

YUCPC Expedition to Durmitior, Montenegro 2004



Introduction

In August 2004, for approximately three weeks, York University Cave and Pothole Club (YUCPC) took part in an international expedition to the Durmitior National Park in Serbia and Montenegro.

The area was first explored by speleologists in the mid 1980s when a number of significant caves were found, the deepest of these being 'Jama na Vjetrenim Brdima' or 'Cave of the Windy Hills' standing at a believed -897m . In 2002, ASAK (Belgrade) returned to Durmitior to continue explorations in JVB, and to resurvey the cave as the original data had been lost. However, due to heavy rains, the expedition could not descend to below approx. -700m . The cave was only resurveyed to -460m , however a discrepancy of approximately 40m at this point showed that the depth calculated in the 1980s was too great. Thus one of

the main aims of the 2004 expedition, as well as prospecting new areas, was to complete the resurvey of JVB, and to search for new leads in the cave.

The 2004 expedition comprised of parties from Serbia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Slovenia and the UK; over 70 people were involved, five of who were from YUCPC.

Transport

It was impossible, given the amount of gear that we wished to take, for everything to be transported as luggage on a plane. This left us with two options: either we would have to freight the gear out, or some or all of the party would have to drive to Montenegro. In the end, for the sake of simplicity, it was decided that Andy V. and Dave would drive while Andy G. and Debs would fly out from the UK, theoretically meeting up with Mark, who was flying out from the US, in Belgrade. Initial fears about this going horribly wrong in some way proved totally unfounded, as they met in the passport queue in Belgrade airport.

Originally we had planned to buy some shoddy Volvo with expo funds and hope it got us to Montenegro and back. In the end, however, AV bought a beautiful Landrover 90 for himself, and the expedition used this.

The Drive

Day 1: 373 mi [UK, France, Belgium]

Day 2: 501 mi [Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany]

Day 3: 459 mi [Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia]

Day 4: 318 mi [Croatia, Bosnia, Croatia]

Day 5: 210 mi [Croatia, Montenegro] – Argh! They wouldn't let us into the Bosnia proper, as we didn't have green card insurance. Worried the same might happen at the Montenegrin border, and started to come up with some fairly ludicrous contingency plans involving walking through the border with as much stuff as we could carry. Luckily, although they wouldn't accept our insurance there was the facility to buy frontier insurance, so we went happily on our way. Phew.

The three who flew caught the bus from Belgrade to Žabljak and arrived at 5am on the 2nd of August.

Equipment

Expedition Equipment

Rope (in metres, all 1998, unmarked or tat):
81, 55, 31, 100, 38, 25, 14, 17, 16, 12, 9, 15, 40.

Slings:

Bag of uncut, 8 small, 13 medium, 5 large.
All of the uncut tape was cut and tied during the expo.

Hangers & related:

- * 40 twists
- * 12 snapgates
- * 25 bends
- * 2 hexes (1 small, 1 large)
- * 8 rings
- * 2 spanners
- * 32 karabiners

Survey:

- * 2 30m tapes
- * 1 notebook bag
- * 1 20m tape
- * 1 Silva compass
- * 2 30cm rulers
- * 1 Silva clinometer
- * 7 waterproof notebooks

Camp:

- * 3 bivi bags
- * 1 force-10 tent
- * 6 spoons
- * 2 'sharp' knives
- * 2 large gas bottles
- * 1 big pot
- * 1 frying pan
- * 1 Dovedale tent (storage)
- * 6 Knives
- * 2 Forks
- * 1 Gas lamp (+2 spare mantles)

- * 1 Small gas canister
- * 3 Medium pots
- * 5 Plates
- * 1 Double burner stove
- * 1 Small chopping board
- * 2 10 litre water containers
- * 1 20 litre water container

It turned out that we took too many pots/cooking implements as this was all covered by the Serbians. It was however useful to have some equipment for cooking underground.

Misc:

- * 5 BDH tubes
- * 3 Small Daren Drums
- * 1 Medium Daren Drum
- * 2 First Aid Kits
- * 3 Large tackle sacks
- * 7 Standard tackle sacks
- * 6 Pigs
- * Electric Drill, 2 batteries & charger
- * 1 Bug (Belay)
- * 2 Pullies with oval krabs
- * 1 Spare SRT kit (with a stop)
- * 3 Bolting kits
- * 2 Trowels
- * 1 Chisel kit

Personal Equipment

Personal gear mainly comprised caving and camp gear, however two personal tents were used during the expo.

Expedition Losses

- * 3 Twists
- * 1 Ring
- * 1 Karabiner
- * 2 Snapgates
- * 1 Waterproof notebook
- * 1 Bolting Hammer (Petzl)
- * 1 Bolting Driver

All of the rope we took was due to be thrown out this year, so at the end of the expedition all of our surviving rope was donated to local farmers.

Food

As we were joining the communal expedition kitchen, all of the food was organised by ASAK. However we took enough food for the journey – mainly rice, pasta and tinned fruit. We also took some supplies for eating underground – something close to 40 Mars bars and a silly number of Tesco Value ‘8 pence’ noodles.

Water was provided thanks to a small spring, which bubbled out from under a rock right next to the camp. Luckily this just about lasted the expedition; it started to run very weakly in the last couple of days.

Prospection

Ah prospection, one of the most pleasant parts of any expedition. While we didn't get as much done as we would have liked, mainly due to some poor weather and spending more time than we had expected down JVB, we still made some interesting finds which deserve more attention in future years.

N 43° 6.867'

E 19° 2.795'

Elevation: 2138m

Stream sinks close to path for approx. 50m. Cave is unmarked, but it is hard to believe this has not been found before. Climb down entrance, 5m rift, then pitch/climb not descended.

N 43° 6.822'

E 19° 2.726'

Elevation: 2138m

Hole between rocks leads down approx. 4m. No apparent continuation or draught.

N 43° 6.929'

E 19° 2.280'

Elevation: 2125m

Promising looking entrance, however it chokes after only 2-3m. There is, however, a strongish draught coming through the boulders.

N 43° 7.195'

E 19° 2.913'

Elevation: 2145m

Climb down 2-3m leads to a small chamber with a (loose) boulder choke. There appears to be a way on through a small hole (possibly too tight). Any continuation after this is unknown.

N 43° 7.322'

E 19° 2.983'

Elevation: 2067m

Small crack leading down 6-8m. Unexplored.

N 43° 6.816'

E 19° 2.337'

Elevation: 2104m

Crack in base of cliff. No draught, had the smell of a dig.

N 43° 6.766'

E 19° 2.612'

Elevation: 2186m

Marked with a cairn – by the Polish group we think. Climb down into small chamber. There are two entrances, though one may be a bit tight. Way on via a climb down through boulders, though we did not proceed.

N 43° 7.094'

E 19° 2.349'

Elevation: 2172m

Marked MSE6. Entrance in side of hill below rock outcrop opens into a small chamber. Aven above. Side routes end quickly.

N 43° 7.025'

E 19° 2.129'

Elevation: 2123m

Large hole in Limestone. I was unable to get right to the bottom as we didn't have any rope with us. It appears to choke, however there may have been a draught coming through.

N 43° 6.841'

E 19° 2.324'

Elevation: 2113m

Marked X1/04. Entrance high in side of cliff. Square passage with loose rock base. Bend to left opens into a small chamber (standing room). Two small rifts continue, but are too small to enter. Termination after a climb up into a smaller chamber.

N 43° 6.833'

E 19° 2.230'

Elevation: 2180m

Marked X2/04. Entrance is a small hole in the bottom of a shake hole. Climb

down through loose boulders leads to a choke after approx 10m. Some members of the Russian group also entered this cave, and believe that shifting one boulder could lead to a way on.

N 43° 6.667'

E 19° 2.216'

Elevation: 2051m

Marked X3/04, AB304, YUCPC 01. Large open shaft blocked with snow and ice. Entry was gained by abseiling past the ice at the North end of the main shaft. See below.

X3/04

YUCPC's main find on the expedition. Initially we gave it the temporary mark X3/04 and the name X3 just stuck with us. Officially it's marked YUCPC 01 and AB304. As for an actual name – well, who knows?

8th August. [On the trip: Mark]

Descended large open shaft to the top of a snow plug. Andy G. had already placed two rebelay's but was unwilling to descend the gap between the rock and ice in his shorts and tee-shirt! After much debate about who was going to put on the oversuit and get cold, my will power finally gave way (note - need to be stronger willed in future). The gap between the snow/ice and rock was not very inviting and my hopes that we would be able to get down were not high at first. I descended to where the snow almost came into contact with the rock and almost turned around however it seemed to get a little wider past the constriction. After five minutes kicking at the snow a reasonable sized hole had been formed and I could see that the gap between the ice and snow was much larger below. I abseiled down and the shaft opened out and I landed on a ledge of ice and snow. By some good fortune the 40m rope ran out at this point and so I tied on the 31m rope and the ensuing knot pass was accomplished with ease. I continued descending and left the snow and ice completely behind. Eventually I ran out of rope probably at least 10m off the floor. Dropping stones seemed to indicate that the floor was yet more snow and ice. However a large black hole could be seen further to the left (west, I think). Throwing rocks down this produced a 3-4 second rattle. The sound of falling water could also be heard. The shaft probably ends in a big choke but you never know. Return with 80m rope is planned - watch this space. The exit was accomplished without too much incident however lost all feeling in my hands when prusiking next to the snow. Definitely need to wear gloves next time. (Mark).

9th August. [On the trip: Mark, Andy G.]

Rained for most of the morning. It cleared up in the afternoon and we decided after much faffing to go and take another look at X3. We finally left at about 4.30pm. Took the 80m rope and swapped this for the 30m and 40m ropes. Put in

three bolts, though it needs some more as it rubs at the entrance as you pass the ice. Added the 40m rope at a rebelay and pressed on. I ended up some 10m off the ground (similar position as the day before, but 20-30m further down). Possible black hole to the left. In the interests of getting back to camp before it got dark we headed out at this point, but made it out just in time for the sun to set and walked back to camp in the dark. Much drinking then ensued. (Mark).

11th August. [On the trip: Dave, Debs]

Another impressively slow start to the day. Eventually I headed off to X3 with Debs to try to make a little more progress. After some dubious routefinding and much 'it's hot and sunny out here and cold and dark in there' faffing, I eventually got underground at approx. 3.40pm. Got to where the rope abruptly ended fairly quickly, having picked up the 30m rope off an ice ledge enroute. It had frozen solid. I tied this onto the end of the 40m and abseiled down the side of another sizable ice plug, hitting the floor just before the rope ran out. I crawled around in the ice and scrot for 15 minutes trying to find a way under or around the ice plug, until the cold caught up with me and I decided to head out. However on reaching the top of the plug an obvious thought hit me - why not try abseiling down the other side? Indeed this way looked more promising, so I put another bolt in (my hands were totally numb by this point, it took ages and was the worst looking bolt I've ever put in). Threw the rest of the 30m down to take a peek. Unsure of how much further it will go, but left the tackle at the bottom anyhow - hope springs eternal and all that. Exited without any problems, other than a couple of near misses with rocks accidentally kicked down from above. (Dave).

16th August. [On the trip: Andy G., Dave]

Trip report to follow.

The Expedition Song

Batareika, by Trishka

Verse 1

Ischezli vse za uglom
A mji ostalisji v zale
Vse govorit ob odnom
Oni nas poterjali
Kuda, ne znajo, udti
Vse tji sudjoba- zlobeika
V tvoem nalobnom fonare
Sela batareika

Chorus

Oi-oi-yoy-yoy,
Batareika! (twice)

Verse 2

Ja vsuodu shol za taboj
Tebe vse bjilo malo
Tonul v holodno vode
I padal vniz na skalji
Nu nakonjetz povezlo
Dopelas kanareika
V moem nalobnom fonare
Sela batareika!

Verse 3

Gla zhu vo tmje na tebja
I uznaju nemnoshka
Vse ta zhe zlaja guba
Vse te krivje noshki
Kak u zmejuki glaza
Gorbataja soppelka
Vidat, V ljubvi mojej k tebe
Sebe batareika

Verse 4

V peskere temnou vdvojom
Mji do jutra sedeli
Za eta vreme drug drugu
Ochenj nadojeli
Vidj ti nje Jeanne d'Arc
Aja ne tvoy Shumejko
I u ljubvi u nashej
Sela batareika...

Pronunciation is entirely phonetic, this has been transcribed from Cyrillic alphabet courtesy of Vera.

Chords: - Em C G B7





