Cave Diving in Greece, 1982

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This summer, seven of us went back to Greece, to follow up the work of the 1981 recce trip. The journey overland is something best forgotten about. Suffice it to say that Greece is an awful long way in a landrover full of compressor and bottles, especially with 800km. of Yugoslavian joke roads in the way. Four days after leaving London, it was a weary bunch of cavers that finally rolled into Athens.

Nevertheless, a "base camp" was set up (under Julian's aunt's house), and the next day we were off to the island of Evia, and the caves. Here a 500m long cave called Agia Trias had been extended last year through a 30m sump. Beyond, about 200m of streamway terminated in a large chamber and waterfall, which stopped progress. We set off armed with a climbing rope and a pocket full of wired nuts and "friends", to tackle this obstacle. Most of it proved to be quite easy, but one section halfway up gave a sporting pitch at about V.S. After 50m the top was reached. Over the next two days about 1km of superb stream passage was explored, surveyed and photographed, to an inviting sump which we didn't have time to dive. There was also a very fine high level series, extremely well decorated, and ending in a calcite choke. The 8km or so potential of this site will have to wait until next year. However, we were well pleased with this discovery, as sporting stream caves are rare in Greece.

After this we drove down to the Mani Peninsula, at the south of the Peloponnesos (near Kalamata). Here the Cave of Selinitsa, near the village of the same name was our objective. About 1km of big passage leading from a beach frequented by naked Germans reached the large clear sump which is a phreatic window into a large tunnel. Upstream we explored two routes over the next few days, each to just under 300m in, and both in massive crystal clear passage. Downstream was also investigated for some 200m again in impressive passages, with quite a strenuous swim back to base against the heavy current. The resurgence for this large body of water is situated offshore in the form of a rather fine "blue hole" known as the Spring of Drakos. A massive chamber has two entrances leading in at 6m depth, and has a large airspace above and to one side, unfortunately with no way on above water. The way on was a big sump, and was explored for over 200m in from the entrance on the sea bed. The depth is 27m at one point, but the passage was comfortably large, and the only limiting factor was once again time. The connection from here to Selinitsa should go fairly easily, and will make a very fine 1000m dive. What lies beyond our limit upstream in Selinitsa is open to debate - but with so much water flowing after three months of drought conditions, potential is obviously good.

In the same area, various other sites were visited, but time prevented further full explorations. 60m of massive sump was entered in a nearby cave continuing in fine proportions, and we also visited a bat cave in the form of a tunnel some 50m in diameter, with stals. from floor to roof (!) We also went up a sporting river gorge near Lamia (N. Greece) for 4km, without finding the expected resurgence - this was just like wet caving with the roof off!

Apart from the caving, there was Ouzo to drink, fine cheap food to eat, and the obvious delights of snorkelling and diving in the Med. to make this a really enjoyable trip. Full details of all extensions made will be found in Cave Diving Group Newsletter No. 65.

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