

Jewel Cave - exploration trip summary

November 8-11, 2015

Nate Hughes, Rene Ohms, Chris Pelczarski and Adam Weaver, entered Jewel Cave on Sunday, November 8, for a four-day exploration trip.

After five hours of travel, they left most of their supplies at the camp site and traveled another hour, south to an area near the Southwest Splinter. Adam and Chris checked passages going west from Dimension Z, and surveyed into an upper Loft level before descending steeply again. They made good progress, but ran out of time just as the passage was beginning to open up into a very large space.

Meanwhile, Rene and Nate surveyed passages east of Sequence Hall. They mapped a large walking-sized passage that led back toward known cave, stopping at a four-way junction. Both teams returned to camp to get a good night's rest.

On Monday, everyone traveled about four hours to the southern extent of the cave, near Hourglass Lake. Chris and Nate surveyed a passage south of the lake. It trended east before ending. Then they traveled to the Lost Subway to check a pit that hadn't previously been explored, but it quickly came to an end.

Rene and Adam surveyed passages near Hourglass Lake. They discovered another similar-sized lake, just 100 feet away. They called it "Piso Mojado," or "Wet Floor" in Spanish. Another nearby passage trends northeast as a large fissure, but eventually ended at some interesting unclimbable pits. They finished surveying in a large passage that went back to the north, then met with the other team and returned to camp late that night.

Tuesday morning, each team returned to the passages that Chris and Adam found on Sunday – west of the Southwest Splinter. Chris and Adam began surveying in the large space they'd discovered on the first day. It was a huge passage, measuring 60 feet wide, 40 feet tall, and 350 feet long. They called it the "New Frontier." Beyond is a tight fissure that they didn't have time to fully map, called the "Final Frontier."

Rene and Nate surveyed south from the New Frontier into a deep pit they called "The Well of Souls." They finished the day in a large passage, leaving multiple leads to be explored on another day.

Wednesday was spent cleaning up camp and exiting the cave. A total of 6,158 feet was surveyed, so Jewel Cave is now 180.07 miles long. Piso Mojado is a new deep point in the cave, at -724 feet. Since March 2014, over eight miles of new passages have been discovered beyond the Southwest Splinter, and over 300 unchecked leads remain for future exploration.



Above: Nate Hughes at Piso Mojado

Below: Rene Ohms in Pinnacles Expressway, on the main travel route to the lakes



New Discoveries in Jewel Cave - November 2015 (1.1 miles)

