



PHOUHIN NAMNO 2024

Summary

Region: Laos, Northern Laos, Vang Vieng and Kasi districts

Clubs: EEGC (94)

The Phouhin Namno 2024 expedition took place in Laos from 23/02/2024 to 11/03/2024, organized by EEGC with 11 participants (Marina Ferrand, Guillaume Lapie, Gabriel Sherk, Cassandra Hryniewicz, Ilian Robin, Sebastien Languenou, Benoit Languenou, Stéphanie Mailhac, Elias Labaki, Jérôme Poisson, Zeus Santos) in 3 karstic sectors in the Kasi district (Pha Lay, Nam Fuang, Phou Phachao), as well as newly explored sectors in the Feuang district (Ban na Dan, Pha Luan, Pha Thor Nor Kham).

A total of 6,530 meters were explored and mapped, divided among 9 newly discovered caves (Tham Hang Nam, Tham Poken, Tham Bang, Tham Dam, Tham Pha Luang 1, 2, 3, Tham Pha Nouk kok, Tham Nam 2) and 6 caves previously explored in past EEGC expeditions (Tham Phato 5, 6, 7, Tham Pha Yem, Tham Nam Mi, Tham Nam Sakai 5). Additionally, several other newly discovered and accessible caves were not explored (Hot spring Kasi, Tham Pha Nor Kham, etc.), while others with obstacles or challenging

access are potential goals for future expeditions (Tham Pi, Tham Jok, Tham Mone, Tham Nam 1, Tham Pha Tong, Tham Pha Luan).

Logistical contacts were made: a bilingual Lao-French PhD student studying cave fauna as disease vectors (ticks, dipterans) for the Pasteur Institute and the University of Reims, and three contacts for accommodation and transport in difficult-to-access areas.

Sector 9 Pha Lay

Tham Lom (TP5): An additional 1,539 meters explored, with 5 obstacles equipped, connecting it with Tham Pha (TP2). A 200-meter exploration was carried out from the northern terminus but could not be mapped.

Tham Pha Hony (TP6) and Tham Pha Hok (TP7): An additional 1,494 meters explored, with a connection made between the two caves via an 8-meter drop from a balcony. This network could potentially be linked to the TP5-TP2 network, though the connection point is yet to be identified. There are multiple overlapping levels:

- TP2 (Red Gallery) with TP6 (Guano Lake),
- TP5 (South of Communist Gallery) with TP7 (Calcite Flow to the West Flooded Gallery),
- TP5 (Nostromo Gallery a little before the Serpent Intersection) and TP7 (North Terminus of the West Flooded Gallery). TP5's Nostromo Gallery seems to have multiple ceilings (30-50m high) with balconies that could lead to upper galleries.

If the TP2-TP5 network (5,733m) and the TP6-TP7 network (1,494m) were connected, it would create a system of over 7km, with a vertical elevation of 161m. The network entrances are currently all on the southeast face of Pha Lay, with a lower entrance at 395m (TP3) and a higher one at 558m (TP7).

Tham Hang Nam (TP9): A newly discovered and mapped cave of 1,104 meters, with 5 equipped obstacles and limited further prospects. Fossil and semi-active during the rainy season.

Sector 15 Nam Fuang

Tham Poken: A newly discovered and explored large sinkhole (P139), which unfortunately only leads to a semi-active seasonal siphon at the water table level. However, it provides insight into the underground water flow of the Nam Fuang, which disappears into the valley a bit further east among rocks in the main riverbed. The sinkhole collapsed due to a geological overthrust, making the descent dangerous (unstable). A porch observed by drone in the sinkhole led to nothing—it was just an advanced sinkhole caused by the overthrust.

Several small caves were found while searching for access to Tham Poken, but little development followed (e.g., Tham Dam).

Tham Bang: A newly discovered cave, with 66 meters of development ending in an impassable narrow passage. It's a semi-active seasonal sinkhole but close to the terminal siphon of Tham Pha Yem (A few dozen meters higher in relative altitude and less than 25m from the siphon's pool).

Prospecting, remapping, and verifying objectives identified during previous expeditions, which yielded little:

- A few new accessible porches in Tham Pi,
- Exploration of fossils west of Tham Pha Yem's entrance and remapping of the Bermudes Gallery (370 meters added to the 2020 development),
- A major resurgence siphoning after 60 meters (Tham "Excavator," renamed Tham Nam Mi),

- A climb in Tham Nam Sakai 5 ending in a forced passage after about 10 meters,
- A siphon in Tham Kob a few meters past the old terminus,
- No major new caves identified at the bottom of the Nam Yunan canyon, despite the significant resurgence feeding a dry riverbed at this time of year,
- Two new caves were identified through discussions with hunters/loggers, and porches were spotted from a distance on the trail: Tham Jok (spotted by drone in 2018) and Tham Mone.

Sector 11 Phou Phachao

Only prospecting was done in this sector. Two permanent resurgences were discovered but not explored. Three tributaries need to be traced back to likely other permanent resurgences. A blockage needs to be cleared at the "Hot Springs," a karstic hydrothermal hot water resurgence, in a boulder choke that seems easy to clear, with a fossil access also needing exploration (with hydrothermal green mineralization observed in a local's photo). Access appears easy on the other side of the massif up to 1,200m altitude (satellite scouting).

Sectors 27 Ban na Dan, 28 Pha Luan, 29 Pha Thor Nor Kham

These three new sectors are close to each other (about 1 hour by motorbike between the farthest ones), located southwest of Vang Vieng, about 3.5 hours by motorbike. They were newly prospected for the club and seem very promising for future expeditions. We spent only a day and a half here, exploring 5 new caves (Tham Pha Luang 1, 2, 3, Tham Pha Nouk kok, Tham Nam 2), mapping 1,085 meters. Several other caves were identified but not explored (Tham Nam 1, Tham Pha Tong, Tham Pha Luan, Tham Pha Nor Kham, with porches spotted at higher elevations).