



Grotta di San Giovanni, Italy

This splendid stream cave lies in the limestone mountains of southern Sardinia. In the late 1800s, a road was built right through the cave to provide a route between up-valley silver mines and the small town of Domusnovas. This then became one of only three drive-through caves in the world, offering an underground journey that is nearly 850 metres long on its unlit public road. Sadly, the road was closed to traffic in 1999 “for environmental reasons”, and so became a popular walk-through. Then some years later it was developed as a show cave with good lighting installed and an unusually wide footpath already in place, but also with expensive entry fees. The small river only flows through the cave during wetter times in winter, but its course is beside the road throughout. One benefit of the site development is that the large banks of flowstone, stalagmite and terraced gourd pools are now viewed more easily than fleetingly from a car window. The cave is still a classic karst site, even though it lacks the original appeal of the drive-through. These photos were taken in 1997, and the interior image was lit only by main-beam headlights on a car that was driven very slowly past the camera position on a convenient ledge.

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