

BERGER 2020 - Questions Frequently Asked

Is the cave rigged with new ropes?

All the vertical parts, yes. But not in the sector of Coufinades, -650 m deep. Here you'll find a lot of lifelines made by two or three very damaged ropes.

Should we use all the tensioned traverse lines in case of low water?

Yes absolutely! They are used to move away from the waterfall, but also to avoid friction (ex: cascade Claudine). Use a pulley on a cow-tail in the descent AND on the way up.

Is there a boat to cross the lake Cadoux?

No. Generally, the lake is dry. If it is filled, a life line is rigged on the left bank as you come down.

Wetsuit or not wetsuit?

Decide for yourself! Wetsuits are only useful in Coufinades, if you prefer swimming rather than using lifelines. But beware: it's necessary to carry it, to take time to put it on at -640m, and especially to remove it before coming up.

Can we drink the water which flows underground?

In the main river, it's risky! But below -600, you'll find clear inlets where it's possible to drink. In any case, it's necessary to carry some drinking water until -600m. 2 litres a person is a minimum.

We took five hours to reach -600m. How long to the bottom?

Too long! You have to consider that at -600m, you have done more than half the depth, but hardly a third of the effort to arrive at -1100m. Be reasonable!

How to manage the likely traffic jams in the first part of the cave?

First, by planning the schedules of descent between the different teams. Then, all the vertical lines over ten meters long are rigged with two ropes until -250m. Experience shows that waiting-times usually occur in the first meander.

We intend to leave at two o'clock in the morning to be in the cave before everybody.

Wrong idea! Too short a sleeping time before the descent will bring you to an advanced state of fatigue in the evening. Being at the entrance between 6 and 7 AM allows you to get out before midnight, in theory.

Is the bivouac at -500 comfortable?

It is a simple shelter made from rescue blankets, with mattresses, for a maximum of ten people. There you'll find a pharmacy and a cordless phone connected to the entrance. Beware: there are no sleeping bags!

I was forced to make a knot on a damaged rope. Hope somebody will change it.

Yes ! But only if the information reaches us. Do not forget to report any defects in the material to base camp on your return.

Phew! At last outside. No time to go to the base camp, let's go back home.

Please, think of us! Thanks for not obliging us to make a round trip to the cave to check the register. If you really can't come back and say good bye, at least leave a message or an SMS to confirm your exit.

But why don't you allow us to reach the bottom? The weather doesn't sound so bad.

Sorry but it is not a choice to be discussed. The decision is taken by the Speleological Rescue Society, which knows perfectly well the risks in that cave. Five deaths due to a flood is enough. Your life has more value than having your hopes dashed.

We plan to visit galerie de la Boue or réseau Mélusine. Is it possible ?

Yes. But only if it is clearly written on the planning at base camp. For obvious safety reasons, a team must not deviate from the classic course without having clearly informed the organization.

It's the first time I come here and I'm too tired... I prefer to get back out and let the others continue.

It's good to know when to give up. But to go back alone when you don't know the cave: certainly not! Someone from your team must come with you.

I have carried a trash bag up from the bottom, but I'm so tired.

Leave it there! Someone else will take it. Make sure you go out in good health.

I picked up a trash bag at -250, how far should I carry it down?

Leave it where it is and come back to the camp. We have to talk.
