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Årets underjordiske vintereventyr, Råggejavre-raige

Some cavers recently took part in a winter expedition to Råggejavre-Raigge, the deepest cave in northern Europe. One of the goals was to find out whether it was possible to descend through the "water passage", where the river disappears into a chasm 230 metres below the entrance. It is only in wintertime that there is a chance of penetrating the chasm as the water flow is reduced. They also hoped to find sediments with traces of pollen or insects in the deepest parts of the cave. The expedition - six men and one woman - belong to the Tysfjord Grotte and Tindeklubb, a potholing and mountaineering club which is run by Torbjørn Storskjær. After a five hour trek, the party arrived at the entrance where they could feel the warmth of the wind coming from inside. Once inside the cave the next day, the route to the chasm took only 2.5 hours. The river had eroded the limestone marble to create jagged edge slates which protruded menacingly in all directions. They dressed in offshore survival suits before attempting to enter the chasm. The water passage inclined reasonable gently at first, but after eight metres it dropped sharply where the water flowed over the edge. This was where the real descent began. There were large, loose boulders scattered around the edge of the chasm, and climbing over the edge proved to be a very wet experience, even with offshore equipment. The deluge didn't last more than seven metres before it ended up in a cavern. This had also the same characteristic formations as the chasm; jagged edge slates like knives. They spent 83 hours in the cave, and achieved the main goal of climbing the water passage. They didn't find anything interesting as regards the sediments in the lower parts. For coming trips, the cavers have to be very careful with the loose boulders at the edge of the chasm.