

# The World Record for Depth

S E R G I O   G A R C Í A - D I L S

**O**VER the last several years, as a result of the use of new technical equipment and improved physical preparation, speleologists have set world records of depth after years of deadlock. For seventeen years (1981-1998), the Jean Bernard Cave in the French Alps held the record with an interior depth of -1,602 meters (5,255 ft). In February of 1998, a dive through a sump in Mirolde Cave, also situated in this alpine region, resulted in the discovery of new galleries up to 1,610 meters (5,282 ft) deep. But this record would barely be held for a few months. In August of that same year, a Polish team would manage to beat it again in Austria in the Lamprechtsofen-Vogelschacht-P2 system with -1,632 meters (5,354 feet).

Three years later, at the beginning of the new millennium, a new world record would be set, going beyond the -1,700 meter (5,577 ft) mark for the first time. On January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, an expedition from the International Cave Exploration Team - CAVEX (Russia-Ukraine-Spain), in collaboration with the Ukrainian Speleological Association (UKSA), reached a depth of 1,710 meters (5,610 ft) in the Krubera-Voronya Cave in Western Caucasus (section of Arabika, Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia).

Abkhazia has not been recognized as an independent state by any international organization, and belongs offi-

This simple hole in a desert plain in the Caucasus is 1,700 metres deep.