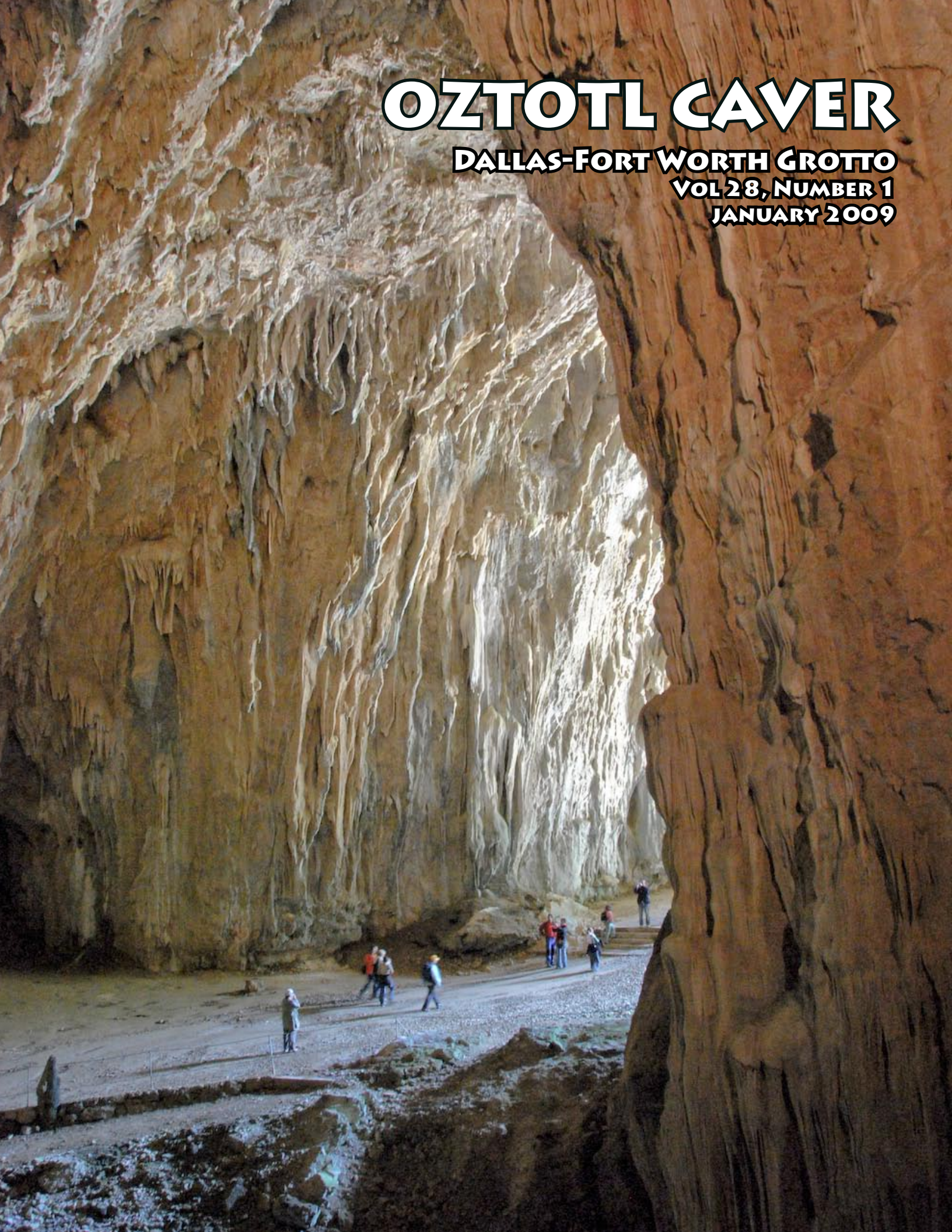


OZTOTL CAVER

DALLAS-FORT WORTH GROTTO

VOL 28, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2009



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The *Oztotl Caver* is a monthly publication of the Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto (DFWG), an internal organization of the National Speleological Society (NSS).

Opinions expressed in the *Oztotl Caver* are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the Dallas-Ft. Worth Grotto or the NSS.

The Dallas-Ft. Worth Grotto meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month except December (the December meeting is replaced with a Metroplex Holiday Party). The meeting site for the Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto is at

Recreational Equipment Inc.
4515 LBJ Freeway
Dallas, TX 75244
(972) 490-5989

All meetings are at REI starting at 6:45 PM; check the message board inside the front door for the room location. After every meeting, the grotto members meet at a nearby restaurant for dinner, socializing and trip-planning. It is a truism that if you wish to join us on caving trips, it helps to attend

the after-meeting gathering.

Subscription requests, newsletter exchanges and address changes should be sent to

Dallas-Ft. Worth Grotto
c/o Bill Steele
P.O. Box 166332
Irving, TX 75016-6332
<http://www.dfwgrotto.org>

OTHER CAVE ORGANIZATIONS

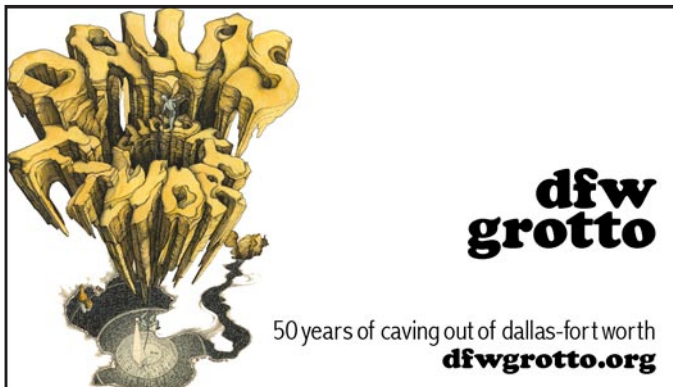
National Speleological Society
<http://www.caves.org>
2813 Cave Avenue
Huntsville, AL 35810-4431
nss@caves.org
\$36/year; monthly publication is the *NSS News*, and the three-times yearly *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies*

Texas Speleological Association
P. O. Box 8026
Austin, TX 78713-8026
<http://www.cavetexas.org>
\$20/year; bi-monthly publication is *The Texas Caver*

Texas Cave Management Association
P.O. Box 202853
Austin, TX 78720-2853
<http://www.tcmacaves.org>
tcma@cavetexas.org
\$15/year; twice yearly publication is *TCMA Passages*

Front cover photo of Škocjanske jame by Pete Lindsley: "Probably the most impressive cave we visited in Slovenia, this major tourist cave boasted large passages with a river in the bottom. This exit was at the bottom of a very large sink and we hiked back up the trail and rode a tram to the top."

Back cover photo of Predjama Castle by Karen Lindsley: "This scenic castle was built into a natural cave over 700 years ago. It was home to a rebellious knight named Erazem of Predjama. Passageways within the castle lead into the depths of the cave."



Our next meeting is Wednesday, January 28th, 2008. The program will be given by Bill Steele, about a two-week caving trip to the Purification region of Mexico over the Christmas-New Year's break. The meeting starts after 6:45 PM, come early so you can buy gear for caving and camping at REI. Don't forget to join us for food and socializing after the meeting at Taco Cabana!

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SLOVENIA: A CLASSIC CASE OF KARST

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY PETE AND KAREN LINDSLEY

We had the opportunity to visit Slovenia and Croatia during September 2008, touring with other karst-interested travelers from six different states. Dwight and Mary Deal were our tour leaders and operate Focused Tours, based in Denver, Colorado (their new web site is at www.focusedtours.com). Dwight “Dirt Doc” Deal has been an active caver and professional geologist in Texas, New Mexico and Colorado (to name a few

Slovenia’s karst region. Daily excursions took us to view the impressive karst features (surface and underground), and to listen to local scientists explain what we were seeing.

Our travels started when our group met in Munich, Germany where we boarded a plane for the flight over the Alps to Ljubljana (Lube-ee-ahn-uh), Slovenia. This was a great flight with fantastic views of the Alps and features such as hanging glaciers. Before heading into the primary karst area, we spent a day in the ancient town of Škofja Loka (Sko-fee-uh Low-kuh). This very scenic town is an ancient walled city dating back to ca. 973, and is one of the oldest settlements in Slovenia.

After traveling to Postojna, we visited the Karst Research Institute where we were welcomed and told about some of the work that takes place there. Arrangements had been made for several of the scientists to accompany us at different times during our stay in the Postojna area to provide a really in-depth look at what we would see. It was really gracious of these scientists to make time for us in their busy schedules.

A well-known karst feature in the Postojna area is Cerknica Lake, located in a huge polje. From the top of nearby Slivniči (Witch) Mountain, we could see the location of the famous disappearing Cerknica Lake with the full polje stretching for many miles. Unfortunately in September 2008 the largest lake in Slovenia was quite



Karen checks her picture of a Slovenian Cave Bear at the Karst Institute.

places). Mary Deal has been taking groups since 1982 on special interest tours to a number of international locations (e.g., China). We have traveled twice to China with Dwight and Mary and were excited to have the opportunity to travel with their first tour group to view “The Classic Karst of Slovenia and Croatia.” Our fellow travelers were John McLean (CO), John & Elaine Taylor (CO), David Worthington (WY), Eve Kuniandy (GA), Margaret Santiago (GA), Gerald and Avis Moni (TN), Judy Fisher (WV), and Paul and Marjorie Richter (WV).

The word “kras” (the source of the English word “karst”) has its origins in the carbonate landscape of Slovenia, as do other related words such as dolina and polje (pole-yuh). Approximately 43% of Slovenia is covered in karst (35% limestone, 8% dolomite). The Slovenians are very proud of their karst landscape and caves, referred to as “classic” and/or “classical karst.” This landscape provides the model for the study of karst worldwide. We spent a week based primarily near the town of Postojna (Poes-toyn-yuh), the center of



Cerknica Lake polje from the top of Witch Mountain.

dry with little evidence of a 26 km² lake. Later as we drove around visiting karst features in the polje we saw many, many sinks that sometimes were “dry lakes” and sometimes led to pits that funneled the surface drainage



Cerkniča Lake Museum

to the underground rivers 200 m below the surface. At the Cerknica Lake Museum we were treated to a 3-D “wet enhanced” topo map that demonstrated (with flowing water) that in wet weather the resurgences flowed into dry Cerknica Lake until a large portion of the polje was filled with water. For several years, the people of the region decided that the lake and potential tourist industry were more important than the farming that used the wetlands, so they tried to stop up the drainage of this giant lake. But that didn’t work – you can’t fool Mother Nature!

We visited five caves in the classic karst area, all interesting for their own reasons. The caves were Račiška Pečina (non-tourist), Postojnska jama (a famous show cave), Planinska jama (ex-tourist, *Proteus* salamander), Križna jama (non-tourist) and Škocjanske jame (an

Evidence of Caves: Imagine our surprise when we realized that this “rock” in the bottom of a sink at one end of a large polje was actually a stalagmite!



impressive show cave). Below is a sampling of photos taken in each cave including some descriptive information.



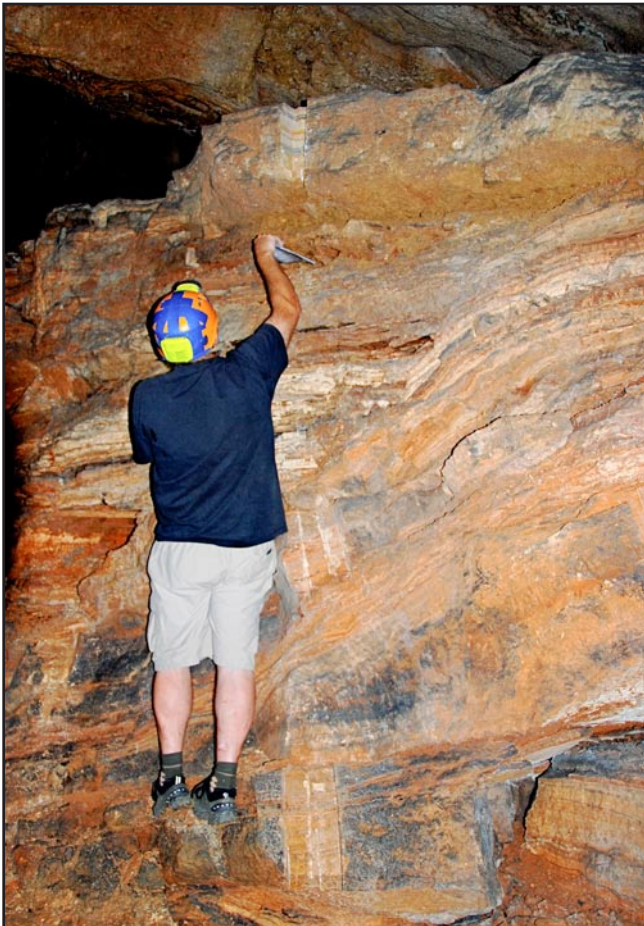
1) Račiška Pečina Cave, above: This cave has an entrance large enough to let trucks drive into it, and has been used in the past as a secure military storage location. Some signs of use remain, such as graffiti, broken concrete and brick walls.

2) Natural Bridge, below: Water flows between two poljes under this natural bridge, created by two collapsed sinkholes. Martin Knez, Dave Worthington, Gerald Moni, Dwight Deal.



Natural Bridge, next page, bottom: From the edge of the sink, we could see a trail leading to cave passages below with flowing water, while overhead we could walk across the natural bridge spanning the sink.

Račiška Pečina Cave, top left: Andrej Mihevc, from the Karst Institute, points out the banks of ancient sediments that have provided scientists with clues to the cave's geologic past. A partial cave bear skeleton attests to other past inhabitants. Modern-day users also include a Lesser Horseshoe Bat that was spotted near the back of the cave.



Planinska jama and Križna jama are two caves that we visited that have provisions for tourist cavers. Both caves offer guides that can take parties of 4-5 cavers to the back parts of the caves using rubber rafts that are important to the conservation of the caves. The flowing rivers in both caves create a series of pools with rimstone, flowstone and sharp rocks between the pools that must be carefully negotiated. Križna is the most pristine and we were given special instructions on how to walk on the calcium carbonate rimstone before we exited the rafts so that we wouldn't damage them when we moved the rafts between pools. In fact, the beautiful emerald green water in Križna is so very clear and pure that it does not support the *Proteus* salamanders. Planinska, on the other hand, is not particularly clear, and we saw hundreds of *Proteus* in the water under our rubber raft as we paddled our way upstream. See the website at www.showcaves.com/english/si/showcaves/Planinska.html for more information.

Trips into both Planinska and Križna are set up based on the size of the rubber boats used and, in some cases, the number of guides if you have more than one boat load and are lucky enough to have a second guide. The boats we used were high quality rubber boats that would hold 4-6 cavers weighing an average of 175 pounds. In Planinska, there were several locations where there were sharp rocks under the surface that could rip the boats. Other locations required 2-3 cavers to exit the boat and walk beside the boat so that the narrow passage between sharp rocks was passable. Of course the water level for the trip is all-important. The passage in Križna was somewhat different. Prior to heading upstream in the boat we were given instructions on how to place our feet on the delicate rimstone dams so that the calcite would not be scuffed or broken. In Križna they are carefully monitoring the wear and tear on the cave floor and have a limit on the total number of visitors each year. We got the idea that if a caver messed up the floor by accident they would close the delicate cave for a period of time. Calcite grows fast in some places, but much slower in other locations; hence the instructions to first-time cave visitors.





Clockwise from top left--

1) Planinska jama: This commercial cave has an interesting train ride into the heart of the cave. The train goes fairly fast with somewhat low ceilings in places, so we had to make sure we didn't hit our heads!

2) This impressive entrance shows the signs of previous commercialization.

3) Our guide outfitted us with "Welly" boots, coveralls, and electric lights for our 5-hour wild cave trip into the area called Paradise (from left: Taylor, McLean, Worthington & Moni).

4) We were rewarded with some fine views of drapery, delicate stalactites, and massive stalagmites at the end of the train ride.





- 1) *Risnik jama: Just to the right of the center at the top of the sink some buildings are visible.*
- 2) *Planinska jama Museum: Sometimes called the “Human Fish”, the *Proteus anguinus* blind salamander has red external gills. The salamanders we saw in the cave averaged 8 inches in length.*
- 3) *Speleo Camp: Slovene caver Franc Facija created Speleo Camp near Laze to serve as a base for cavers coming to cave in the classic karst. While you aren't required to cave while staying here, you do have to be a caver. See the website at www.speleocamp.com for information.*
- 4) *We are walking back from the Camp's outbuildings where extra facilities and an outdoor grill are located for visiting cavers staying here. This building houses rooms and space for rent by cavers, while Franc Facija and his family reside upstairs.*
- 5) *Dwight Deal (on left) stands in a bunkroom while talking with Franc Facija, a caver and owner of Speleo Camp. This great facility is located in the heart of Slovenia's classic karst.*





Škocjanske jame: A church is visible at the top of this impressive sink. Midway to the bottom is a large entrance on the right, and barely visible is the tourist path in the trees. Below that, in the center of the picture, is a tourist bridge over the water below, and several waterfalls are seen below it.

Križna jama (below): The wooden paddles minimize any damage to the cave floor along the boat's path (from left: Worthington, McLean, Richter & Lindsley).

Web sites of interest:

- www.showcaves.com/english/si/show-caves/PlaninskaGallery.html
- www.krizna-jama.si/uvod_ENG.htm
- www.keyhole.org.uk/sloveniabook.asp
- www.park-skocjanske-jame.si/eng
- www.postojna-cave.com
- www.ntz-nta.si/en/default.asp?ID=2014
- www.burger.si/Cerknica/CerkniskoJezero/CerkniskoJezero_PolnoPanorama.HTM
- www.burger.si/Cerknica/CerkniskoJezero/uvod_ENG.html
- www.focusedtours.com





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