Salle Beayno...

For the last year this name accompanied us in each and every Jiita trip, but now it’s over (Fig. 1, 2, and 3).

The result: a hundred and fifty-five meters of cave development to be added to the total development of Jiita cave with three more connections to the main Jiita axis, a new and more accurate survey was now finally completed (Fig. 4 and 5) and above all, lots of adventures, stories, and memories...

We’re definitely going to raise the delightful climb up left after the SCL camp site, the opposition climb following that, and finally the exciting ladder leading to a traverse which used to turn to a crawl, and then a big chamber and a crawl and... the point is that we spent memorable moments in gallery Beayno’s tunnels and chambers.

Come to think of it, it was not long ago that we first decided to re-explore this section of our beloved mother of all caves, Jiita. The first trip to Salle Beayno took place in June of last year.

During that outing, a small group of SCL cavers pointed out the discrepancies between the published map and the actual structure of the cave (Labaki and Harl, 2008).

Salle Beayno had – again its share of staffs and time during the infamous three-day expedition in October 2007. The team spent a whole day exploring and surveying the gallery, except for the stinks which required dedicated equipment. These stinks were later fully explored and drawn during a first trip.

Two question marks remained on the survey map. New, is it just me or are they really providing... those small question marks left behind, here and there on cave surveys?

So we packed our binoculars and binoculars in June 2008 and journeyed once again. The remaining two stinks were finally explored and turned out to lead into a summit chamber and from that chamber a second stinkhole had to be circumvented. The digging was fun, the army of stalagmites, stalactites, columns and other formations made our digging rather easy. The autumn was there to rig around these.

To dig naturally whenever possible, as much as possible, saves the burden of using nuts and bolts for the future cave environment, an environment that already has lots of scars from previous expeditions. An environment, that is some places, used to be as white as snow, as beautiful as heaven, and now most of its beauty is covered by mud (Fig. 5). Edits in spelaeology should be remembered, taught and studied again and again.

That second stinkhole guided us to the top of the giant ‘couch’ between the camp of SCL and the climb that leads to Salle Beayno. The view from up there was impressive, just like sitting on a balcony on top of a valley of wonders, with roaring water and twinkling stars; a mesmerizing sight from the ceiling to the floor... then, back to reality... we were getting cold and had to leave.

One last passage was left unexplored though. It was one of those tight tunnels that only Rod K. can do, so we decided... she loves them really!

She did enter and Haid K. followed. She found herself in a new, virgin tunnel but then she let go and suggested we leave it for future generations and we all agreed. We will certainly not tell them that it’s filled with that sticky thick honey mud. Good luck to them.

Leaving Salle Beayno that day, we knew, deep inside, that the work was far from over and we will probably never see this place again (Fig. 6 and 7). But at least the next time we pass by the SCL camp in Jiita, when someone points to a climb or an opening on the top of a massive ‘couch’... we know what’s up there...
Fig. 6: A general view of Salle-Boumpa. (Photo by Franck Vernet)

Fig. 7: The general view of a tunnel in the Big Bum of Salle-Boumpa. (Photo by Franck Vernet)