

## PERU CAVING EXPEDITION (SEP-04)

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## Blog

📅 Sep 05, 2004

Peru Caving Expedition 2004 - Yauyos District of Central Peru

By Greg Brock (BEC/CDG)

As we stepped out the hired/borrowed 4x4 trucks at 4378m above sea level the effects of the altitude and lack of acclimatization finally hit us. Suddenly a young and fit international expedition could hardly move from the confines of the trucks. It wasn't long ago that we were all fighting our way through various international airports and then risking our lives in a cab journey from Lima airport to Nick Hawkes (BEC) house. Unfortunately our first bit of exercise was up at 4378m as we had sat in trucks up until this point. We headed down Sima Pumacocha 2 (SP2) to rig the first pitches before heading back down the valley to recover. It somehow took us 4 hours to rig 80m of cave. The locals were very keen that we drunk coca(ine) tea, which is apparently their cure for altitude sickness.

Sima Pumacocha (Cave of the Mountain Lion Lake) was one of our main objectives for the trip. Explored to a depth of 638m to a sump in 2001 and 2002. It was hoped that an ascending muddy passage (Road to Certain Death) down near the sump would bypass this sump and previous limit of exploration.

The next day, 7th September, we headed back down SP2 to continue rigging the pitches. Today I was feeling a lot better which was probably a combination of being better acclimatized, the coca tea and diamox tablets (prescribed altitude drugs). While these activities were going on in SP2 others were rigging the huge entrance shaft of SP1 and also the higher entrance of Qaqa Mach'ay.

We had now rigged down to the x-files ledge and the trips were starting to get longer so we decided it was appropriate to have a day off and visit the San Valentin Mine. All the bang fumes, lorry fumes and wine at high altitude on our tour round this mine meant that most of us went back feeling worse from our day off than if we had been caving. The mine was protected by heavily armed guards and after a conversation in Spanish between Nick and the guard we were allowed in. We were shown a very impressive selection of rock samples and geological maps from the mines and given samples to take with us. We were then provided food in the Cafe where we were treated like royalty.

After recovering from our rest day Pete Whitaker, Chris Densham and myself headed back underground to carry on with the rigging of SP2 (10th Sept 04). Chris insisted on taking his newly acquired video camera on every trip and as it was kept in a yellow pelican case he soon got the nickname "Yellow Peril Productions". With lots of rope, Drills, Batteries, Rigging Gear and more Hangers than we knew what to do with we headed very slowly into the cave with our train of gear. Once at the X-Files ledge Yellow Peril Productions kicked into action and wanted to film us rigging across X-Files and down into Cascadas de Don Jesus. This was protested greatly by Pete and myself. However we soon made it to the bottom of the big pitch where we reached the "Horizontal bit". This consisted of a steeply inclined passage full of house sized boulders. From Here we rigged to the bottom of Rolling Thunder before a shortage of gear, battery power and enthusiasm prompted a return.

After a hard slog up all the ropes we reached the surface at 3am and was greeted by a freezing cold night. A great contrast in weather to the boiling hot day we left when we entered the cave. By the time we reached top camp our gear was beginning to

Further trips into SP2 were done for photography and then the de-rigging commenced.

Meanwhile SP1 was connected via a 282m pitch to "The Shining Path" in SP2 making a fantastic exchange trip.

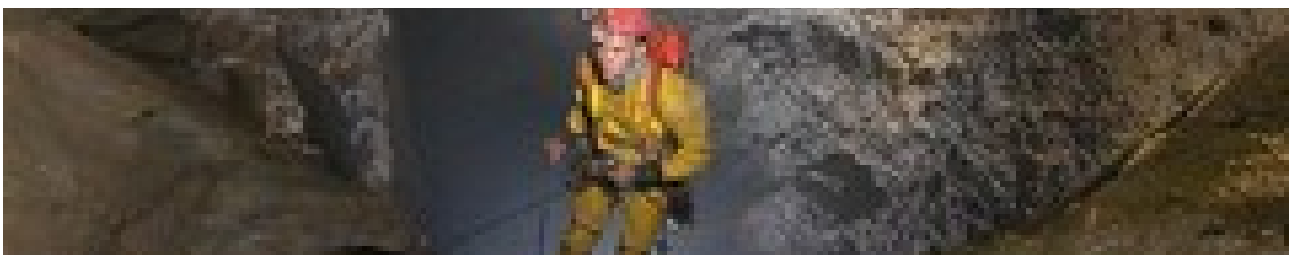
Further details can be found from the expedition's website that Ian McKenzie and the rest of the 2004 team set-up: <http://members.shaw.ca/pumacochoa> (<http://members.shaw.ca/pumacochoa>)

## Gallery | Video

International Caving Expedition to the High Altitude Caves of Peru.



Caving: Peru (Sep-04)



([https://farm6.staticflickr.com/5341/29913681010\\_41a7cdb700\\_b.jpg](https://farm6.staticflickr.com/5341/29913681010_41a7cdb700_b.jpg))

Greg descending Ammonite Shaft

