

# The Dead Sea Piping Project



#SPELEOMEDIC 

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## The Products

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Total Participants          | 60  |
| Total Visit Days            | 10  |
| Expedition Days             | 6   |
| Total Caves Mapped          | 17  |
| Total Km Mapped (estimated) | 3.5 |

## Expedition Summary

01-06 January 2023

### The Expedition's Story

#### How it started

It all started with a caving trip Boaz Langford organized in Italy, to which a group of 13 Israeli cavers registered.

The Italian hosts were club Tetide and its CEO - Francesco (Franz) Maurano. The trip was a huge success, with the Italians doing a great job of hosting the Israelis, taking them into spectacular caves, laying out the ropes and, in general, making them enjoy the tour

immensely and feel extremely welcome. Eli even wrote an article in ISA's magazine about the trip.

As Boaz and Francesco discussed a reciprocity visit of the Italians to Israel, Boaz suggested that instead of arriving for a caving trip, they will organize a mapping expedition to a (quite) newly found sinkholes fields. Franz was immediately enthusiastic and the expedition's planning took

off.

#### The Preparations

As Franz was advertising the idea to his club's members and beginning to register participants, Boaz was occupied assembling his production team. Soon, Eli, Raz and Asaf Gayer joined in.

Asaf Begerano joined the team two month before the expedition date.

### Pre-Expedition Fun

The first Italians landed on 28th of December.

On the 29th they were already outdoors, visiting the Tachmas river - a short and technical desert canyon - with Shirley. The canyon's pools were filled with water following the past week's rain, and the tour was challenging and spectacular.

On the 30th the visitors who stayed at Shirley's were taken on a morning tour through Dror's family vineyard and then joined the others for a tour Eli and Irena arranged for the group in Jerusalem.

On the 31st the group separated into two groups. One group went with Shirley to visit man-made caves in the Yehuda Plains.

The caves are 2000-2500 years old and our-days form a spectacular array of underground mazes, very much like the famous cities of Kapadokia, Turkey.

A second group went for a challenging desert hike in the Northern Negev.

At night, on New Years Eve, we all gathered at Eli's house in Tlalim for a celebratory feast and barbeque. The mood was great, the people happy, the alcohol and food abundant, and at precisely midnight, everyone kissed and hugged. The new year begun THE RIGHT WAY.

In the morning we woke up early and started making our way to the camp - some with cars and 12

others in busses.

The ride was long but beautiful.



Photo:  
Lilach Makdoosi

## The Expedition

As soon as everyone was done setting up their tents, we immediately boarded our cars and went for a crazy walk in Neot Hakikar's Havarim (badland) area, the area we will be working all week at.

The beautiful hike started in a nearby natural fountain. From there we proceeded to a walk in a canyon which soon turned out to be a climb up one of its walls and onto a narrow trail, which went up and down

in-between sandy cliffs with a beautiful sunset as the perfect background.

The walk was thrilling and ended in an entrance to one of the caves - most participants' first entry to a piping cave. We were all soon covered in dust, which will be our permanent state throughout the expedition.

From day 2 onward, each day we would all wake up around 7am, grab breakfast made by Eli and his casual helpers, prepare some sandwiches

for the way and off we went, having Raz and Boaz drive us to our respective mapping location.

Meanwhile Eli and Asaf will sort out the kitchen and Eli will drive for resupplies while Asaf stays behind, guarding the camp (reading a book and sleeping, in case you wondered).

Every evening Eli would prepare soup for the early returns and then at 8pm, dinner would be served, all made by Eli's

competent hands and a little help from all who were unfortunate enough to hang around the kitchen during these hours.

Boaz and Raz would use this time to gather every mapping team, hear their day's stories and download the mapping data.

After that, we would sit around the bonfire with beer bottles in our hands and talk till the last ones retired back to their tent, resting before the next



Photo: Boaz Langford

day starts.

On Tuesday we all went for a hike in the world's longest salt cave - the Malham cave in Mt. Sodom.

Boaz led the way as the visitors marveled at the cave's beauty - huge walls and impressive columns, all made of colorful salt stone.

Everyone were looking awed by the huge halls, intricate passages and delicate salt stalactites. As we exited the cave, the moon was already

high in the sky, lighting our path back to the cars.

On Thursday evening we had a celebratory graduation meal, with huge amounts of food, a lavish BBQ and an extra number of wine and beer bottles.

It was hard, but the group managed to eat and drink most of what was offered, with Eli and Asaf running to the kitchen tent every 10 minutes for resupply. Music was set on and some even danced.

On Friday we woke up

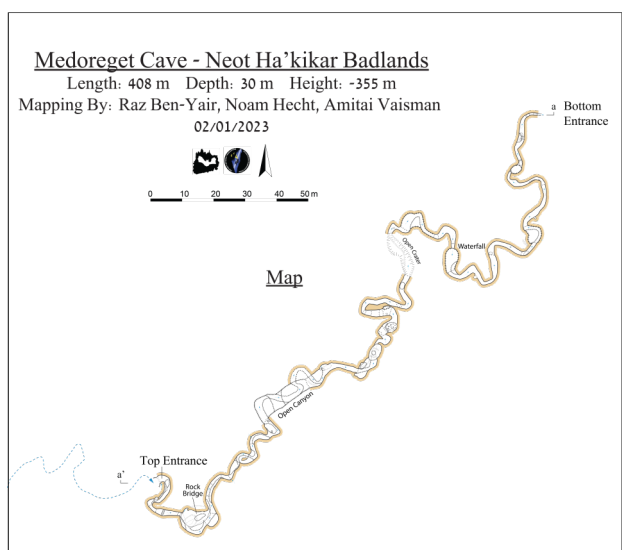
early, folded and packed the tents and after a brief breakfast and a group photo, headed out to Ein Gedi for a sinkhole tour. Not before most cars were unpacked and rearranged to enable driving everyone.

In Ein Gedi, Boaz again led an incredible walk between the sinkholes and the beach. As we passed an astonishing landscape, we marveled at the natural salt structures, crazy sinkholes filled with

colorful water and a multitude of amazing phenomena.

Many pictures were taken as the group slowly went along the seashore, enjoying the beauty of nature's creation.

Once back in the cars, Asaf managed to miraculously arrange transportation for everyone, and soon we were all on our way - some home and others to the airport.



## The Inside Stories

### A close one

12 people left Eli's place on the morning of January 1st to take the bus to the campsite.

Headed by Asaf, who hasn't been on these busses in 28 years, we walked to the bus station and took a bus to Be'er Sheva. Ivan had to pay for Asaf, who's bus card didn't work. At BS's bus terminal we nearly missed the bus as Asaf was desperately trying to book tickets, sending Marketa to physically stop the bus (as big and intimidating as she is). Luckily we all got on and Asaf realized he could have just paid for the tickets onboard.

### First Time Mapper

Arnon arrived at the expedition with no previous mapping experience. Under Boaz's guidance, he started practicing mapping for the first time in his life. He took it upon himself to map a relatively easy cave and went back there two days in a row. In order to finish the map, he took an extra day off from work, leaving his wife and infant child at home. That's the heart of a mapper!!

### Forgotten Documents

On Wednesday most of the group went travelling in the

area. 8 of them went by bus to Masada. At around 5pm we received a call to come and pick them up from Neve Zohar. Yaaron and Asaf were soon on the way.

When they arrived they found out that one Italian is missing - Ivan.

Apparently, as they came off the bus, Ivan realized he left his document case behind - passport, money and all. He immediately started chasing the bus, but it took off, on its way to the city of Arad. At that point Ivan acted most impressively, finding a shuttle which he took to chase the



Photo: Oren Tocker

**Mohammed,  
the nicest man  
on the planet,  
volunteered to  
take the keys  
and meet Boaz  
halfway,  
in Ein Gedi**

bus all the way to Arad. There he boarded the bus and got back his case. That amazing effort was worth Asaf taking an extra 40 minutes drive to pick him up and bring all 4 Italians back to the camp, almost in time for dinner.

### Keys left behind

On Thursday Boaz was meant to take the truck with the attached cart, drive to Jerusalem, leave the car there and take his own car, which was parked there, head home to unload his gear and only then return to the camp for the graduation meal. While in

Jerusalem he discovered his car keys are missing. In a call with Asaf they realized the keys were in Boaz's tent, back in the camp. Mohammed, the nicest man on the planet, volunteered to take the keys and meet Boaz halfway, in Ein Gedi. He took with him Lilach and the two saved Boaz two extra hours on the road. He arrived just in time to sit by the bonfire with those who stayed late. KUDOS!!

### The Final Piece

6 years ago a young Vietnamese volunteer went missing in the Dead Sea area.

Years later, while surveying a cave in the Havarim area, a group of Israeli cavers stumbled upon his belongings and head-less skeleton remains. The Israeli and Vietnamese police were put into action and the story made many headlines.

On the 4th day of the expedition Chiara found the man's skull and a few of his belongings - his diary, a backpack cover, etc.

The case can now finally be closed.

## One Cave's Story - Eshel (C2-15) by Mariella Serrone

My team - Donatella, Ivan, Andrea, Francesco Maurano and myself - was assigned with Eshel cave (C2-15). The experience was interesting, new and challenging.

The cave had a narrow entrance followed by a long articulated meander with stretches to crawl through, other stretches with multiple levels, and others with short chimneys where we could take a fresh breath from the

outside world and look at the intense blue sky. Mapping the path of this cave is truly unique and highlights how nature is never the same.

One of our team's members was Andrea, a brilliant little boy who acted as a pathfinder, scouting ahead and looking for the next passage. Having him around turned out to be the most curious element of our

activity - seeing his enthusiasm, experiencing this adventure through his curious eyes, being amazed when discovering new meanders. Truly the greatest gift of this adventure. We should all cultivate the desire to continue to amaze ourselves at any age!!!



Photo:  
Francesco Maurano



## EXPEDITION STAFF

**Francesco Maurano**  
Co-Entrepreneur, Manager  
(Tetide)

**Asaf Begerano**  
Expedition Manager

**Eli Shvatsman**  
Camp Manager, host, chef,  
delivery boy, driver and a  
**great friend**

**Raz Ben-Yair**  
Professional Manager  
(Mapping), trusted driver and  
downloader

**Boaz Langford**  
Co-Entrepreneur, Professional  
and Logistics Manager

## EXPLORED CAVES

- Neshika (kiss)
- Mianderim  
(meanders)
- Shnei Kta'im (2 sections)
- Argis
- Halicha (walk)
- Chitim (tusks)
- Parva (fur)
- Ofri
- Michnas Dromi  
(south trousers)
- Michnas Tzfon  
(north trousers)
- Chetz To'e (stray arrow)
- Shira 2 (poem 2)
- Vietnami  
(Vietnamese)
- Ne'edar (Missing Person)
- Eshel (tamarisk)
- Hitbarbaru (lost)
- Medureget  
(terraced)

## The Participants

|                   |                   |                  |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Amir Zalel        | Francesco Lorusso | Meirav Hadar     | Vito Vairo              |
| Amitai Wiseman    | Francesco Maurano | Mickey Gardosh   | Yaaron Einav-Poznanski  |
| Andrea Maurano    | Francesco Papetti | Mohamad Gabarin  | Yeara Einav Levi        |
| Arnon Ratzabi     | Galit Cohen       | Noam Hecht       | Michal (Cimbal) Hejna   |
| Asaf Begerano     | Ido Meroz         | Ofri Shvatsman   | Silvia Clausi Schettini |
| Asaf Gayer        | Inan Tasci        | Oren Tocker      | Umberto Del Vecchio     |
| Ayala Oren        | Irena Farhi       | Raffaella Langon |                         |
| Biagio Fasi       | Itai Katz         | Raffaella Longo  |                         |
| Boaz Langford     | Ivan Giorgetti    | Raz Ben Yair     |                         |
| Cayan Okan        | Ivana Guidone     | Roea Fridman     |                         |
| Chiara Gadaleta   | Joerg Dreybrodt   | Salih Gucel      |                         |
| Donatella Di Turi | Lilach Makdoosi   | Sepi Givony      |                         |
| Eli Shvatsman     | Luisa Auletta     | Sergei Alimov    |                         |
| Elisha Kesner     | Marco La Gala     | Shahar Banin     |                         |
| Enza Finelli      | Marco Ragusa      | Greg Tarnowski   |                         |
| Eran Zohar        | Maria Serrone     | Valentina Ciampa |                         |
| Fabio Blaso       | Marketa Jakovenko | Valentina Gori   |                         |



## Our Thanks:

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|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| The Israel Cave Research Center       | The European Speleological Federation    |
| Tetide APS                            | The Israeli Speleology Association (ISA) |
| The Geological Survey of Israel (GSI) |  |
| Società Speleologica Italiana (ETS)   |  |

## Special Thanks:

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Nira Shemesh and the Shvatsman family (and cats) | Sergei Alimov |
| Shirley, Dror and the Gazit & Cohen families     | Erez Rahamim  |
| Irena Farhi                                      | Udi Ravitsky  |