

## A FEW SPANISH CAVING TERMS - BEYOND *CERVEZA & BAÑOS*

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Once you have gotten a taste of caving in Mexico, you crave that flavor. You will see all sorts of interesting things, and you will meet all sorts of interesting people; but how do you talk about what you have seen to the people you have met? Here are a few caving terms and other useful words in Spanish. Please print out this handy glossary and take it with you the next time you go caving in Mexico or write a trip report about your adventures there. If you think of other related words that are not on this list, please send them to us.

### **Words for caves and karst features**

dolina = sinkhole  
cueva, la caverna = cave  
pozo = well (used for pits)  
sótano = cellar, basement (used for pits)  
hoyo = hole, pit  
sumidero = sinking stream, insurgence, drain  
resumidero = drain, sewer  
grieta = crack, crevice  
gruta = cave, grotto  
sima = chasm, pit  
nacimiento, manantial = spring (nacimiento is literally “birthplace”)

### **Words for things in caves**

entrada = entrance  
salida = exit  
pasaje = passage  
sala, salón = large room, chamber (sala also is used for “camera” due to the original derivation of “camara oscura”, i.e. “dark chamber”)  
olla = pots (also used as a cave term to describe a bowl-shaped hole in floor)  
muñeco(a) = doll, referring to an archaeological statue (muñeca is also “wrist”)  
estalactitas = stalactites  
estalagmitas = stalagmites  
techo = ceiling, roof  
piso = floor  
pared = wall  
tiro = drop, pitch  
subida = climb

restricción = restriction/squeeze  
pasadizo = passage, corridor  
gatera = crawlway (literally “catway”)  
arrastradera = belly crawl  
gusanera = narrow winding passage where you have to go sideways (literally “wormway”)  
sifón = sump, siphon  
lodo = mud  
barro = mud, clay  
el agua = water (note that agua is feminine, but has a masculine article)  
arena = sand  
grava = gravel  
roca/piedra = rock  
derrumbes = breakdown, landslide  
atasco = obstruction, blockage  
caliza = limestone  
calcita = calcite  
yeso = gypsum  
travertinos = flowstone  
cortinas = draperies  
fósiles = fossils  
murciélago = bat  
vampiro = vampire bat  
guano = bat dung, which is sometimes used as fertilizer  
pez, peces = fish, fishes (pesca = live fish, pescado = dead fish, to eat)  
culebra, serpiente = snake  
víbora, cascabel = rattlesnake  
lagarto, lagartija = lizard  
salamadra = salamander  
rana = frog

sapo = toad  
hueso = bone  
bichos, insectos = bugs (generically)  
abeja = bee  
avispa = wasp  
araña = spider  
milpiés = millipede  
cienpiés = centipede  
alacrán, escorpio = scorpion  
jejenes = gnats (biting flies)  
moscas = flies (non-biting)  
zancudos = mosquitos  
garrapata = tick (the blood-sucking kind)  
pinolillos = seed ticks (literally “cornmeal”)  
hormiga = ant  
pulga = flea  
piojo = louse

### **Cave descriptors (adjectives)**

subterráneo = subterranean  
profundo(a) = deep  
hondo(a) = deep  
alto(a) = high  
arriba = up, above  
abajo = down, below  
oscuro(a) = dark.  
vertical = vertical  
estrecho(a) = tight  
angosto(a) = narrow  
ancho(a) = wide  
grande = big, great, extensive  
chico(a), pequeño(a) = small, tiny  
bajo(a) = low  
largo(a) = long  
corto(a) = short  
lodoso(a) = muddy  
lodo = mud  
barro = mud (clay)  
arenoso(a) = sandy  
resbaloso(a) = slippery, slick  
peligroso(a) = dangerous

### **Words for equipment**

equipo = equipment, gear  
casco = the helmet.

luz = light, such as a headlamp or the station light. Also generically means “electricity.”  
brillante = bright (light)  
cuerda, cable = rope (note that la ropa means clothes, not rope)  
nudo = knot  
cuerda de la almohadilla = rope pad  
mochila = pack  
arnés = harness  
pechera = chest harness, chest block, chest roller  
cola de vaca = cowstail  
estribo = footloop (literally “stirrup”)  
puño = Jumar-type ascender (literally “fist”)  
descensor = descender  
marimba = rappel rack  
ocho = figure 8 descender  
mosquetón con seguro = locking carabiner  
mosquetón sin seguro = non-locking carabiner  
fracción = rebelay  
maillon = maillon/screw link  
plaqueta = hanger  
tornillo, cerrojo = bolt  
taladro = drill  
taladro de impacto = hammer drill  
martillo = hammer  
palanca, barra = crowbar/prybar  
guantes = gloves  
rodilleras = kneepads  
codos de la almohadilla = elbow pads  
libro de la topografía = survey book  
lápiz = pencil  
Disto = Disto  
cinta = tape, such as flagging tape or measuring tape. Also means “belt.”  
gafas, anteojos, lentes = eyeglasses  
pilas = dry cells (AAA, AA, C, D, etc.)  
batería = battery (for a car)  
bolsa seca = dry bag  
traje de neopreno = wetsuit  
cámara = camera [see *sala*]  
cámara de aire = inner tube (air chamber)  
GPS = GPS  
hilo = string, cord

cadena = chain  
candado = lock  
llave = key  
clave = combination (to a lock), radio  
frequency channel or code  
escalera = ladder, stairs  
el mapa = map (note feminine noun with  
masculine article)  
la foto = photo (note masculine noun with  
feminine article)

### **Words for techniques**

“libre” = “Clear”(used when getting off rope  
and out of the fall zone)  
“ayuda!” = help!  
aventar la piedra = to toss a rock into a pit  
redireccionar = to redirect  
rappellear = to rappel  
descender = to go down  
subir = to ascend, climb up  
biólogo(a) = biologist  
arqueólogo(a) = archaeologist  
geólogo(a) = geologist  
topógrafo(a) = mapper, sketcher  
mapa = map  
plan de mapa = plan view  
perfil de mapa = profile view  
estación = survey point, station  
punto = point, as in a survey point, or period,  
as in “punto com” (dot com)  
fotografía, foto = photograph  
excavar, cavar = to dig  
topografir = to survey (to make a map)  
explorar = to explore  
entrar = to enter  
salir = to exit  
dejar = to leave  
bajar = to go down  
subir = to go up  
escalar = to climb a wall  
cargar = to load, to carry  
caminar = to walk  
gatear = to crawl (like a baby)  
arrastrar = to crawl (on your belly)  
levantar = to lift

empujar = to push  
jalar = to pull  
poner/colocar = to put  
ayudar = to help  
rescate = rescue (noun)  
rescater = to rescue  
primeros auxilios = first aid  
botiquín = first aid kit

### **Words for clothing**

ropa termica = thermal clothing  
sombbrero = hat  
gorra, cachucha = cap  
chaqueta, abrigo = jacket, coat  
suéter = sweater  
camisa = shirt  
camiseta = T-shirt  
pantalones = pants  
shorts/pantalones corto = shorts (yes, they also  
say “shorts” in Mexico)  
ropa interior = underwear  
bragas, calzones, pantis = panties  
sostén, sujetador = bra  
calcetines = socks  
mosquitero = mosquito net

### **Words for body parts**

uña = fingernail  
dedo = finger  
pulgar = thumb  
mano = hand  
puño = fist  
brazo = arm  
pierna = leg  
cabeza = head  
cráneo = skull  
pata, pie = foot  
dedo del pie = toe  
pecho = chest  
piel = skin (sometimes used for animal hide)

### **Miscellaneous useful words**

carga = cargo, gear, load  
compañeros = teammates  
campamento = the camp

campo = the country (as opposed to “the city”)	apagar = to turn off (a light or equipment)
sierra, cordillera = mountain range	comida = food
montaña = mountain	cuero = leather, animal hide
cerro = hill	vaca = cow
loma = rise in landscape, small hill	burro = donkey
valle seco = dry valley	borrego = sheep
sendero = trail, path	chivo, cabra = goat
cerca = fence (also means “near”)	cerdo, puerco = pig
árbol = tree	norte = north
serrucho, sierra = saw (for cutting wood)	sur = south
cortar, serrar = to cut or saw	este = east
hacha = ax, hachet	oriente = East
filoso(a) = sharp, as in a knife, machete, or axe	oeste = west
lima = file (for sharpening)	poniente = West
fuego, lumbre = fire	left = izquierda
alumbre = illumination	right = derecha
encender, prender = to light a fire, turn on a light, or burn	straight ahead = derecho
	clavo = nail (for pounding in to wood)