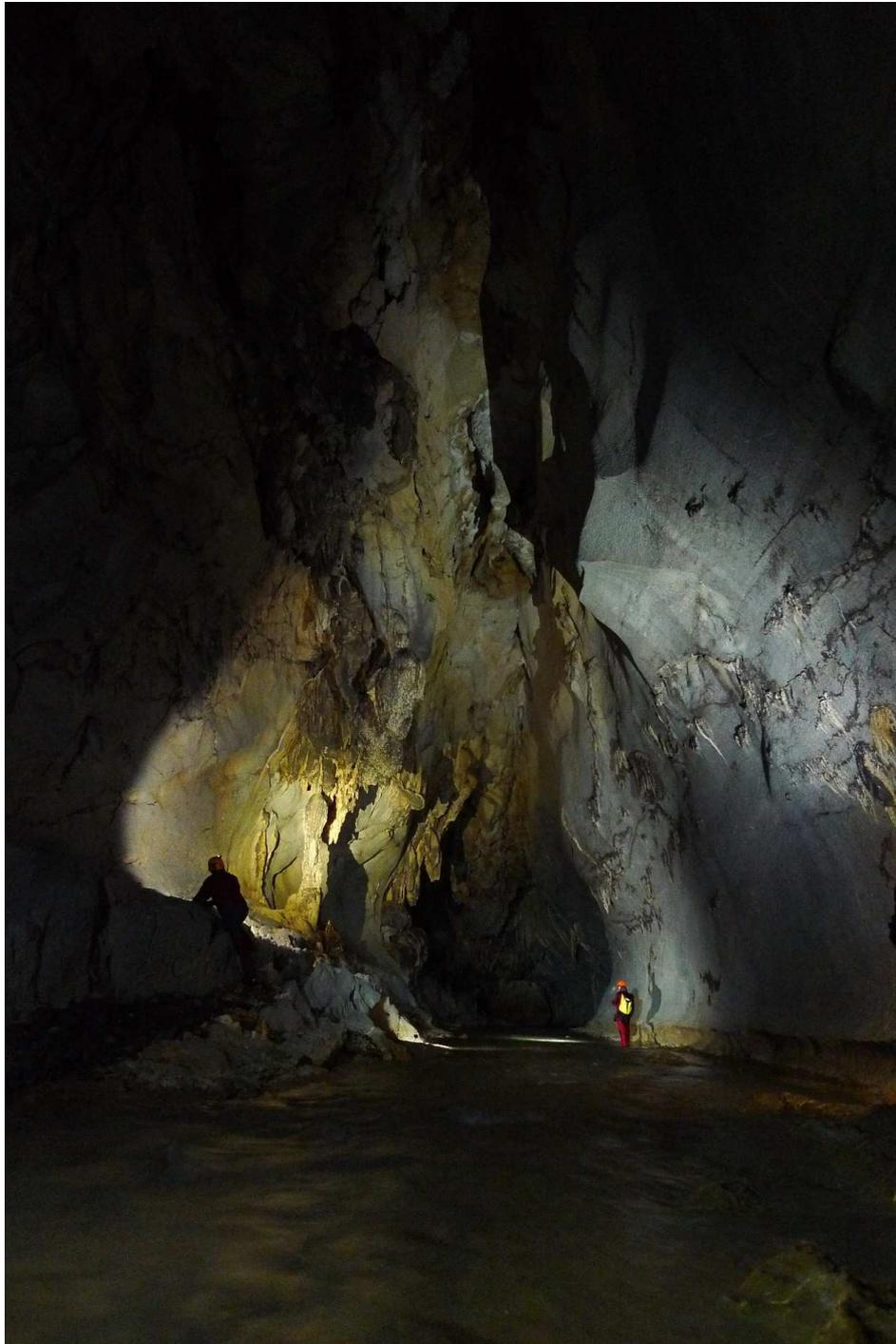


REPORT
for Euro Speleo Project ESP-2014-13
Expedition to Northern Laos 2014-13
December 22nd 2014 - January 17th 2015



Tham Chom Ong System (photo: Irina Ermakova).

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1. Summary

Mission Continuation of open leads and new areas found during the 2014 expedition in Houaphan
2014-15: province as well as starting to investigate new areas in Xieng Khouang province.



The map shows an overview of Northern Laos. The target areas are outlined in the map by circles.

The black area indicates the karst in eastern Xieng Khouang province.

The dotted blue area represents the karst north of Xam Neua town in Houaphan province.

The red area indicates the alternative area of fieldwork in Oudomxay province which was chosen after denial of our permit by the military in Xieng Khouang province.



The expedition 2014 continued the strategy to form independent teams in order to explore more areas during the same expedition. Whereas one team targeted Xieng Khouang and Oudomxay provinces (22nd Dec. 2014 - 3rd Jan 2015) a second team went again to Houaphan province (5th - 17th Jan 2015). Twelve speleologists from six different countries (Belgium, Russia, Ireland, USA, the Netherlands, and Germany) contributed to the results of the expedition.

To our extreme dismay, although formal permit was obtained (and paid!) for Nonghet district in Xieng Khouang province, the Lao military refused to let us do any fieldwork because of “safety reasons”. Consequently, after having surveyed three smaller show caves in the surroundings of the provincial capital Phonsavan we went on a 15 hours ride to Oudomxay province where we still had good contacts from previous years and where safety problems are not an issue. During one exploration week 12 new caves around Chom Ong village were explored, including 900 m long (preliminary value) Tham Ketlin. Several of these new caves resemble upper fossil levels of the 17.15 km long Tham Chom Ong System but are not connected to the main cave any more. Furthermore new caves in Beng district (Oudomxay) were targeted with the local authorities being very keen of having more cave exploration done in that district.

The final two expedition weeks were again spent in Houaphan province where the cave potential is still not depleted. Main discoveries were 770 m long Tham Pang Noy, which was connected to Tham Houay Ngot, now forming the over 3.6 km long “Tham Houay Ngot-Tham Pang Noy System”. Another major breakthrough was made in Tham Sop Koup, a river cave which was discovered in 2013 and where exploration was stopped in front of a sump 765 m from the entrance. In 2015 this sump was circumvented by a climb up over flowstone and 1,680 additional metres were added to the cave length, resulting in a new total length of over 2.4 km for Tham Sop Koup. A period of heavy rain and cold weather prohibited to target Ban Nam Y where on our previous expedition in January 2014 a large new river cave with major potential was discovered. Consequently, Houaphan province needs a return trip in 2016.

Altogether 24 new caves were explored and 2 already known caves were extended, with a total of ~8 km of passages surveyed during the expedition.

The expedition results 2014-15 will be presented at various conferences depending on participation of the expedition members and starting with the German national congress in September 2015, and including the Euro-Speleo Forum in Ingleton (UK) in 2016.

All results will be published in detail in the expedition series "Berliner Höhlenkundliche Berichte" of the Speleoclub Berlin in English language. Our sixth volume on northern Laos, comprising the 2014-2015 expeditions is foreseen to be released in 2015. FSE and its partners will be acknowledged.

Cave Synopsis Laos 2014-15 (Oudomxay, Houaphan + Xieng Khouang provinces)														13. February 2015	
No.	Map-sheet	Req.No	Date	Name	Coordinates (WGS 84)	Alt.	Village / Ban	District	Province	Length (m)	Survey	Map	Options		
1			22.12.2014	Tham Xang 1 (Medical Depot Cave)	N 19°36'33"; E 103°24'56"	1100	Nam Kha	Paek	Xieng Khouang	330	CE	ML	+/- finished		
2			22.12.2014	Tham Xang 2 (Residential Cave)	N 19°36'36"; E 103°24'53"	1100	Nam Kha	Paek	Xieng Khouang	420	CE/IE	ML	+/- finished		
3	E48-014	E48-014-003	24.12.2014	Tham Nam (Tham That - M3)	N 19°30'10"; E 102°52'21"	1230	Xiang Ngha	Phu Kut (Su)	Xieng Khouang	330	CE	CE	+/- finished		
4			27.12.2014	Tham Hou Nguak	N 20°42'54"; E 101°45'38"	730	Chom Ong Tai	Xai	Oudomxay	191	ML	ML	finished		
5			27.12.2014	Tham Ketlin	N 20°43'19"; E 101°45'59"	850	Chom Ong Tai	Xai	Oudomxay	900	CE	CE	going		
6			27.12.2014	Tham Mark Phuk	N 20°44'08"; E 101°46'12"	879	Chom Ong Tai	Xai	Oudomxay	200	IE	IE	+/- finished		
7			28.12.2014	Tham Di	N 20°43'49"; E 101°46'16"	957	Chom Ong Tai	Xai	Oudomxay	50	IE	IE	+/- finished		
8			28.12.2014	Tham Khang Thum	N 20°46'05"; E 101°45'37"	846	Houay Soy	Xai	Oudomxay	150	CE	CE	finished		
9			28.12.2014	Tham Houay Soy (insurgence)	N 20°45'37"; E 101°45'50"	845	Houay Soy	Xai	Oudomxay	449	IE/CE	IE	finished		
11				Tham Houay Soy (resurgence)	N 20°46'30"; E 101°45'43"	806									
10			29.12.2014	Tham Siang Kao	N 20°43'32"; E 101°45'58"	918	Chom Ong	Xai	Oudomxay	250	ML/CE	ML	+/- finished		
11			2.1.2015	Tham Namheng 1	N 20°16'56"; E 101°33'26"	556	Homsajkhame	Beng	Oudomxay	100	IE	IE	finished		
12			2.1.2015	Tham Namheng 2	N 20°16'48"; E 101°33'19"	---	Homsajkhame	Beng	Oudomxay	100	CE	CE	finished		
13			3.1.2015	Tham Thia	N 20°17'25"; E 101°33'20"	838	Homsajkhame	Beng	Oudomxay	231	ML	ML	finished		
14			3.1.2015	Tham Seu	N 20°17'33"; E 101°33'28"	792	Homsajkhame	Beng	Oudomxay	62	ML	ML	finished		
15			3.1.2015	Tham Dikai	N 20°17'41"; E 101°34'03"	759	Homsajkhame	Beng	Oudomxay	89	ML	ML	finished		
16			5.1.2015	Tham Na Khang	N 20°32'06"; E 104°04'29"	993	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	120	CE	CE	finished		
17			5.1.2015	Tham Ei Eud 1	N 20°32'33"; E 104°04'43"	972	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	80	IE	IE	finished		
18			5.1.2015	Tham Ei Eud 2	N 20°32'32"; E 104°04'40"	944	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	80	IE	IE	finished		
19			6.1.2015	Tham Kia	N 20°32'21"; E 104°03'37"	1062	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	100	IE	IE	finished		
20			6.1.2015	Tham Pang Noy	N 20°32'24"; E 104°03'47"	1034	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	770	IE	IE	finished		
21	F48-125	F48-125-086	6.1.2015	Tham Sop Kou (continued)	N 20°33'49"; E 104°03'39"	960	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	1680	CE	CE	+/- finished		
22			7.1.2015	Tham Pang	N 20°32'21"; E 104°03'49"	1078	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	80	IE	IE	finished		
23			7.1.2015	Tham Din Loub	N 20°32'56"; E 104°03'41"	991	Nam Kou	Xam Neua	Houaphan	134	IE	IE	finished		
24			11.1.2015	Tham Khia Noy	N 20°33'31"; E 104°01'14"	1046	O	Xam Neua	Houaphan	350	CE/SV	CE/SV	finished		
25			12.1.2015	Tham Nam Ok	N 20°33'30"; E 104°01'26"	937	O	Xam Neua	Houaphan	380	CE/SV	CE/SV	+/- finished		
26	F48-124	F48-124-002	14.1.2015	Tham Beung (continued)	N 20°36'24"; E 103°57'37"	677	Nam Y	Xam Neua	Houaphan	350	CE/SV	CE	+/- finished		
Total Laos 2014-15										7.896					

Synoptic list of caves explored by the international team of the Northern Lao-European Cave Project in 2014-15 in the provinces of Xieng Khouang, Oudomxay, and Houaphan. Figures in red indicate caves where the cave survey is not drawn yet and speleometric data may change (usually increase).



2. Photographs:



The Xieng Khouang/Oudomxay team (missing: Terry Bolger, USA & Yulia Chistyakova, Russia), from left to right: Irina Ermakova, Michael Laumanns, Hoi (guide from Green Discovery, Vientiane), Carsten Ebenau, Siegfried Moser (guest), Marc Vandermeulen, Dominik Fröhlich and Helmut Steiner. Photo: Yulia Chistyakova.



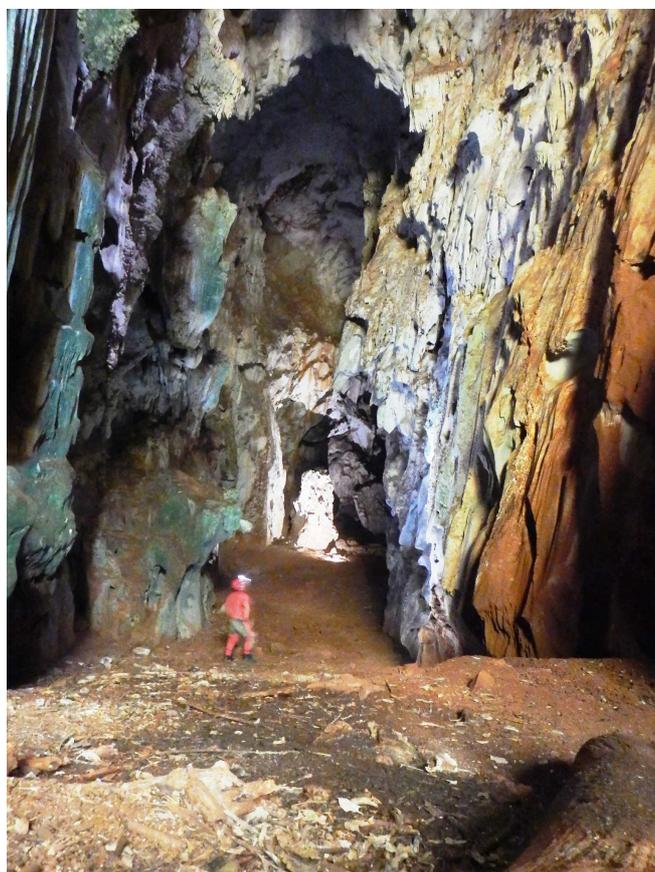
Tham Chom Ong System (photo: Irina Ermakova).



The Houaphan team, from left to right: lower row: Tony Dwyer, Irina Ermakova, Kaiphet (guide), Yulia Chistyakova; upper row: Romé van Grinsven, Carsten Ebenau, Stefan Virsik, Stefan Voigt.



Tham Nam (Xieng Khouang) (photo: M.Vandermeulen).



Tham Ketlin (Oudomxay) (photo: M.Vandermeulen).



Tham Houay Soy (Oudomxay), main river passage (photo: I.Ermakova).



Tham Khang Thum (Oudomxay) (photo: C.Ebenau).

