

Abstract:

Caves and Caving in Today's Romania

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Romania has now over 12,000 caves, considering caves longer than 10 m or with a height difference bigger than 10 m. This is the result of the creation of the first Speleological Institute in the world, at Cluj, Romania, in 1920, by Emil Racovita, with all the consequences concerning the scientific research in caves and the hard work of the amateur cavers, who explored and mapped most of these caves. In 1978 the National Speleo Competition 'speosport' was 'born', which had in part both good and bad results. The good results are the exploration and mapping of more than 11,000 caves, lots of scientific work, the professional cavers and the bad results were the fights and arguments between the clubs and the leadership at that time (not very democratic).

Before 1990 in Romania there were more than 60 caving clubs and one national Commission as part of the Tourism and Mountaineering Federation. In 1990 this commission was broken into five regional or national organisations; the Transylvanian Speleological Society, the Romanian Society of Speleology and Karstology, the Speleological Society of Banat, Group for Underwater and Speleological Explorations and the Central Speleological Commission from the Romanian Federation of Tourism, Mountain Rescue and Speleology - a government body. After 5 years of discussions, in October 1994, these organisations founded the Romanian Speleological Federation as a non-government and non-profit organisation.

Because of the events from 1989 and 1990 and because of the lack of interest in and money for speleology, the activity of the Romanian cavers decreased. In 1993 it began to increase again, but not as much before 1989. Now there are only a few speleo organisations (about 15) with any real activity.

In these conditions the most important results of the last years are:

- 1990** 3 km explored in the longest Romanian cave - Vintului Cave (44 km) (the Amateurs Caving Club from Cluj).

The Pothole Polenita reached from - 100 m depth to a depth of 247 m and the system (the Humpleu System) a height difference of -347.6 m (the Politehnica Speleo Club from Cluj).
- 1991** 2 km explored in the Humpleu System (34 km length) (Speleo Club 'Emil Racovita' from Cluj).
- 1992** The Pothole V5 reached a depth of -273 m (the T.S.S. Summer Caving Camp).

The Pothole from Grind reached a depth of -505 m (the Politehnica Speleo Club from Cluj).

1992-1993 5 km explored in the Cerbului Cave.

1993 7 km explored in the Pothole Adrian for the total depth of -250 m (the T.S.S. Summer Caving Camp).

1994 7 km explored in the Pothole Adrian for the total depth of -265 m - and a length of 11,718 m mapped. (the 'Z' Oradea Speleo Club and the T.S.S. Summer Caving Camp).

During the same time several caves and potholes no longer than 1 km or deeper than 100 m were explored, and also few important caves were re-mapped.

In particular the Adrian Pothole (Bad Valley) was found in 1986 by a 5 year old child, son of one of the greatest Romanian cavers of the 70s and 80s - Liviu Valenas, founder of the 'Z' Oradea Speleo Club. During 1990 the cave was explored to 200 m length and 32 m depth. In 1990, during an inter-club caving camp 'Z' Oradea, Ursus Spelaeus Tirgu Mures, Speleotex Cluj, the pothole Labirint Bucuresti reached 1k m length and 118 m depth. The terminus point was represented by a narrow diacalse. In May 1993 Zih Ioska passed the narrow place and explored few hundred metres of gallery. During the 1992 T.S.S. Summer Caving Camp (July 19 - August 4) and a T.S.S. Caving Trip in August (16-22) the pothole reached 6 km length and 250 m in depth. In October 1993 during a caving trip another 2 km of new galleries were found. In 1994, another 7 km of galleries were explored, the cavity was mapped on 11,718 m length for 265 m depth and the second entrance was found. This new entryance makes it easier access to the terminal point - the second siphon downstream. Also in 1994 was found the possible outlet spring of the cave.

The Adrian Pothole is developed in dolomites and grey anisian limestones of the Ferice structure, under the andezitic Cirligati - Cornu Mutilor - Fintina Rece. The extension of the karstificable rocks is only small at the surface, corresponding to a band 150-300 m in width, but it increases under the surface to 2 km in width in the Popii Valley. The limestones and dolomites are limited by Werfenian and Permian quartz sandstones.

The cavity has big rooms (90/20/30 m, 50/30/30 m), and high galleries. It represents a cavity with the biggest surface area covered with gypsum in Romania and it has some 'tops' as concerning the dimensions of the gypsum formations anthodite of 34 cm length, needle pmonocrystal of 28.5 cm length, needle monocrystals (0.2 - 0.3 mm thickness) of 15 cm length, gypsum rope (angels' hair) of 15 cm length.

It should be mentioned the presence of other minerals such as: quartz, limonite, malachite, celestine, hydromagnesite, and aragonite. The calcite formations are present in many places and various forms (stalactites, stalagmites, pool basins, helictites, monocrystals 5-6 cm length).

The exploration and the mapping activities were stopped for a while, because of the difficult access and bad weather, but the cave still continues. A scientific research concerning the minerology and the bio-speleology was started in November, during a three day caving trip (4-6 Nov.), in collaboration with two speleologists from the 'Emil Racovita' Speleological Institute from Cluj, both members of the T.S.S.

