

Tête Sauvage – Salle La Verna Traverse Description Page 1

The pitches of Tête Sauvage

This route has pitches which were superbly equipped by ARSIP with P Hangers and stainless steel chains in 2001. La Tête has the disadvantage of having an installation of metal poles up to -180m (parrot ladders, a pain going down but good going up), which the French are thinking of uninstalling. These poles, which curiously remain in an acceptable state throughout the years, consist of a central tube cut by metal steps. Some of the steps are bent and others are missing, which will force us to take precautions if we choose to use them.

We recommend avoiding using them as much as possible and abseil all the pitches as if they were not there.

You start with an R4 from which the poles appear after a narrow section. This is followed immediately by a P16. A short meander brings you closer to P45 "Tortoise pitch" that you don't go all the way to the bottom, but 17 meters from its base you go through a window to the right, following the poles. After the window, the 1st meander, 40 m, brings you closer to a P50 whose first half has no poles. This pitch has, in its first half, a pair of anchors at -8m and -16m that we will not use. At the base of the pitch, you climb down an R5 and an R3 using the poles.



Climbing the R3



En-route to the Pitches

After the last highlight you come to some blocks, under which is the next P25 "Damocles pitch", followed by an R4, R2 and R2 using the last poles. Then a small P6 followed by a P30 with an intermediate ledge that you pass by.

You are already at -210m and next to the head of the P18 (washed down with rain), at whose base and after a short meander you will find the head of a P11 followed by a P4, after which the 2nd meander begins, narrow, uncomfortable and with water at its base.



Second Meander



Base of the Pitches

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After about 30m, and in a bend, you find the next P28 (watered) with a small intermediate ledge that you pass by. Once at the base, the 3rd meander begins, shorter and more comfortable than the previous one and takes you to the head of the P100. This pitch is divided into five lengths less than 25m and has small intermediate ledges, where the ropes are installed. The first three rope runs form a ramp, which becomes vertical in the last two.

The base of the pitch, already wider, is located at -380m and through it a small supply of water circulates, which, after a few metres turns to the left, forming a recessed bend that seems to end the cavity. Right there, at the bend, you will see a small space over the flooded area with a strong draught: **The Vent (below)**



The Vent !

Passing through this duck it is impossible to stay dry and you will appreciate the benefits of the neoprene etc that you are wearing! Once past the flooded section begins the 4th meander, about 60m long, which ends at the head of a P8 that is usually in-situ rigged. From its base you can hear the water of the **Bassaburuko** tributary that circulates through the **Salle Cosyns**. A few meters later and following the noise, you reach a balcony 6m above the **Salle Cosyns** (-384m). This P6 is fixed on naturals and leaves you next to the waterfall that comes from SC.3.

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Salle Cosyns to Grand Canyon

Don't follow the water to Sump 1 but cross the chamber to a large block and take a fossil passage to the right for about 25m that short-circuits the sump and leads to a large waist deep pot. *To avoid the pot, several metres before reaching the pot, and on the right hand side there is an overpass (E3) of easy climbing that takes you to an upper passage through which you access the river again.* Continue along the river for a few metres then take a passage on the left to bypass sump 2. This passage begins with an equipped E7 climb, a bit dirty and with rub points.

After the climb you find an old bivouac on flat ground and immediately a P6 from which we see on the right the river between the 2nd and 3rd siphon, and ahead a climb of an E6, also rigged. About 30m of passage after the last climb lead us to a P8 that leads us again in the river. Now we continue through the active streamway for 120m, crossing a pair of pots, avoidable by traversing on the side. The roof begins to go down to form the 4th sump, which we will bypass through a passage on the left that leads to the **Salle Pierrette**, through which the tributary **Max Couderc** runs. In this Chamber we continue downstream through a boulder filled passage until we see that the stream disappears to our right.

About fifteen metres ahead and another fifteen metres before reaching a trailing P10, take a narrow passage to the right that, after an E2 climb, takes you back to the river, past the fourth sump. After a low roof step follow about 150 metres of passage, crossing several pots (avoidable by traversing on the sides) until entering the **Salle Monique** (100x30m), whose end marks the entrance (until the end of the **Salle Lepineux**) to Spanish territory. You go across the chamber to reach a horizontal and descending rift of about 5m that drops directly into a 20m lake that you cross on the left, helped by a traverse line, before reaching the beginning of the **Salle Susse** (280x 50m). This chamber, which is basically a boulder chaos, will have to be followed on the right to its highest part following obvious markers.

From there and following an edge (west) that soon descends to the left by a steep slope, leads you, finally, to the river of the PSM, which has greatly increased its flow. You have now entered the **Grand Canyon**.



Salle Susse



Start of Grand Canyon

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Grand Canyon to Shunt Hidalga

Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon, 1.5km of the total 8.6 km, is one of the best stretches of the traverse, with the roof between 40 and 100m high. The floor is covered with gravel and sand, making progression easy. It is split into two sections, divided by the **Great Barrier** where the **C.50 entrance** connects. The first section, the longest (1,200m) has deep water sections (some over waist deep).

This first section is split, in its last 500 metres, by five chokes, of which the last two are the largest. You cross them below or at medium height. The fifth collapse (**the Great Barrier**), the largest, you cross on the right to a point where an R4 climb, with fixed rope is followed by a narrow passage between blocks, which leads to the open canyon and the connection with the **C.50 entrance** on our right. After the connection point of the **C.50**, a new choke, much simpler than the previous one, is passed to gain the last 300m of this section of the **Grand Canyon**. (*The Great Barrier is easy to identify, because after it the canyon follows two curves of more than 180°*)

The second section of the canyon, of easy going, narrows its walls, which means that the water level is kept at your waist – and up to the chest - continuously. At the end of this second section the canyon is enlarged and some sandy beaches appear, a few meters after the passage closes at a point where the water is added at a low pass. There you will see a fixed rope that falls into the streamway, which indicates the E4climb, the **Embarcadero**, where you leave the Grand Canyon and enter the **Marmite Passage**.

Marmite Gallery - Shunt de la Hidalga

From **the Marmite Gallery** to the **Tunnel de Vent** is the most intricate section of the traverse, so it is worth stopping, re-reading the description and reviewing the survey. **IT IS VERY EASY TO GET LOST IN THIS AREA, TAKE CARE !**

This fossil passage is interrupted by small pots (Marmites) with water. Just 100m from the **Embarcadero** the passage divides into two. Take the right hand passage with an air current. After a few more pots, a small stream follows to an R2 through which you reach a passage with blocks that continue for about 20m until you reach a climb with fixed rope on the right that goes up to the **Great Cornice**.

The cornice is 8 meters long and almost 1m wide. From the top you can see the bottom of the passage covered by a lake 20m below our feet. After the ledge, a single R6 fixed rope takes us back to the base of the passage. Continuing straight through this passage for about 100m we reach a chaos of blocks, and a little further on an E4 with fixed ropes on the left, which you climb, (*If you continue through the front passage, by mistake instead of climbing the E4 on the left, you will arrive at 50 metres to a lake formed by the PSM river between siphons*). Once up the climb take a passage that bears to the right and then leads to an ascending and muddy ramp. The ramp has a large block in its middle and after a few meters of passing it we will find on the right wall a crack of about 80cm wide, with a fixed rope inside, which will help us ascend a fixed climb E5: **The Shunt Hidalga**



E5 The Shunt Hidalga

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Shunt Hidalgo to Tunnel du Vent

The ascending climb of **the Shunt Hidalgo** passes over the head of the **Pitch Hidalgo** (P25), which you can see under your feet after passing an intermediate narrow point. Tracing a small recessed block leads you to the **Prince of Viana Gallery**. When leaving the shunt ropes you will have to take extreme precautions to reach the exposed P25 rope.

The head of the pitch Hidalgo is the entrance of a new and great gallery: **Prince of Viana Gallery**. From the ropes, go up to a short promontory on the left and then go down to the right (northwest) on a large chaotic ramp, in whose lower part you will find on the left the entrance to a passage with a lower ceiling. Taking this passage and following it to the right, takes us to the Lake of the Railings of the Stone River at 40m. If you wear a wetsuit you can ignore the traverse lines and cross the lake on the left (where you can stand) to the first corner, a delicate point with the water around the neck, where we will approach the right wall to continue until we reach an area of blocks, which will take you, after another flooded area, to the **Prince of Viana Hall** through a chaotic area. This room has a central promontory that you ascend to its highest point, then, descend it without losing sight of the left wall, to a point where the two accesses to the **Tunnel du Vent** are. Both accesses are roughly the same length (about 50m), the first one being wider and more comfortable than the second.

- **1st access to the Tunnel Du Vent:** In the lower part of the collapse you find in the left wall an opening, with a lower ceiling, that communicates with a flooded gallery. The icy wind blows strongly and communicates at 50m with the **Tunnel du Vent** itself, another 50m, where you will not want to stand at any time, but have the help of a handline, with buoys, installed in its first meters in the front wall and then passes through the ceiling, to help the pull through.

- **2nd access to the Tunnel Du Vent:** From the first access to the Tunnel, the gallery ascends again, and at 15 or 20 meters, following the left wall, we will find a small passage entrance, next to the ground, that opens to **Gallery Gaterosa** (Small passage) in its first 20 metres, which finally takes us to the **tributary of Arlés**. Following the tributary downstream (left), we will immediately find the handline with buoys that will take us through the **Wind Tunnel** to the **Salle Navarra**, and with it to the great chambers of the **PSM**.

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Tunnel du Vent to Salle Adelle

The exit of the Tunnel du Vent is a key point of the crossing, because if you have a wet suit on you can take it off, as the rest of the trip is dry. The roof will usually be almost 100m above your heads, and the size of the chambers that you cross will give you, without a doubt, a new impression of the system. You can change clothes and rest a little in a flat area, old bivouac, to the right of the exit of the Tunnel du Vent, **or avoid the draught in another bivouac, 100 meters ahead, next to the right wall and just pass the union of tributary Kuley**. The route is now well marked all the way to the **Tunnel of the Verna 3,600m**,

From now on the cave becomes a series of great boulder filled chambers, with mountains of blocks up to 100m high that you will be forced to navigate over. The following hours of crossing this section (about 7), being already tired, require extra endurance and physical strength, in order to maintain the pace of progression and enjoy the superb dimensions. The best way to reach the **Salle la Verna** successfully is to follow the abundant markers, formed mostly by reflectors and pieces of red and white plastic signalling tape.

From the **Tunnel du Vent** you continue near the right wall, ascend past the **bivouac Kuley** and continue about 150m more, to turn right and after turning right cross over and take the path on the left that opens to the **Salle Navarra** (220x50) Cross this chamber next to the left wall, and descending, during its first three quarters, a huge cluster of blocks (about 150m), then climb upwards in its final section. From this chamber you can exit by two routes, an E10 with fixed rope, or by an easy climb, very vertical, between blocks. Both routes are marked and take you to a point where you will have the roof 5 metres above your heads. Here the **Salle Navarra** ends and the **Salle Lepineux** starts, about 30m wide, and you climb up about 100mtrs over boulders. From the top of the promontory you can see on the roof the large black hole that it forms the end of the **Sima de la Pierre de San Martín (P320) (Lepineux Shaft)**.

It is impossible to go there and not stop, and remember and imagine the fatal outcome of Marcel Loubens in 1952. The steep ramp is descended by a marked path of sand and, continuing again near the left wall, you reach an area of bivouac of the 50, where we can see the metal stretcher and the engravings on a block in honour of Loubens. From there you continue down to a block chaos that ends in an R10 that leads you to the **Salle Casteret**. This highlight is known as the **Gibraltar Pass**, as it is the point where we leave Spanish soil, to enter France again.

You go down a steep ramp on the left wall and then continue on the right to the lowest point of the chamber. Following the existing beacons, go back to the right wall and pass under the French **Pascal chasm**, which accesses the system, until reaching a viewpoint, where the walls approach, which opens to the **Salle Loubens**. Cross the **Salle Loubens** on the left, following, in its final section, a beautiful path formed by narrow terraces between strata. After finishing, the path leads down to the river at a point where you see that the chamber is finished and a clear gallery of smaller dimensions begins, through which the river circulates: **Metro Gallery**.

Metro Gallery

It is worth stopping, drinking water and enjoying the gours that carpet the floor. The most beautiful curtains hang on a balcony hung at 20m, from which a rope falls. From now on, and to the **Dihedral**, there will be no orientation problem, following marked paths **heading west**. This gallery is 600m, of which the first 200 are smooth and easy, complicating a bit as it approaches the river. Cross it always following the marked itinerary that runs along the left wall. This gallery ends in a wider space where we see the circular river below, with difficult access, and to our right. If you look closely, in front of us there is a gallery above from which a large stone wall falls (beacons above the stone) and which you access by following the left wall.

Above the blocks you will find a fixed rope on the left (E6) that will take you to a short gallery that opens to the **Salle Queffelec**. This chamber, about 250m, is crossed following the marked path that runs through the left wall, until you reach a balcony from which a new gallery with the floor covered with blocks comes out and then at a mere fifty meters, after turning to the left, a step of 2m high leads to the **Salle Adelle**

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Salle Adélie to Salle Verna and Out!

Continue, like the last few hours by the left wall, with the river at a great distance under your feet, ascending until we find in the first part of the chamber a rope on the wall, which we will easily cross with the feet resting on a slab, and which will take us to a high point that divides the chamber into two. From there you must go down to the river along a steep slope that runs along the left, to get 100m into a fossil gallery on the left. This gallery is cut, near the end, by a low roof passage with a deep lake, which you pass lying down by a small ledge on the left that surrounds the passage. A few meters later we enter the **Salle Chevalier**, almost 400m long. In this impressive chamber, which looks like a true underground valley, you will ascend a little, and then descend on the left, for more than 100m, to the river, which you cross and take a path that runs along the right bank. A rope that hangs from the ceiling, more than 80m, will leave you speechless and you then find, at 100m, the end of the chamber, at a point where it seems to close. The river collapses through a small waterfall and the roof of the lower chamber. On the right we will find a P6, the **Dihedral**, which consists of a vertical fissure with both walls about 80cm. It is usually installed with fixed ropes.

The galleries under the **Dihedral**, which will immediately give us access to the **Verna**, have greatly reduced its dimensions and takes a detour on the right, downstream, to a rope next to the river that surrounds a large area of flow and depth. A metal bar at the height of the feet will help to pass its central part. The rope leads you onto a balcony over the river, after which we follow for 50m a path that follows the course of the water, to take another ascending path to the right, marked with a great landmark, that goes up to a fossil gallery. Keep an eye out here because at 40 or 50 meters from the gallery there opens to our left, and near the ground, a window with the slippery slide (R4) that leaves you in the access hall to the Verna. You must be careful with the slide, because it ends with a two metre drop !!

(From the dihedral, apart from the path that goes along the river there is another one, marked with beacons, which will also take us to the Verna through the highest part of the gallery, using a long handline / zip line, which if we go along the river we will see although we will not use it (this path is more tiring and slow, and it is only worth it in case of flood).

Now, in the **Salle Verna**, you will see the small EDF dam on our left protected with metal railings, concrete flooring, in short, you are at the end of the traverse. Look out from the top of the Verna and see the floor of the chamber at 100m below our feet, the ceiling at another 100m high, and the course of water that is precipitated by an 80m waterfall. A whole prize to the determination of the caver. Stairs and a fenced path lead us directly to the **Tunnel of the Verna**.



Salle Verna and the EDF Plant



From there and after about 500m of simple walking through flat and concrete ground, you arrive at the door, which opens from the inside. When you open the door, the air roars loudly and it will make it difficult for you to close it, but at that moment, seeing the sunlight again will be what really moves you on (though most may come out in the dark).

Tête Sauvage – Salle La Verna Traverse Survey Sheet 1

Tête Sauvage –Entrance Shaft Section

SIMA TÊTE SAUVAGE

Edición: Viana 2014

FICHA TÉCNICA

P16: pasamanos: 2 aQ (anclaje Químico)
1 cadena de descuelgue.

P45: pasamanos: 2 aQ.

Dividido en tres rápeles inferiores a 20m.
Pequeña repisa en las tres cadenas.

P50: pasamanos: 3 aQ. 2 cadenas.
Unos 25m cada rápel.

Primer cadena de descuelgue
con acceso incómodo.

Existe un estribo de cuerda en fijo
que ayuda en la aproximación.

P25: pasamanos: 3 aQ. 1 cadena.

P6: pasamanos: 2aQ. 1 cadena.

P30: pasamanos: 2 aQ. 1 cadena.
Ojo 32m de rápel.

P18: pasamanos: 3 aQ. 1 cadena.

P11: pasamanos: 2 aQ. 1 cadena.

P4: pasamanos: 2 aQ. 1 cadena.

P28: pasamanos: 2 aQ. 1 cadena.

P100: pasamanos: 2 aQ. 5 cadenas.

Ninguno de los cinco largos es mayor de 25m.

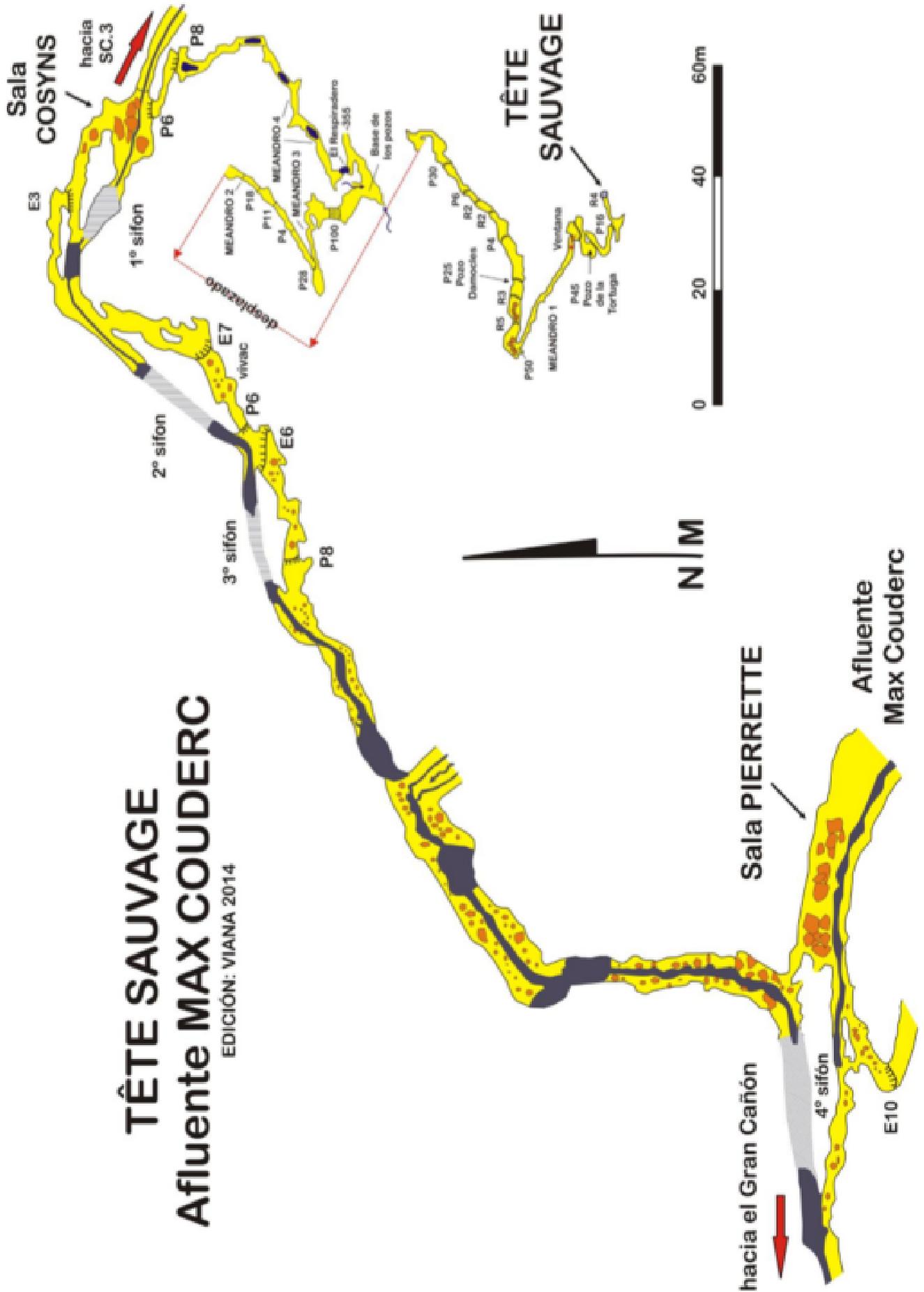
P8: pasamanos: 2 aQ. 1 cadena. En fijo (2014).

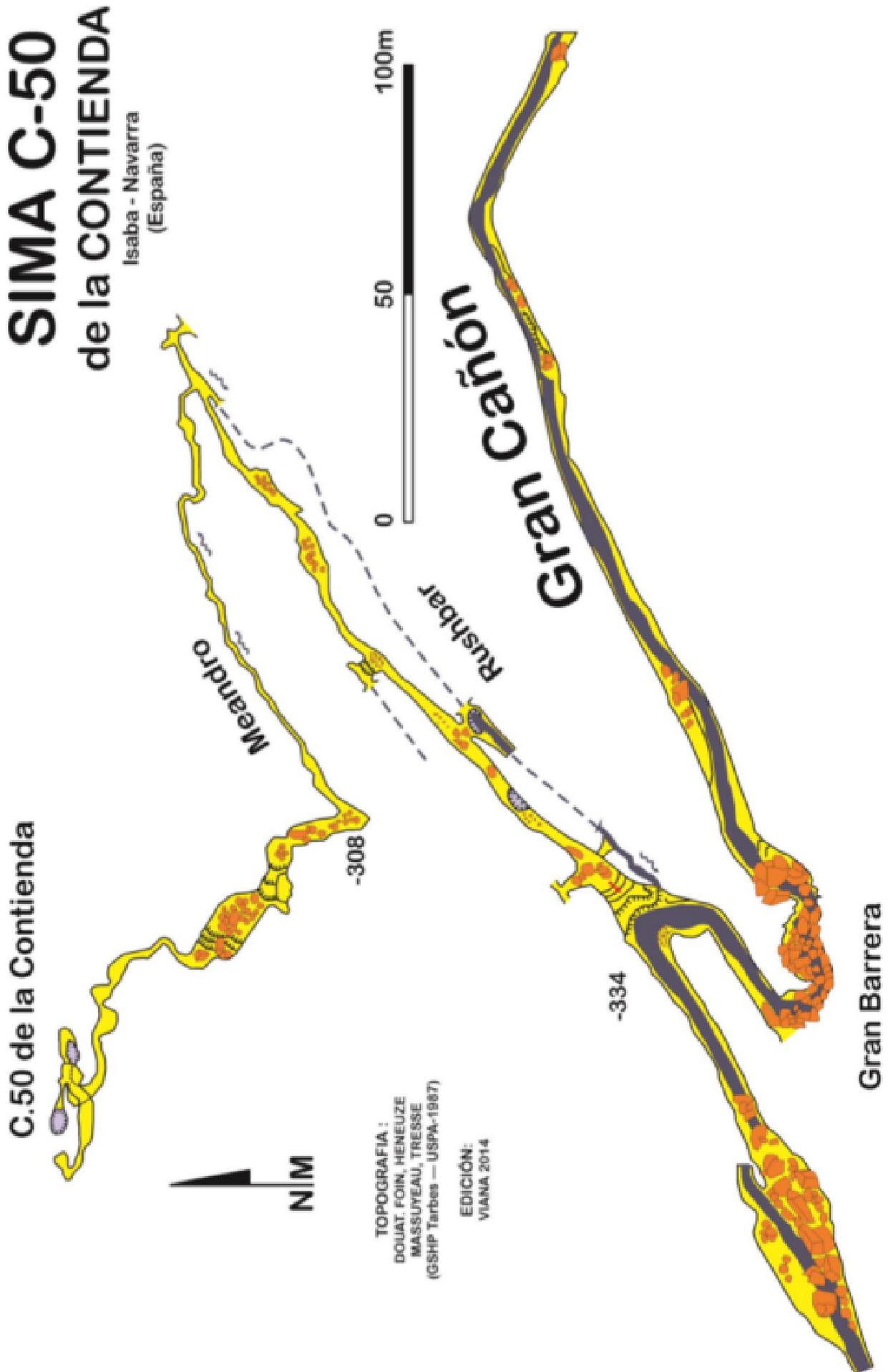
P6: A partir de aquí hasta la Verna,
todos los pasos que requieren cuerda
están equipados en fijo.



Tête Sauvage – Salle La Verna Traverse Survey Sheet 2

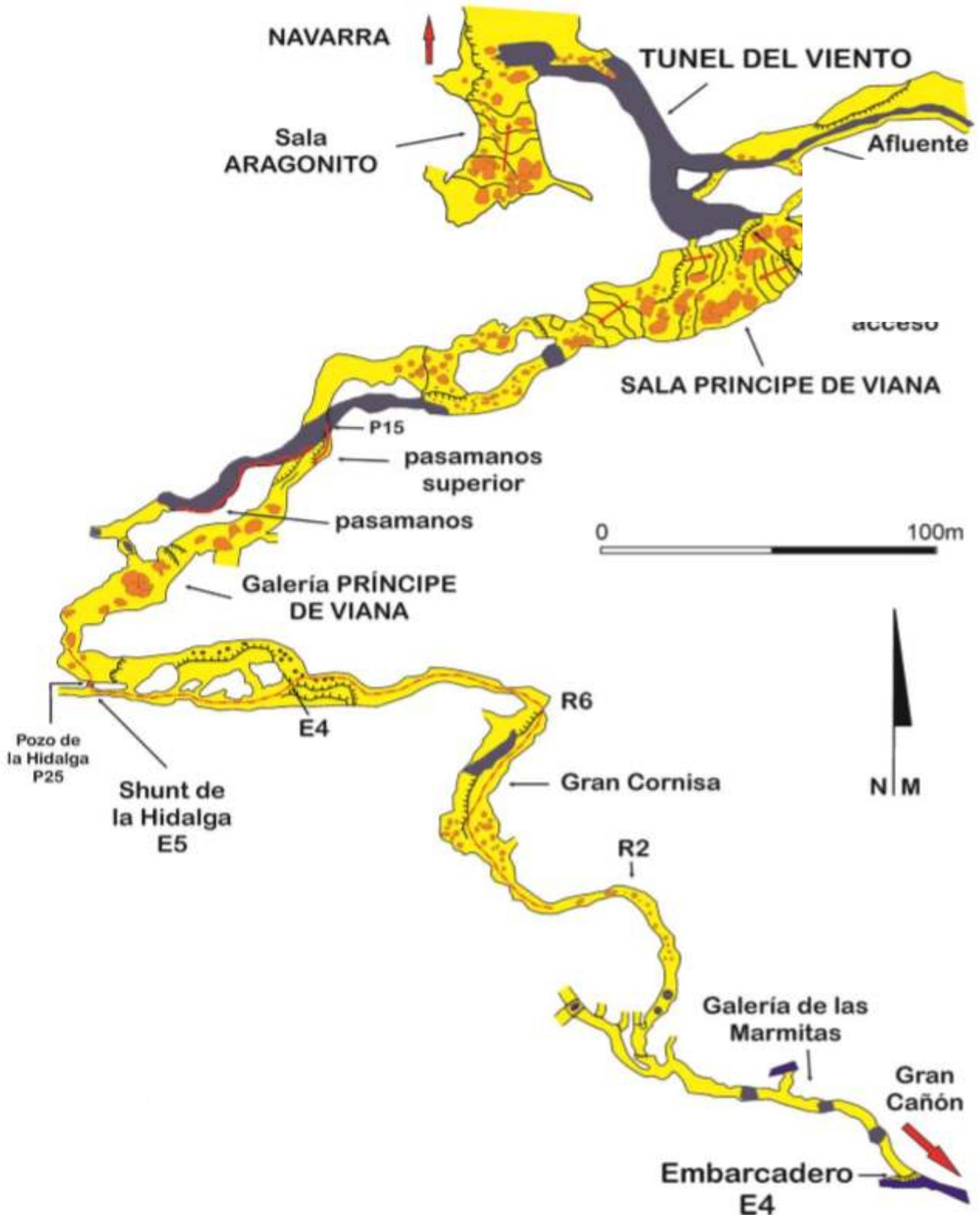
Tete Sauvage Entrance to Grand Canyon





Tête Sauvage – Salle La Verna Traverse Survey Sheet 4

Grand Canyon to Tunnel du Vent 2 of 2



Tête Sauvage – Salle La Verna Traverse Survey Sheet 5

Tunnel du Vent to Salle Lepineux

