

2012
Loferer Forschung 2012 - "Sekt oder Selters"

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[Summary]

The expedition to Loferer Schacht took place between the 25th August and 2nd September. Seven speleologists from Germany, Czech Republic, Portugal, Romania and the USA participated. Due to poor weather conditions, the team could spend only a total of five days and four nights underground at -600m. Exploratory work at the large breakdown zone was undertaken, without a breakthrough being achieved. In addition, several new areas were surveyed and the existing fixed rigging was brought to higher safety standards. The camp at Waldstadion was dismantled after all leads had been thoroughly explored.

[Pre-tour]

Preparatory work began in January, with the call for participants and formal request for exploration with the Austrian authorities. A supply tour was held between 5-8 July, during which several speleologists from Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary and Portugal lent their backpacks to carry around 200Kg of food and rigging material to the base camp.

[Ascent, Weather, Camp, Participants]

The first speleologists to arrive gathered in the Lofer Valley on 24th August. Two members of the expedition were still in transit after delays during their trips. Three further speleologists would fail to arrive at the appointed meeting time, finally dropping out of the expedition entirely. The remaining supplies would now have to be distributed through less backs, all the more loaded on the five-hour ascent to the base camp.



Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru

The camp was set up under an approaching storm, forcing the team to descend back to the von-Schmidt-Zabierow-Hütte since suitable sleeping spaces could not be arranged in time. After an early start on the following day, sleeping, kitchen

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arrangements and a connection to the outside world through Cavelink were prepared. Ron and Petr descended the first few pits to replace ropes at the end of their useful life, after which the team hiked back to the Hut to join Radu, who had been on the road for thirty hours.



The team before descent

Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru

[Descent]

The descent team, composed of Oliver, Petr, Radu and Renato, started the descent to the main camp, the “Garten für die Harten”, on Monday morning. Ron kept watch over the base camp at the surface, where further bad weather was expected. Fully loaded, with supplies, personal material and the 2-stroke rotary hammer, the team toiled on for ten hours until reaching the main bivak, doing repairs and registering the state of the rigging along the way. After a quick set-up, all lights were out for a good night's rest.

Tuesday was set for exploration and de-rigging of the Propast Robert Zidlického, which was discovered and first surveyed in 2011. This massive hall's ceiling could not be seen, even using several high-powered lamps. In the absence of any feasible leads, the ropes leading to the bottom were removed. A climb, accessible from the same meander that leads into the hall, was partially explored and surveyed, and will be the object of further action in a future expedition. During this day there was still occasion to secure a deep pit at Stairway to Heaven zone that would be of great importance for the attack on the most relevant exploration lead.

The furthest camp, Waldstadion, served teams of up to four people during exploration of the westernmost branch of Loferer Schacht. Not only did measurements indicate a distance of approximately 60m to the surface, but also the

presence of dark earth and strong wind at certain locations, contributed to the conviction that a second exit could be found in this area. Nevertheless, several years of unfruitful searches meant that this branch would be abandoned in favour of surface prospection, in itself a complex endeavour due to the rugged nature of the terrain. On a day in which two less relevant halls were surveyed, the entire Waldstation camp was also dismantled and its contents carried back to the Garten bivak. Carefully piled rocks and four person-sized patches of compacted clay were all that remained, inert witnesses of human occupation.



On the way to Waldstadion

Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru



On the way to Waldstadion

Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru

The current exploration lead is located in a branch of high geological interest, where several converging diaclases have created large open volumes and the resulting chaos presents considerable challenges to the interpretation of the cave. Careful exploration lead the team to a tight passage which appears to be one of the main wind routes. Behind the small tunnel and after a small room, the wind disappears between firmly wedged blocks that obstruct further exploration. Thursday was set to be the first day dedicated to opening this passage, during which desobstruction work would take place in cramped conditions and chilling wind. An unplanned-for malfunction of the rotary hammer, which had been serviced over winter, and which could not be corrected in the field, forced the end of work after only a small amount of rock had been removed. Dealing with the frustration after this unfortunate episode, the team turned back, intent on clearing a number of question marks that had been deemed less relevant. One of these meanders would lead, to the surprise and joy of the team, over the course of several passages, to areas surveyed over twelve years in the past - the Glutamat Connection.

2012
Lofoten
Svalbard
Cave
Exploration



Oliver sketching the Glutamat Connection

Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru

[Ascent]

After a night in which swelling water quantities became loud enough to wake up some of the speleologists - an indication that heavy rain was raging outside - the team packed the gear and swept the camp, leaving it ready for the next expedition. The ascent to the surface was steady, with the team being greeted by warm drinks and 15cm of fresh snow. Energy could still be found in all the speleologists to descend, under a black sky and thick flakes, to the comfort of the von-Schmidt-Zabierow-Hütte.



Ascending

Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru



Out into the snow!

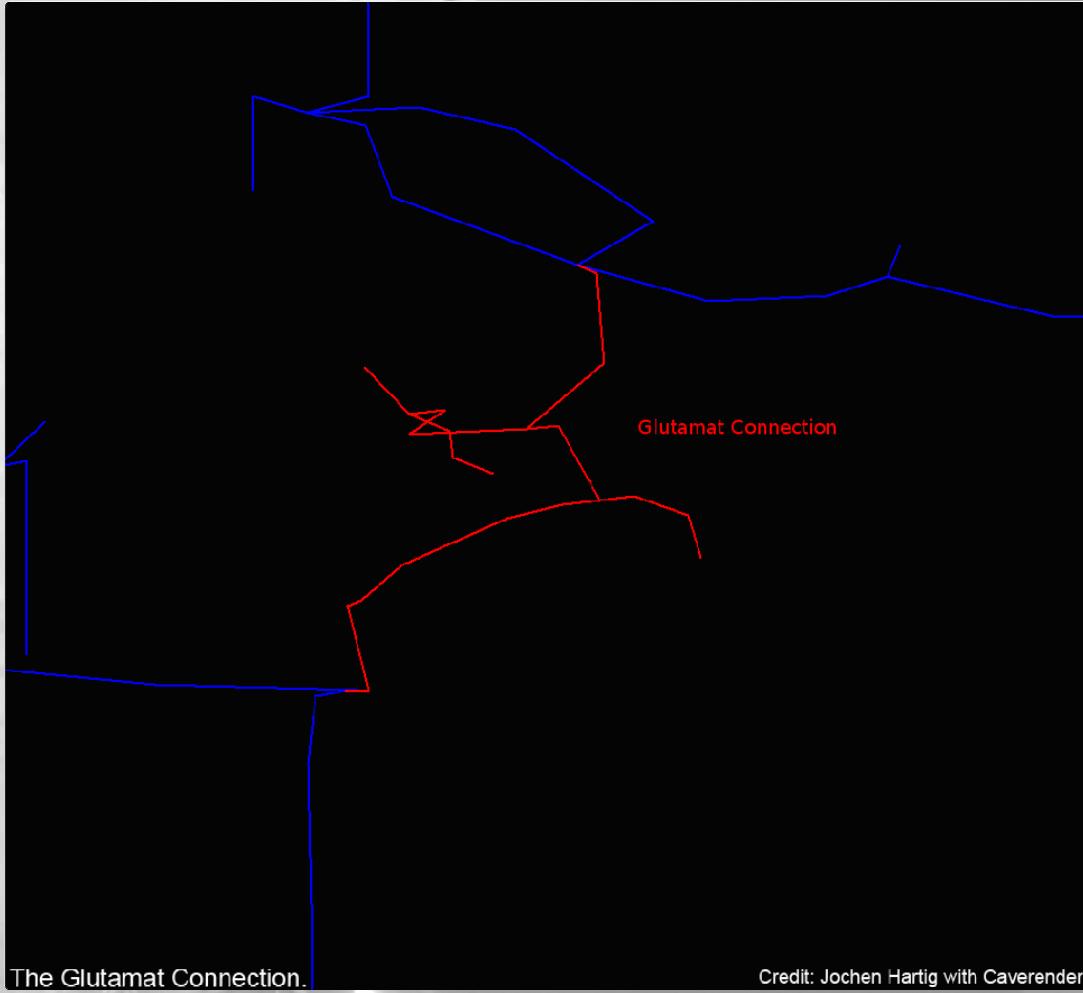
Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru

[Next expedition]

After a successful and accident-free expedition, the team is processing - in more hospitable conditions - the measurements, digital media and other results from this year's expedition. Work takes place in as many countries as there were speleologists, and in multiple fronts. The team expects to present an exciting account of more than 25 years of exploration in the Loferer Steinbergen during the Brno 2013 conferences, and thus attract new participants to explorations in this fascinating location.



Photo credit: Radu C Dumitru



[Thank notes]

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