



CHECKLIST AND DISTRIBUTION OF ICELANDIC LAVA CAVES

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Abstract

Since the founding of the Icelandic Speleological Society in 1989, systematic collection of cave-data has been conducted by the society. The pioneer work of Hroarsson (1991) lay the foundations for that database and additions have been quite a few every year.

The island is 103.000 km² and the potential cave areas are confined to the neovolcanic zone from the Reykjanes peninsula in the southwest through Langjökull, and north to the Melrakkaslétta peninsula from Vatnajökull, with offshoot from the centre-line between Langjökull and Vatnajökull to the south towards the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago. The area covered with postglacial lava-flows; (younger than 10-13.000 years) is about 10.000 km². In the book *Hraunhellar á Íslandi* (Hroarsson, 1991) the author mentions about 150 caves. Today the total number of caves is 225. The total added length of all known lava-caves in Iceland is about 37 km. Numerous small caves are not listed, some caves on the list are "lost" and Icelandic speleologists like to think that there are many more out there to be discovered.

Since 1995 the ISS has tried to mark all the known caves, when visited, with a specially prepared plastic ribbon with pre-printed marking. The serial number of the cave to be tagged is marked on the ribbon using a waterproof felt-tip marker and hung up inside, in the dark zone of the cave.

A checklist of all known Icelandic lava caves is presented.