



EXPEDITION REPORT: Kashmir 2018

Prepared October 2018
by
Amber Fies, Expedition Leader



*Figure 1. North Star Adventure Consulting's Kashmir Expedition Team standing at the entrance to Cave-1.
(Left to Right: Amber Fies, Vamsi Ramakrishna, Eric Fies, and Dustin Kisner)*



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MISSION

- Locate and explore the cave(s) of Kalaroos, Kashmir, India.

OBJECTIVES

- Interact with the local people and develop rapport.
- Locate the cave(s).
- Explore the cave(s).
- Determine if a future expedition should be launched for further exploration and mapping.

TEAM

- Amber Fies: Expedition Leader (USA / Virginia)
- CSM(R) Eric Fies, FRGS: Deputy Expedition Leader (USA / Virginia)
 - Wilderness First Responder
- Dustin Kisner: Expedition Caving Advisor (USA / Ohio)
 - Wilderness First Responder
- Vamsi Ramakrishna: Expedition Interpreter (India)
- Tyson and Letha Anderson: U.S. Based Support Team (USA / Maryland)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to Moonshine Houseboats for serving as our basecamp accommodations in Srinagar, the staff at Chandigram Guesthouse for making our stay in the Lolab Valley comfortable, Mr. Manzoor Ahmad from the J&K Tourism Department for helping to organize the logistics of the expedition from start to finish, Mr. Azhar Pir for assisting with logistics while on the ground in Kashmir, Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance for providing us emergency travel coverage, and Outdoor Equipment Rentals for providing the team with personal locator beacons.





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GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF KALAROOS, KASHMIR, INDIA:

N34°34'45.8616" E074°19'14.2349"



Figure 2. Regional Map showing geographic location of Kalaroos, Kashmir, India.



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GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS OF KEY FEATURES

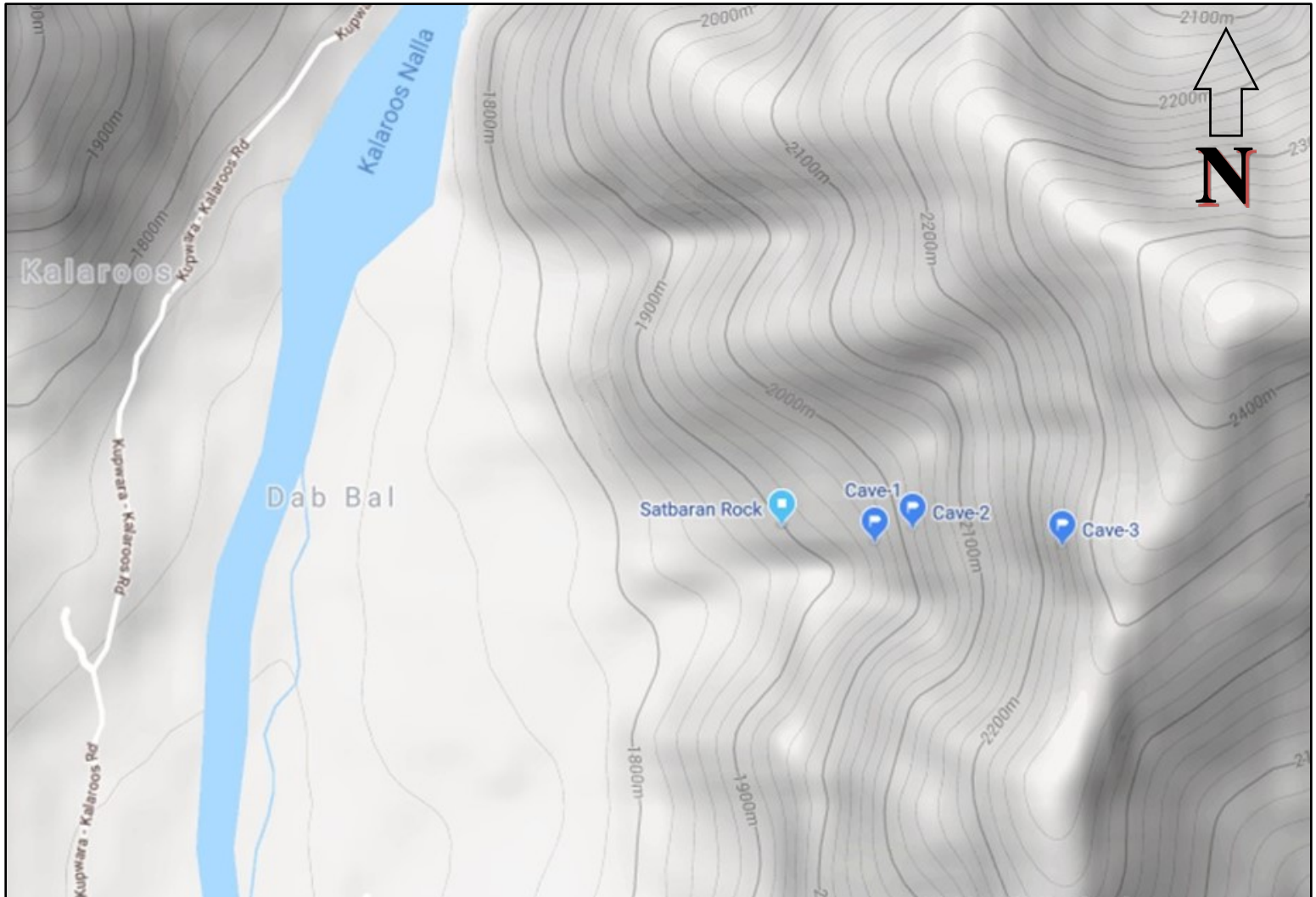


Figure 3. Map showing the locations of key features.



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SATBARAN ROCK

Location: N34°34'26.6" E074°20'15.8"



Figure 4. Photograph of Satbaran Rock taken from the West.

Satbaran Rock sits above the village of Madmadov, Kalaroos at 1,900 meters (6,234 feet) elevation along the path that leads to the Kalaroos Caves. The name Satbaran means “Seven Doors” in Kashmiri. There are seven carved openings in the rock and one carved opening on a smaller rock to the right, all oriented generally southwest. No one knows the history behind this structure, who built it, or its age. There is a local theory that this may have been a part of a larger structure, possibly a temple, which collapsed or was intentionally destroyed.



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CAVE-1

Location: N34°34'25.3" E074°20'24.1"

Cave-1 is the first cave reached beyond Satbaran Rock at 1,980 meters (6,496 feet) elevation. The first 50 meters are a narrow up-trending passage that is pinched down in some areas. This leads to a 15 meter shaft that opens to a small room. From here there is 10 meter shaft which opens to another room. Beyond that is a 5 meter up-trending passage that leads to a narrow horizontal passage terminating within 15 meters. We explored all leads off of the main passage and near the main entrance which all quickly terminated.



Figure 5. Lower opening at Cave-1.



Figure 6. Dustin Kisner entering one of the small secondary caves near the lower entrance to Cave-1.



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CAVE-2

Location: N34°34'26.3" E074°20'27.5"



Figure 7. Dustin Kisner standing within the entrance to Cave-2.

Cave-2 is located higher up on the mountainside at 2,020 meters (6,627 feet) elevation. It has the largest entrance of the three caves. The main passage is down-trending and terminates in 50 meters. It looks to have been filled in from a landslide or years of erosion. Local elders did not know if/when this cave was ever open.



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CAVE-3

Location: N34°34'25.2" E074°20'40.5"



Figure 8. The entrance to Cave-3.

Relative to the other caves, Cave-3 sits at the highest elevation on the mountain, 2,260 meters (7,415 feet). There is a 40 meter down-trending passage that leads to a pinched horizontal passage which terminates in 20 meters. All leads off of the main passage were explored and all quickly terminated. The Indian Army attempted to explosively seal this cave, as corroborated by local people and evidenced by blast scarring near the cave entrance. This action was allegedly due to the presence of bears and/or militants. The year in which this happened is unclear. No signs of bears or recent human passage were present, however, the cave is currently being occupied by at least one mating pair of Himalayan porcupine.



Figure 9. Blast scarring on the exterior cave wall near the entrance.



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NOTES & FINDINGS

- Precise locations of the caves were recorded by the team using a calibrated global positioning system (GPS).
- All three main caves, secondary entrances and leads were explored until termination points were reached.
- It is possible that Cave-1 and Cave-2 could have been connected at one time, as Cave-1 is upward-trending and Cave-2 is downward trending, both on similar azimuths and elevations.
- It cannot be determined what Cave-3 was like prior to the reported explosive demolition by the Indian Army.
- The team trekked along the ridgeline and thoroughly explored the terrain at each contour in search of other openings, but none were located.
- There are insufficient significant findings to support launching another expedition to map the caves.

CONCLUSIONS

North Star Adventure Consulting's 2018 Kashmir Expedition Team did an outstanding job meeting the aforementioned mission objectives. The Kashmiri people were very welcoming of our team and mission, and the community of Madmadov were supportive and assisted in the location of the caves. The team felt completely safe and at home throughout the expedition and made many new Kashmiri friends we look forward to seeing again. In addition, we participated in community outreach and Expedition Leader Amber Fies provided a presentation about the expedition to children in a local school. We cannot overemphasize the importance of stewardship of our natural world and the diligent application of the Leave No Trace principles of outdoor ethics. We encourage everyone to embrace these principles in order for all visitors and future generations to experience and enjoy pristine views and unspoiled landscapes, both above and below ground. To learn more about Leave No Trace, please visit www.lnt.org.

CONTACT INFO

Any questions regarding this report and expedition may be directed to North Star Adventure Consulting at www.explorenorthstar.com.

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