

Resources

UIS-IUCN Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection Second Edition, 2022

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The first edition of these Guidelines was published by IUCN in 1997. This second edition was published by the International Union of Speleology – UIS in April 2022, with support from the International Union for Conservation of Nature – IUCN. They were written by Members of the Caves and Karst Working Group, part of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas. The original guidelines were primarily concerned with geoheritage, and while this remains an important consideration in the second edition, we also cover the biological issues involved in cave and karst conservation. We hope these guidelines will make a significant contribution to knowledge of the special management considerations essential for effective protection of caves and karst.



Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection

Second Edition



Xe Bang Fai cave, Laos

Photo by Steven Bourne

Karst and caves have been silent witnesses of Earth's evolution and the rise of human civilisations. Caves and karst have retained and protected important pieces of Earth's long and tumultuous geological past. These range from ancient mineral deposits, long gone oceans and early forms of life, to unique cave adapted organisms, extinct megafauna remains and the early manifestation of human art. Without caves and karst, such information would have been largely unavailable to us.

Karst and caves are among the most exquisite and valuable landscapes in our planet, with intrinsic touristic and economic value. Protecting caves and karst is vital to the preservation of our history and that of the planet. Karst and cave knowledge is essential to safeguarding a healthy coexistence between karst and our civilisation, minimising and avoiding environmental impacts that will, ultimately, be reflected upon us. The safe and sustainable use of karst and caves, and how to properly protect and manage them, is the subject of this book. We aim to convey an update of global best practice that is accessible to general readers, while providing technical details of interest to the specialist.

It's appropriate that this publication appears during the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) 2021–22, which is organised by the International Union of Speleology, the worldwide organisation of cave and karst explorers, scientists, managers and educators.

The three central themes of the IYCK are *Explore, Understand and Protect*, and whilst this publication focuses on the third of these themes, our aim is to increase understanding of the sensitivity of caves and karst. Whilst there has been a welcome increase in caves and karst knowledge since the first edition was published, they continue to be threatened by human activities around the world. In fact, there are exceptional, irreplaceable and hydrologically, ecologically, and culturally important cave and karst landscapes that are being damaged or threatened on a continuous basis.

The guidelines can be freely downloaded from the International Union of Speleology website at:

<http://uis-speleo.org/index.php/2022/04/13/the-uis-guidelines-for-cave-and-karst-protection-are-now-available/>