

Myanmar Cave Documentation Project 2013



Results of the Pinlaung/Taunggyi Team

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Webpages:

www.myanmarcaves.com (in construction)
www.laoscaveproject.de

1. Introduction and Summary

The main objective of this year was the exploration of the Namun Spring Cave near the Leili bridge in Pinlaung district. The cave was briefly visited by the La Venta team in 2005 and confirmed as the major karst spring which drains the upper karst plateau. It is very likely the resurgence of the Te Toke Taung Cave near Phinton village. The distance between the caves is 6 km with an altitude difference of 500 m. The second objective was the revisit of the Hopong area to investigate on cave entrances located in 2011 that were not surveyed.

Expedition members Pinlaung/Taunggyi: J. Dreybrodt (co-ordinator, D), U. Etter (CH), H. Steiner (D)

Results: The team surveyed 7 caves with a total length of 2.5 km. The table below gives an overview:

No.	Name	Coordinates (WGS 84)	Altitude	Village	Township	Length (m)	Status
1	Namun Spring Cave	N 20,01905° E 96,62597°	381	Namun	Pinlaung	1,162	going
2	Dream Cave	N 20,84735° E 97,23729°	1201	Parpart	Hopong	606	going
3	Win Gubai Taung (Hermit)	N 20,06917° E 96,77017°	1440	Hti Phyar	Pinlaung	318	finished
4	Hti Pyon Gu	N 20,38638° E 97,06271°	1297	Hti Pyon	Taunggyi	277	finished
5	Star Hole	N 20,86338° E 97,31126°	1476		Hopong	78	finished
6	Zeygone Spring Stone Cave	N 19,92065° E 96,63111°	388	Zeygone	Pinlaung	36	finished
7	Natural Cave Pagoda	N 20,64116° E 97,06708°	1297		Taunggyi	20	finished
						2497	

The Namun spring cave was surveyed in three days to a length of 1.2 km. It has the character of a vertical cave with large horizontal overflow passages and below active streams. The cave is complex due to a maze of side passages and vertical cracks and possesses many open passages. The impressive flow marks, heavily eroded sinter and high ceiling water marks confirm an enormous water flow during the wet season and supports the La Venta estimation of 100 cbm per second in peak times.

One day was spent to visit a karst spring down river near Zeygone Monastery of the same village which sumps after an entrance hall. The setting is lovely with a clear stream full of fish that can be feed from a lake pavilion and a beautiful valley with lush vegetation.

A nice tower karst areas reminding on the famous stone forest near Kunming was found during the drive along the Pinlaung-Leili motorway. A hermit develops one of the towers with a 277 m long cave as holy site. It is just 5 minutes of the junction from Pinlaung, easy to reach and of interest for use of tourism.

The revisit to Hopong allowed the survey of Dream cave near Parpart. The passage is average 15-20 m wide and 10 m high. It seems to be the geological continuation of nearby Happy Monk cave with similar features and south orientation. The cave is limited by the karst ridge and likely ends after some more hundred meters. Star hole 5 km North of Htam Sam pagoda was descended. It has a direct 75 m shaft and ends in a large chamber of 50 m diameter.

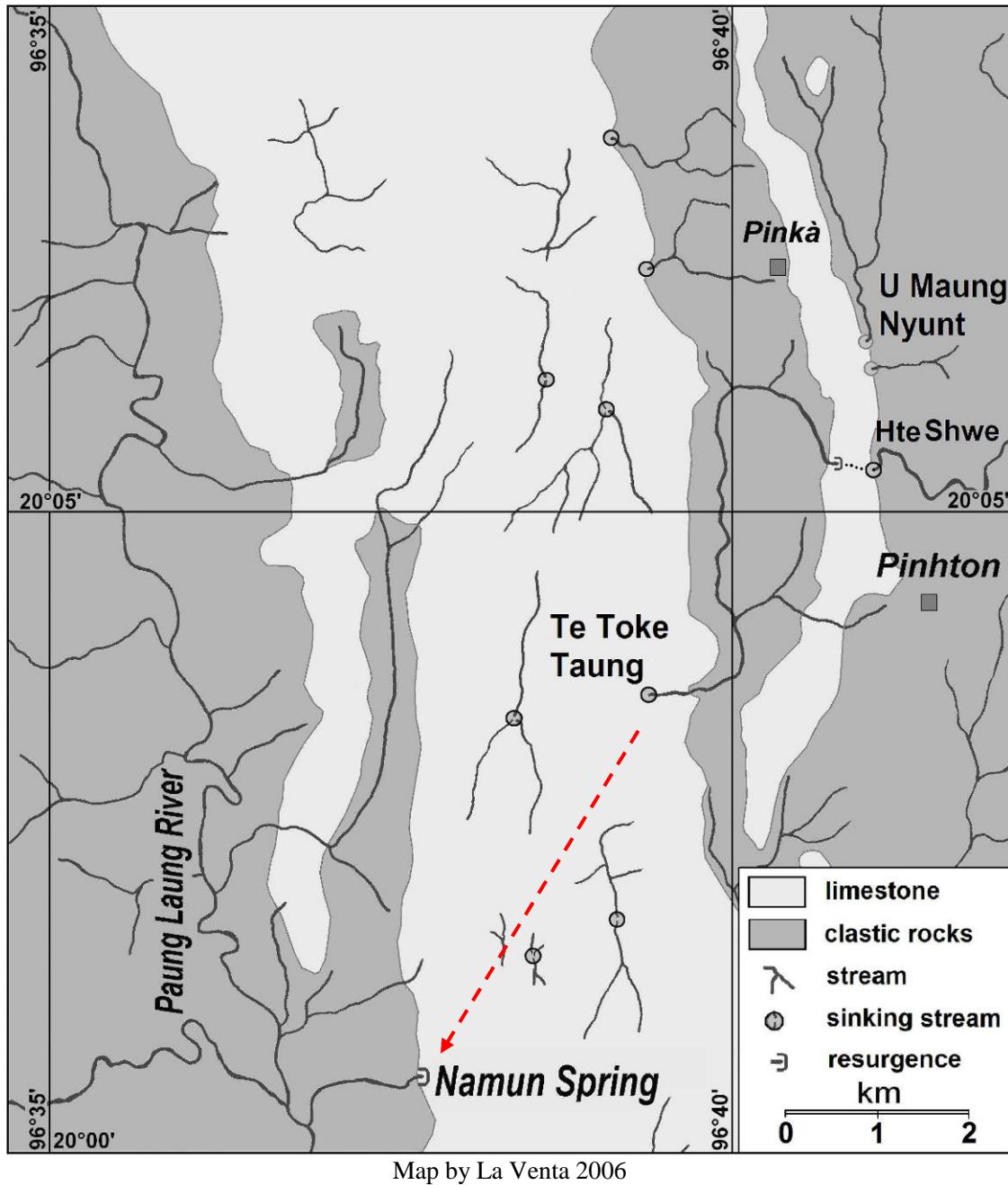
One day was spent to investigate on caves east of Inle lake. Near Hti Pyon close to Kakku one cave was surveyed and one more cave confirmed (2h walk, no end known).

Overview of schedule:	10.1.	Transfer Yangon to Pinlaung
	11.1 – 14.1.	Leili-Bridge
	15.1.	Transfer to Taunggyi
	16.1.,18.1	Hopong
	17.1.	East of Inle Lake

2. Caves by area

a.) Leili Bridge

The below pictures shows the relation between Te Toke Taung Cave and Namun Spring Cave which means “clear water”.



Access and accommodation:

The area is reached by the new Nay Pyi Taw Pyinmana-Pinlaung motor road. It takes 1.5 hours on the mostly tarred road from Pinlaung to Leili bridge. From there it is another 20 minutes by boat upstream and a 40 minutes mostly flat hike through fields and later jungle. The large sinter terraces covering a huge area outside the cave are impressive.

The team was hosted by Leili monastery and slept in a convenient separate side building of bamboo.

Pictures of area:



The 1000 feet long Leili bridge seen from the Pinlaung river towards north.



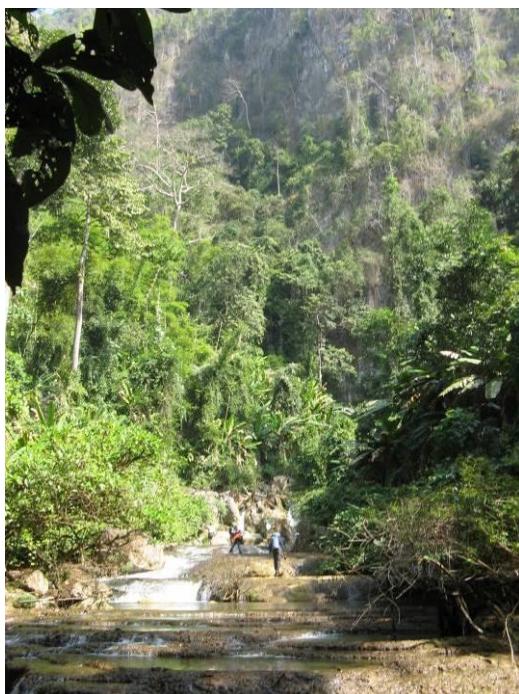
View from Leili bridge on Leili village with the karst hills hosting the Namun Spring in the background.



Approach on the Namun tributary.



Jungle hike over sinter terraces.

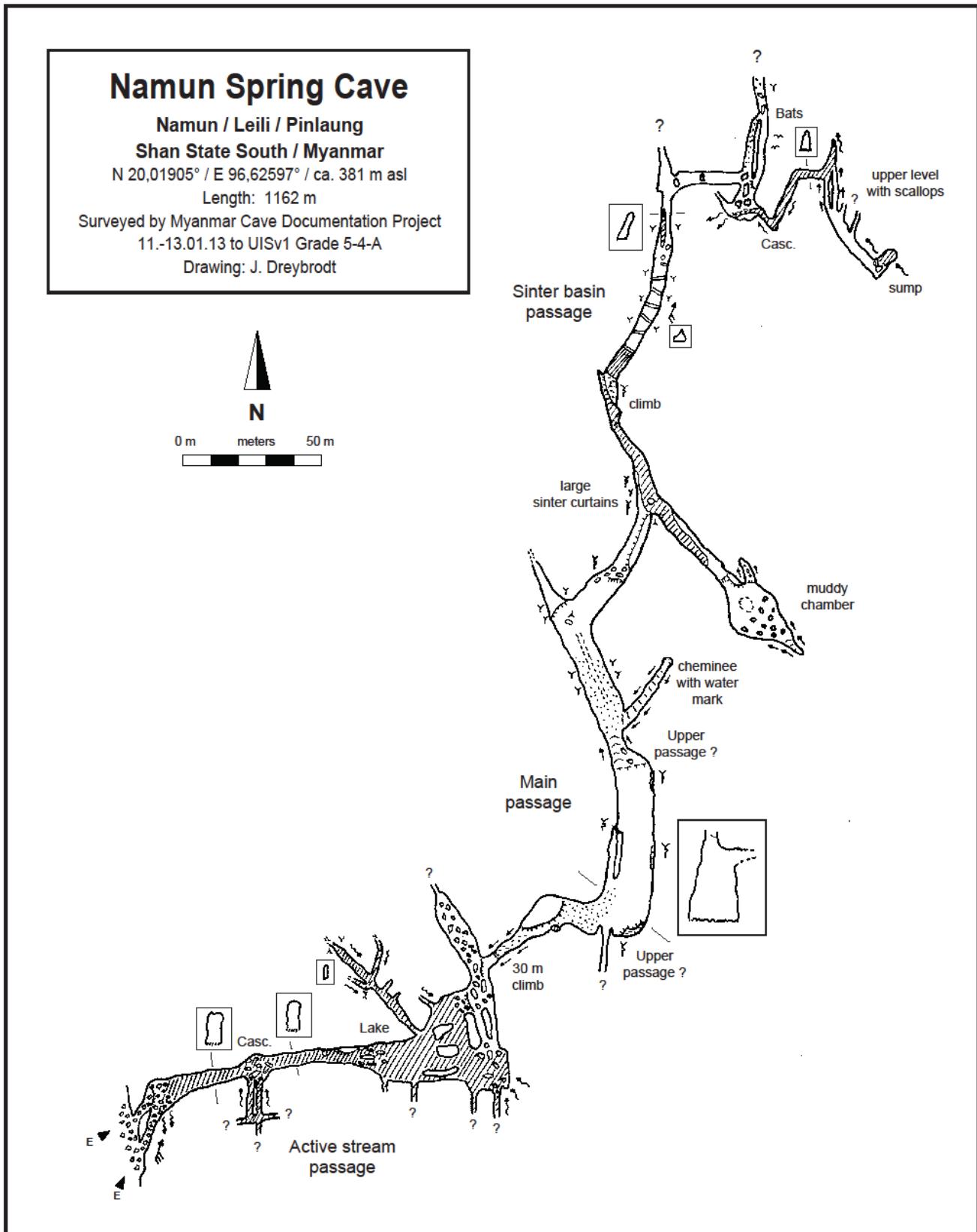


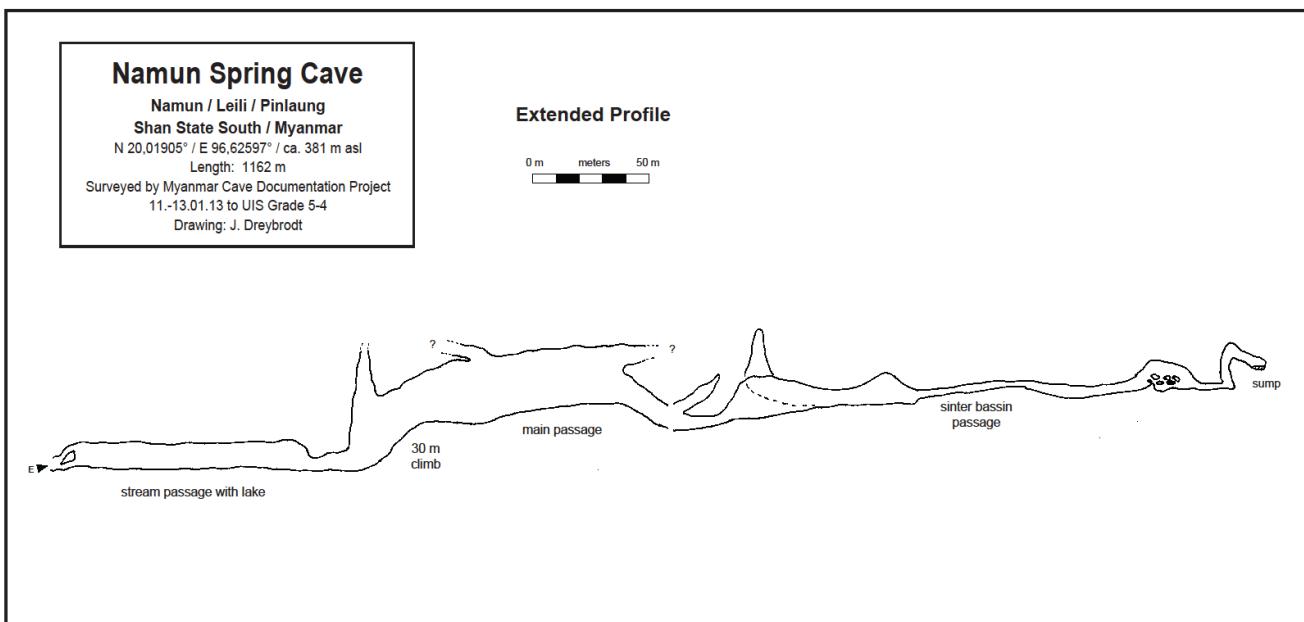
The Namun stream with the limestone cliff hosting the cave.



Waterfall before the entrance is reached

Map of Namun Spring Cave:





Description:

The cave is entered by two small entrances. Immediately a water passage is reached. It can be partially climbed on the left side. The passage continues for 80 m until a 50 m long deep lake is reached. There are several side passages on north and south side discharging streams. After the lake is a collapse hall. A 30 m climb which requires rope leads to a dry large overflow passage of 15-20 m width and 20-30 m height. The passage continues up and down with a floor consisting of eroded rocks and seldom some sand. It narrows down and another lake series is reached. After the lakes a 4 m high sinter fall has to be climbed. The passage continues over beautiful large sinter basins which show heavy signs of erosion and indicate an extremely strong water flow during wet season. After 40 m a block hall is reached with an active stream appearing. The passage changes orientation into west-east. Due to time restraints only the eastern passage was surveyed. The western 5 m wide passage was followed for about 50 m and continues wide open. The stream sinks in the block hall and can not be followed. It originates from a 3 m wide and 5 m high passage. After 50 m a lake is reached. The passage continues upwards by a 15 m climb over heavily polished rock. On top are large gours, pot holes and scallops. Shortly afterwards the stream appears out of a clear pool and the passage sums. This marks the end of the eastern section and point of return.

General remarks: Namun spring cave is not a classical river cave with large passages. It consists rather of large overflow passages activated during wet season with underlying streams. These can be accessed only partially. A clear watermark level was found in a steep upwards going chimney between wet and dry clay at +48 m above entrance level. This seems to be in agreement with large stalactite formations observed before that look intact. The limestone layers incline almost vertically at 15° in North-South orientation. There is a maze of cracks and vertical upper possible continuations which could not be checked. The ceiling heights reach sometimes 30-50 m which emphasises the vertical character. A full exploration and check of each side passage of the cave requires a larger team with equipment for aided climbs.

Pictures of Namun Spring Cave:



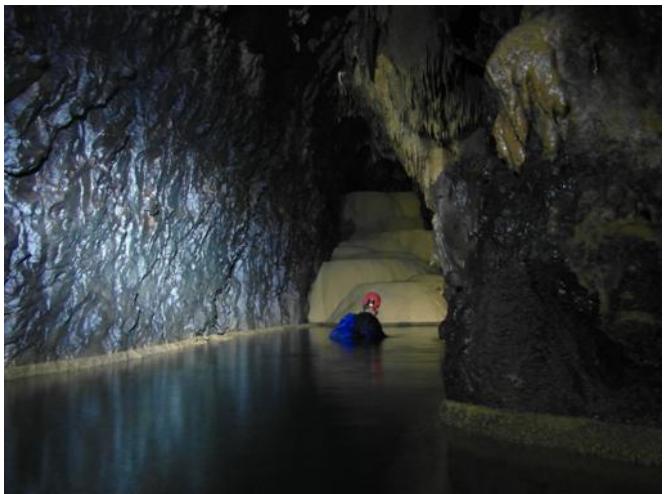
In front of Namun Spring Cave with its two entrances behind.



White sinter in the overflow passage after the 40 m climb.



Helmut in front of heavily eroded sinter formations.



The beginning of the section of sinter pools.



The final sump in the eastern passage.



The team in the most upper part.

b.) Tower karst near Pinlaung

A small area of scenic tower karst was found only few km from Pinlaung of the junction on the road to Leili. It is at comparable high altitude of 1440 m. The base consists of conglomerate with limestone on the top. The cave is a through cave of 320 m length with four entrances.



Tower karst near Pinlaung



The “Hermit Towers”



Entrance area of the Hermit cave with statues



Entrance with construction of side platforms



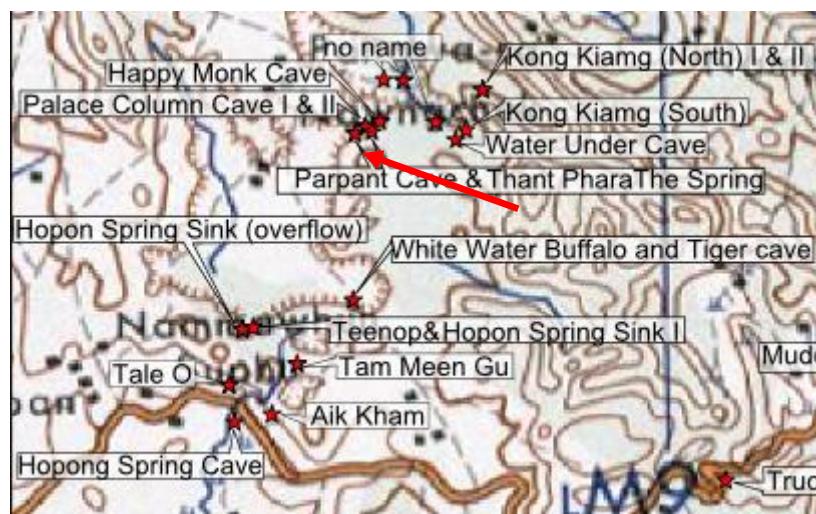
The hermit with his vision of the karst tower.
The different side entrances are included.

c.) Hopong

The area of Hopong was revisited to follow up on open leads from the 2011 expedition. Four items were checked:

1. Dream Cave at Parpart

The cave is in the ridge south to Happy Monk Cave. The entrance is small with 1mx1m and immediately followed by a 6 m drop into the main passage of 15-20 m width. It heads south in the ridge and is heavily decorated with sinter formations that partially block the way. The survey was stopped after a sinter block before a 5 m drop which requires some rope. The passage has wind and continues very likely to the southern end of the isolated ridge for some more hundred meters. The cave has same dimensions as Happy Monk Cave and was likely once the same passage. The red arrow in below map marks the entrance:



2. Starhole

The pitch is about 5 km North of Htam Sam close to the developing village Hti Phue next to a road. The shaft widens after 17 m into a large chamber. Its depth is -75 m. The pitch was used for waste disposal which piles at the bottom. Former mentioned pitches in 2011 few hundred meters away could not be confirmed despite inquiring with several people in the village.

3. No name (Mad Phil find)

A cliff was found at the GPS coordinates. Cracks with no continuation were checked.

4. Htam Sam

The cave is now fully electrified and finished with minor works ongoing. The wall at the end lake is removed and the passage open. A volunteer English guide explained that the lake is traversed by a bamboo boat. Afterwards the passage continues for 3200 feet. The size varies from big to narrow in the end with low ceiling. Access is difficult due to a floor covered with stones. A non-speaking English guide next to him has been at the end of the cave. A permission to survey beyond the lake was not granted.



Htam Sam end lake with open passage. A part of the bamboo raft is seen on the right.

Acknowledgement

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Especially we thank U Phyoe Wai Yar Zar for supporting the project and arranging logistics.

The following teams helped us in the field supporting us to reach remote cave entrances and assured our safety in the restricted areas:

Pinlaung-Leili



U Wing Naing & Team (Police Pinlaung & Leili), U Thein Zaw Soe (Military Leili),
U Kyaw Win (boat driver Leili), U Ye Kare & U Htun Aye (local guides Leili)
Ven. Thu Seik Tha (Abbot Leili Monastery)

Taunggyi-Hopong



U Baran San Aung, U Phyo Htat Aung, U Kyaw Nin Than, U Sai Than Klaing (Immigration Hopong),
U Aung Thant Sin (Police Hopong),
U Thet Nyo Htue (Main Guide & Translator Taunggyi), U Aung Thing Soe (Driver Taunggyi)