very limited.

The International Union of Speleology (UIS) has declared 2021 as the IYCK in a major effort to make the world aware of how caves and karst are valuable to all people. To make this possible, the UIS is calling on all of its member countries and other organizations to begin with planning a series of public lectures, programs, demonstration of caving techniques, and other activities for 2021.

The IYCK website is now open at <http://www.iyck2021.org/>. It is designed to teach the public about caves and karst, and so it has a great amount of educational information. It also has information on how to become involved in the IYCK. Please send the activities you plan for the IYCK to <http://iyck2021.org/index.php/contact-us/> so we can post them on the "Events" page of the website. Have a look at the "Partners" page, and if your organization is not listed, send your logo and website address and you will be included. If you know of organizations that should be involved, please contact them. The website will continue to be updated, so bookmark the URL. The IYCK has incredible potential to advance speleology in many and great ways, but only if we all work together to make it possible.



Sanmin Bianfu Dong, a large rock-shelter in northern Taiwan (photo: Matt Oliphant).



## EuroSpeleo Forum in Burgos/Spain re-scheduled to 2022

Due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus the 14<sup>th</sup> EuroSpeleo Forum in Burgos, Spain, which was planned for July/August this year, was cancelled. The FSE Bureau agreed that the Spanish organizers re-schedule the EuroSpeleo Forum to 2022. This event will still be held in the city of Burgos. Our Spanish colleagues hope to see you all in 2022 at the EuroSpeleo Forum. The exact dates still need to be determined but will be published as soon as they are available.

## Balkan Cavers Camp 2020

The 2020 Balkan Cavers Camp in Dryanovo, Bulgaria, has been re-scheduled and is now foreseen to be organized from 9-14 September, 2020. The participation fee is 30 EUR but will only be collected on arrival because the Covid-19 pandemic may force the organisers to further postpone or cancel the event and repayment of fees may thus become difficult. For all details as well as registration forms, accommodation and presentations etc please visit the event's website: <http://balkancaverscamp.weebly.com/>

## Urgent calls by the organizers of the 18<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology in France (see also page 6)

The 18th International Congress of Speleology (25th July to 1st August 2021) will be organised by the French Speleological Federation FFS on behalf of the International Union of Speleology UIS and will take place in the Le Bourget-du-Lac in the Savoie region:

<https://uis2021.speleos.fr/>

Before and after the congress the FFS is planning to organise pre- and post-camps. The European Speleological Federation FSE agreed to the FFS and UIS to **ask clubs and organisations in member countries to also organise such pre- and post-camps** to provide an opportunity for cavers from outside France and Europe to get acquainted with European caves and karst and to grant a European dimension to the congress.

We would like to invite not only the neighbouring countries of France but all FSE member countries to organise a camp before or after the congress in the Savoie. Proposed activities are exploration or traditional speleology, canyoning, cave diving, scientific internships, photography ... or cultural tourism and/or speleo-culinary, either above or below ground, all in accordance with speleo and canyoning codes of conduct.

For more information, the conditions and the application form please read this document:

<https://u.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=XZRjOkZMWLuxiS3Ke5e07rnb76Sa4DTtUV>. The application should be sent to [camps@uis2021.speleo.fr](mailto:camps@uis2021.speleo.fr). Upon approval you will be informed and information about the camp will be published on the above-mentioned congress website.

Lets make this congress a real exhibition of European cave and karst activities for all the cavers to come to France next summer.





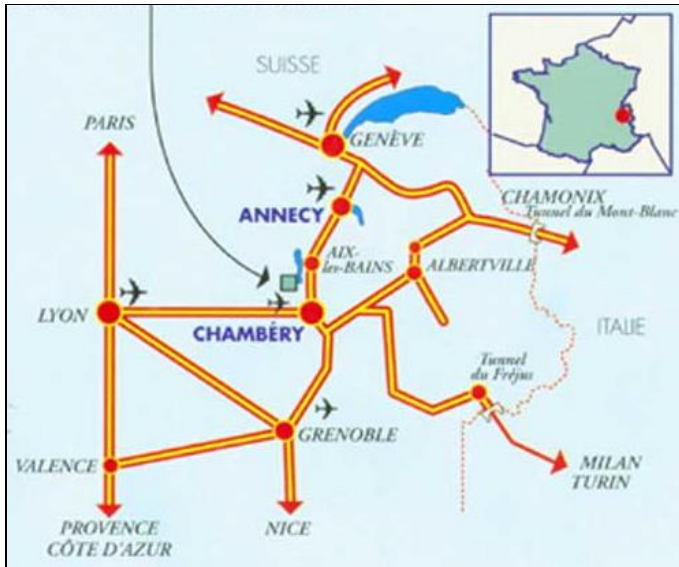
During the UIS congress there will be a scientific conference with different symposia on many topics. We **ask caving organisations and cavers to submit oral or poster presentations to the UIS congress** next year. You can submit your presentation on the special website of the scientific conference: <https://uis2021.sciencesconf.org/>. There you will find information on the steps to take to register for and submit presentations. You can still register after the mentioned deadline of 30th June 2020, stated on the website. We look forward seeing you at the scientific conference.

**The congress online registration for participants is open.** You can buy tickets for the congress at an **early-bird price with a reduction of more than 25% until 24th January 2021.**

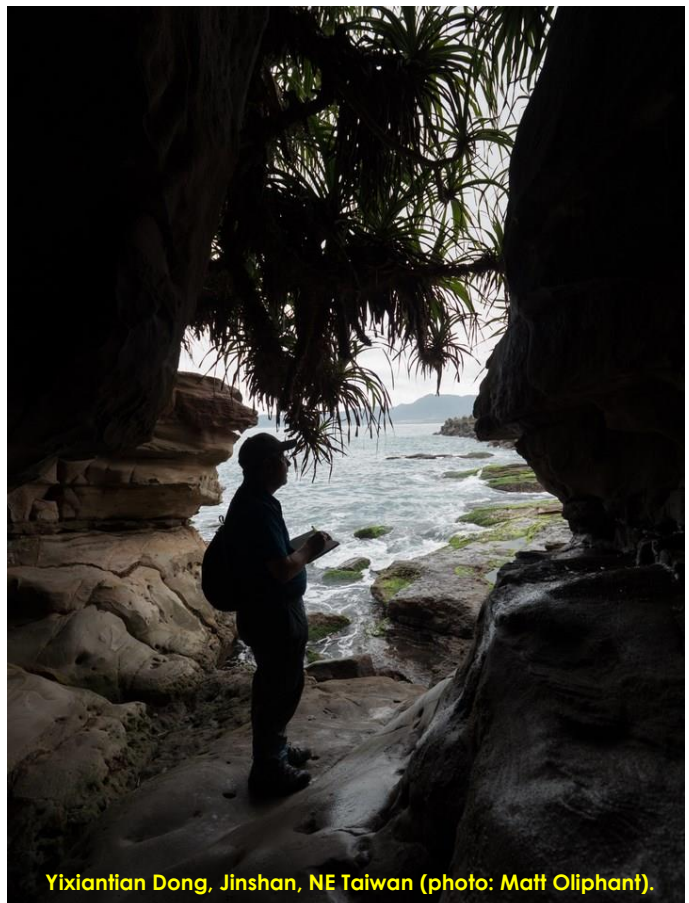
Please register at:

<https://uis2021.speleos.fr/infos/inscriptions-au-congres/>

**Let's make the 18th International Congress of Speleology a real exhibition of European cave and karst research for all the cavers and scientists who will come to France next summer!**



**Beauty Cave Trail Cave 3**  
(Lombai Island, Taiwan) (photo: Matt Oliphant)



**Yixiantian Dong, Jinshan, NE Taiwan** (photo: Matt Oliphant).