

Daren Cilau – Restaurant at the End of the Universe to Last Spit Choke

To avoid repetition this trip to Last Spit Choke (the very end of Daren Cilau) is described from the Restaurant at the End of the Universe camp onwards - see 'Hard Rock Café and St David's Sump' and 'Hard Rock Café to Restaurant at the End of the Universe' Printable Route Descriptions for route as far as the REU.

Trip times vary depending on group size and familiarity with the cave system, but it's advisable to allow 5 hours for a trip from REU to the end of the cave and back to REU, 10 hours to the end and back starting and returning from HRC or 20 hours if undertaking as a day trip from the Daren entrance. An extra 1 hour 30 mins should be added to this if including a visit to Dweebland, the closest point to Agen Allwedd.

Unless on a determined mission to see the very end of the cave, you may consider the end of Friday the Thirteenth a good final destination as beyond this excellent cave passage the way on is mostly crawling.

Tackle: Cowstails and karabiners suitable for lifelining should be taken for the descent down to Big Chamber. Use of the lifeline in situ here is highly recommended to safety the 'vintage' electron ladder currently rigged. The fixed aids along this route are not officially maintained, so please inspect before using whenever possible.

NOTE: Seventh Hour Sump (just below REU) is the last fresh water source from the REU onwards, so be sure to bring some water for the 5 hours of sweaty caving beyond this point if going to the end and back.

The Restaurant at the End of the Universe to Trouser Filler and Starbar – From the top of the REU chamber, duck left into a walking-sized phreatic passage with fine acoustics which heads, via a short, rope-assisted climb, to Cordillera Blanca Chamber. Climbs in the roof reach a small chamber, oxbows and unpromising digs. Continue northwards to a constriction with a choice of a tight squeeze at low level or a short climb up. This brings you to a short traverse (care) and the head of a 13 metre ladder pitch (ladder and lifeline in situ) down into Big Chamber. Several digs have been undertaken here with a view to regaining the streamway somewhere below, but to no avail. Continue through a low arch on the opposite side of the chamber to begin the long crawl which becomes a Neanderthalesque stooping trudge along the Inca Trail. The next few hundred metres continue along a wide, sand and rubble floored passage with occasional crawls and thrutches through passage-blocking breakdown, past an abandoned dig in the floor at Unicorn Shit Rift until a low arch is reached in the left hand wall of a sand-floored walking-sized section just before the rocky slope up to the Matchu Pitchu boulder choke. Crawl left through this arch, the Matchu Pitchu Bypass, to emerge in more sandy-floored passage and a short walk left to the junction at Parting of the Ways and the choked termination of the passage at Trouser-Filler. To the right Starbar continues in a northerly direction as a spacious but block-strewn passage for some way to (you guessed it!) another extension along low, crawling passage to a choke. The bottom end of Trident Passage in Agen Allwedd perhaps?

Trouser Filler to DADES Choke – It is worth noting that, from REU to this point, the passage has trended up-dip through the mountain in a northerly direction, but things are about to change. Take

the northerly passage from Trouser Filler and follow it as it trends immediately westwards through a series of small chambers and walking and all-fours crawls. Just before it degenerates to a long, flat out crawl, the Sand Swims, a passage on the right, The Warren, heads north, mainly as a thrutchy crawl, to a 6m pitch up, possibly still rigged with an antiquated ladder (care), through a series of sand-filled chambers whose connecting digs require regular clearing, ending in a lead with spectacular aragonite formations that would be more viable if there was a bit more stacking space without the likelihood of blocking yourself in. Another contender for the southerly continuation or Trident Passage or, further away but well-aligned and similar in nature, Midnight Passage in Agen Allwedd?

You now resume the long see-saw back down the mountain with a tedious, flat out crawl, with one all too brief respite, through the Sand Swims heading due south and, after 100 metres, reach the large passage of Friday the Thirteenth. Ignore a dig up on the left wall, Gwyn's Surprise, which doubles back to the north before fizzling out, and head down the impressive main passage. Bypass a boulder choke by climbing up and along on the RHS to drop down to the continuation, note an impressive hole up in the roof before eventually coming to a passage on the left, Shit Rift, which continues for over 100 metres, becoming increasingly narrow until impassable to even the slimmest of anorexic cave tigers. Just beyond the start of Shit Rift, in a moderate-sized passage, you arrive at a dug out, sandy u-tube (which needs regular clearing out as sand is carried in by each passing caver) and a banged dig, Another Bloody Valentine, above which a short climb heads up into a bouldery rift with an enticing draught continuing upwards, with spaces between boulders, that may reward a committed siege with a good drill. 5m up the rift a gnarly, constricted, horizontal squeeze past blocks brings you out into Payoff Passage, a parched, crumbly, breakdown passage which is followed, gently downhill, mostly on all fours with several unrelenting constrictions, for about a hundred metres until, just before a short wriggle, a small inlet on the right, Bad Bat, is reached. When it was discovered Bad Bat had a promising draught that was lost, possibly due to spoil being stacked to the sides while digging. Parties on subsequent trips have experienced bad air problems. Bad Bat trends westwards for some way as a low crawl with squeezes, heading close to, but at a higher level than, the extensions beyond Iles Inlet in Agen Allwedd.

Continue south, through the wriggle, along the main passage and pass over a narrow slot, through which stones can be dropped into a tantalizingly out of sight, lower level void, to eventually arrive at the massive boulder choke of DADES (Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?) Choke. This is one of the closest points for a connection to Agen Allwedd, and gets to within 35m of Priory Road. A connection has been attempted, and abandoned, from the Agen Allwedd side and would require long-term, committed digging through a large, unstable boulder choke. Regular diggers on the Daren side have hitherto opted to leave the two caves unconnected to preserve the unique nature of this extremely remote section of cave (not to mention the long term siege tactics required for the project!). In the floor nearby is a choked dig, Stingray.

DADES Choke to Last Spit Choke – Carry on below DADES Choke, avoiding the right hand passage to Sick Choke, and follow the left wall along the south-trending sandy crawl, Still Warthogs After All These Years, with progress predictably being mostly on all fours with occasional walking. A side passage on the left, Mark's Headroom, has been dug to enter a short network of small passages. Carrying along the more obvious southerly main drag brings you to a low crawl on the right which quickly becomes a tight squeeze through unstable boulders (caution) to emerge into a small chamber, InBetweeb, and another short crawl into Dweebland, a parallel series of mostly stooping and all fours in sandy passage with a southerly-headed dig, Downtweeb. Upstream are

two further leads, Updweeb, just 22m from Agen Allwedd, the closest known point between the two caves, and Archies, both degenerating into committing boulder chokes. Declining the allure of the Dweebland connection continue the route along a small, sandy, block-strewn passage, ignoring a small passage to the right, The Yohzone, which heads back and nearly connects to Sick Choke. before climbing up through a bouldery constriction, The Lemon Squeeze, into a low, boulder chamber at the back of which you can drop comfortably through Dig of a Thousand Pricks into Spaderunner, a comfortably sandy all fours crawl of about fifty metres which concludes at a narrow, banged out, horizontal rift which drops after 10m through a constricted hole 1m to a sandy floor. The only way on leads after a few metres to a dome-roofed breakdown chamber below the far wall of which is a slot down to a 2m flat out crawl, Ground Hog Day, which gives way to walking size passage. 10m further on, via a clamber over a short wall, is Last Spit Choke. This unassuming, excavated 2m square 'chamber' in small loose rock and infill, marks the current end of the cave and the start of the entertaining six mile journey back to the surface for you and your smarting knees and elbows.

Spotted an error in this route description or want to leave feedback?
Contact the Webmaster (see contacts page on CSS website <https://chelseaspelaeo.org>)

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