

Amazon Pot

Location: Mount Parnassus, towards Kali via from camp

Grid ref: N 38° 33' 30", E 22° 33' 44", Alt. 1600 m

Depth: 48 m (Underground: 34 m!)

Surveyors: Laurence Abbott, David Betteridge, Vicky Dunn, and Jemimah Eve

Survey date: 17/09/1997

Of the four of us, Dave was the only one who had been on the prospecting trip that found the entrance to this cave. He told stories of a rift in the corner of a huge shake hole, into which they had abseiled. The prospecting party had returned to camp via the road so the pushing team was dropped off about a mile down the road towards Kali via and set off back up the hill through the forest, towards where Dave thought the cave was. After several wrong shake holes, and quite a lot of trudging, we eventually found the correct shake hole; by now it was starting to rain. The shake hole was quite impressive, being about 20 m across with sheer, fluted limestone walls all round.

After we had changed into caving garb, Dave started rigging from a tree near the lip of the shake hole. From the tree, the rope led down a slope onto a rocky pier that stretched about a quarter of the way across the shake hole. The end of the rocky pier held a few large boulders, and a rebelay was set up from one of these, allowing the final twelve metres to be descended to the floor of the shake hole.

The plan was for Dave and I to bolt the actual rift, while Vicky and Mima put in a few bolts between the tree and the rebelay; I followed Dave to the edge of the rift and looked down into the darkness. Dave had told us previously that when they had thrown rocks down this rift, a few days previously, they had not heard them hit the bottom. Morale was high: this was going to be a deep one!

Dave banged a bolt into the wall at the pitch head; on the easy side! Then it was my turn to hang on Dave's fresh bolt, swinging around above a black rift of unknown depth, as I banged in a second bolt for a Y-hang. Meanwhile, Vicky and Mima had descended into the shake hole and they added another bolt a bit further back as a back-up.

After a brief lunch break, it was time to descend into the depths of Parnassus. For some reason, I volunteered to rig the rest of the cave. Rigging a cave can have a few interesting bits such as knots tightening as they are loaded, rigging from bolts that had only just been inserted was even more disconcerting; especially as this was the first bolt that I had done for real! Rather than having a Y-hang, I tensioned the rope to the back-up, just in case! It certainly was an odd

feeling, descending into somewhere where no one, except for an errant sheep, had gone before.

Unfortunately, the reason that Dave had not heard rocks hitting the floor was the presence of a huge snow plug at the bottom of the shaft. The pitch was a pleasant 25-m free hang down a shaft with a diameter of about 3 m. At the bottom was a small climb down to the ice plug. The other three followed and we frantically searched for a way on but none was to be found. Vicky forced her way into a parallel shaft but that went nowhere; each of us crawled round the back of the snow plug but found no evidence for a way on. Slightly disheartened, we exited the cave, surveying as we went.

The walk back to camp was by a similar route to that taken on the way to the cave: none of us fancied getting lost trying to find a short cut back to camp up the hill.

Amazon Pot, Mount Parnassos, Greece

