

## **Flag Report**

**Grutas de Guerrero Expedition  
Cave Exploration  
Guerrero, Mexico  
April 2009  
Flag #44  
Report by C. William Steele, FN'79**

From April 4–15, 2009, four speleologists traveled the Southern Mexico state of Guerrero in search of a new speleological study area. Our stated plan when applying to carry the flag of The Explorers Club was to look primarily in the vicinity of Grutas de Juxtlahuaca, Guerrero, of which C. William Steele had been a primary explorer and surveyor of in 1971. In 2002 Steele returned to Juxtlahuaca for a visit, the cave having in those subsequent years been established as a national park, and was treated like a renown returning original explorer, including being photographed for the local newspaper, awarded an embroidered cave guide shirt, and honored with the title of “guide for life.”

At Grutas de Juxtlahuaca our group of four, consisting of Diana Tomchick, Ph.D. of Irving, Texas (applying for membership in The Explorers Club soon), Emily Zuber of Anacortes, Washington (daughter of Explorers Club member Ron Zuber, and likely to become a member some day), and Charles Fromen of Zihuatanejo, Guerrero, Mexico (being encouraged to join The Explorers Club), was offered the keys to the cave for us to guide ourselves. Instead, we decided to take a tour, which worked out very well because the premier guide of them all, Andres Ortega, personally led us, and we were able to talk with him at length about other caves in the area.

Ortega told us that there are other caves with large galleries within the national park, and that they are unexplored. He also told us of a 50 meter-deep entrance shaft in the park which was descended by Italian cavers in the late 1980s, but they did not explore the underground stream they discovered and did not map it.

However, with us being in the area during Easter week, and that being the busiest tourist week of the year, Ortega was unable to find a guide to show us the caves. He said it was not allowed for us to look for the unexplored caves on our own.

So we left the Grutas de Juxtlahuaca area and went up into the mountains west of Chilpancingo to try and find a cave named on a road atlas we had. Our plan was to enter it and see if it appeared to have been explored, and as cavers know where there is one cave, there are usually others.

After a difficult time finding the right road up into the mountains west of Chilpancingo, we eventually found it, and drove into the mountains to look for caves. Along the way we

talked to a man riding in the back of a pickup truck. He told us if we followed them they would show us a big cave next to the road.

In about an hour the truck stopped and we saw a big cave entrance. We spent the next week taking trips into this huge cave. A report we had told us that Italian cavers had explored about five kilometers of this cave in 1988. They did not reach an end and passed many large passages they did not explore.

Apparently the main cave we were looking for, which is not near the road but is less than a mile from it, has not been explored at least as far as anyone knows, and a search of all records has turned up only one sentence of description about it: an unsurveyed cave with passages reputed to be 80m high. We do not wish to make the name of this cave known yet. If we did, it is quite possible that others would beat us to it and explore it before we have a chance to. Such is the practice of some cave explorers.

We began mapping a cave the locals call Sima del Borrego and mapped over one kilometer of it. It is immense and branches out a lot. The accompanying photo was taken in this cave along with The Explorers Club flag. Our plan is to spend the next year studying the area by acquiring maps, geologic information, compiling everything known about caves in the area, and return in spring 2010 to continue work in the area.