

# Hosting an International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology



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## I. Purpose of This Guide

Broadly speaking, the purpose of this guide is two-fold:

- (1) To assist prospective hosts in understanding what to expect when hosting an international symposium on vulcanospeleology, and
- (2) To assist prospective hosts in understanding what registered participants expect from the host before, during and after the symposium.

The suggestions in this guide are just that - suggestions. Hosts are not required to rigidly adhere to anything in this proposal, as long as the participants are well-informed of what to expect. *This is the key to hosting a successful symposium - keep the participants well-informed of the what to expect, and do so well in advance.*

Many of the suggestions listed in this guide are included because of problems that occurred during previous symposia. This guide is meant to help both the host and participants have an enjoyable and successful experience.

Other suggestions presented in this guide are just to help the host plan the symposium.

## **II. About the Commission on Volcanic Caves**

The Commission on Volcanic Caves is a working group of the International Union of Speleology. The Commission membership is composed of a diverse group of about 50 cavers from around the world, all of whom are interested in volcanic caves. Many of the members are scientists and university professors whose research takes them into volcanic caves. Other members are just cavers who are interested in volcanoes and volcanic caves.

The Commission on Volcanic Caves holds an international symposium every few years at various locations around the world. Since 1972 there have been fifteen symposia:

1. Washington, USA, 1972
2. Catania, Italy, 1975
3. Oregon, USA, 1982
4. Catania, Italy, 1983
5. Japan, 1986
6. Hawaii, USA, 1991
7. Canary Islands, Spain, 1994
8. Nairobi, Kenya, 1998
9. Catania, Italy, 1999
10. Reykjavik, Iceland, 2002
11. Pico Island, Azores, 2004
12. Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico, 2006
13. Jeju Island, Korea, 2008
14. Undara, Queensland, Australia, 2010
15. Amman, Jordan, 2012

None of the officers of the Commission are paid or receive compensation for their efforts. The Commission itself does not have any monetary funds. All work done by members on behalf of the Commission is done on a volunteer basis.

The Commission publishes a quarterly electronic newsletter, which is the primary method of communication between members.

### **III. Overview of the Format of the Symposium**

#### **A. The Symposium**

Previous symposia have been 1 to 10 days in duration. The symposium is a semi-formal scientific meeting during which there are presentations of research papers, exploration, etc. Often there are half-day or full-day tours to local volcanic caves or volcanic features.

#### **B. Pre- or Post-Symposium Caving Excursion**

Previous symposia have included a pre- or post-symposium caving excursion to explore volcanic caves and other volcanic features in the region. These field trips have been 3 to 5 days in duration, and have been a separate event from the symposium itself.

#### **C. Dates**

Many of the participants are university scientists, so the symposium should be scheduled when professors are on either the summer or winter break. Thus, the preferred dates are during spring break or between August 15-September 15.

#### **D. Presentation Topics**

Presentations during the symposium should be limited to topics directly or indirectly related to volcanic caves. Subject matter can include volcanic caves, geology, archeology, anthropology, hydrology, chemistry, exploration, cave diving, etc. Generally the Commission is only interested in presentations relating to volcanic caves. However, presentations relating to a pertinent local topic (such as local history or local geology) may be appropriate.

## **IV. Details of the Symposium**

### **A. The Symposium**

Previous symposia have been 1 to 10 days in duration. Here is a list of previous symposia:

1. White Salmon, Washington, August 16, 1972 (1 day)
2. Catania, Italy, August 1975
3. Bend, Oregon, July 30-Aug 1, 1982 (3 days)
4. Catania, Italy, September Sep 12-17, 1983 (6 days)
5. Japan, November 1986
6. Hilo, Hawaii, August 5-9, 1991 (5 days)
7. Canary Islands, Spain, November 4-11, 1994 (8 days)
8. Nairobi, Kenya, February 7-8, 1998 (2 days)
9. Catania, Italy, September 1999 (9 days)
10. Reykjavik, Iceland, September 11-19, 2002 (7 days)
11. Pico Island, Azores, May 12-18, 2004 (7 days)
12. Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico, July 2-7, 2006 (6 days)
13. Jeju Island, Korea, September 1-10, 2008 (10 days)
14. Undara, Queensland, Australia, August 12-17, 2010 (6 days)
15. Amman, Jordan, March 15-18, 2012 (3 days)

The actual length of the symposium should depend on the number of participants, the number of presentations, excursions, tours, and the cost of lodging.

The symposium is a semi-formal scientific meeting during which there are presentations of research papers, exploration, etc. Often there are half-day or full-day tours to local volcanic caves or volcanic features.

### **B. Technology for Presentations**

Presentations using Power Point have become standard. Microphones, speakers, projectors, laptops, laser pointers, and computer hook-ups should be available. Back-up equipment is highly recommended.

### **C. Number of Participants**

Prospective hosts can expect approximately about 15 to 30 international participants at the symposium. At previous symposia there have been another 10 to 20 local host participants, bringing the total number of local and international participants to 25 to 50 people.

Prospective hosts who are close to Australia, Europe, Japan and the United States can expect more participants. Prospective hosts who are in more remote regions, or regions with international travel warnings, can expect fewer participants.

#### **D. Tours**

Tours can be scheduled during the symposium. These tours can include trips to local caves, volcanic features, or other local sites of interest.

The tours can be included in the symposium fee, or the tours can be optional with additional fees, depending on the nature of the tours.

Not everyone can attend both the symposium and the pre-symposium or post-symposium caving excursion, so some caving tours should be integrated into the symposium, if possible and practical. These can half or full-day events.

The day before each tour, the host should ensure that the details of the tour schedule are made clear to participants, so that participants can adequately prepare. Participants may need to bring extra clothing, a change of clothing, medications, food and drink, caving equipment, etc. Be sure that participants under the nature of the tour what equipment will be required.

The tours should *not* include tourist stores or factory shops.

#### **E. Registration Package**

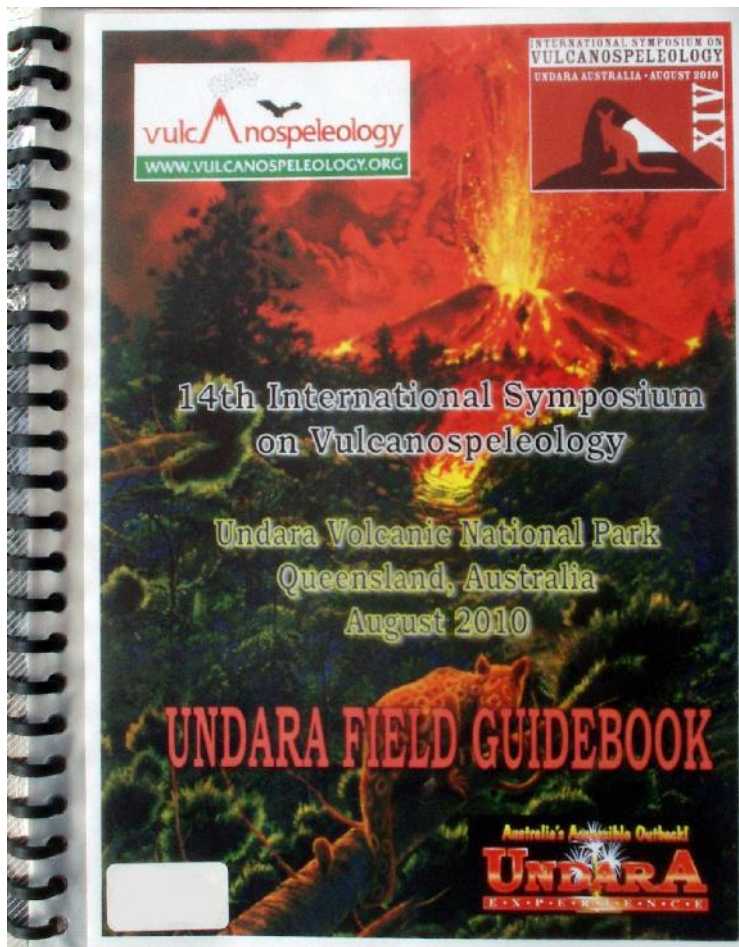
Participants should be given a package on arrival that includes the following:

- Maps of the local area that show the locations of ATMs, banks, foods stores, restaurants, etc.
- Map of symposium building and facilities
- Symposium Program

## F. Symposium Program

A program should be printed for the symposium participants. The program can include the following:

- Map of the region
- Overview of the geology
- Cave descriptions
- Tour descriptions
- Schedule



Example: The program guide from the 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology

## **G. Daily Schedule**

The daily schedule should run from about 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The day is divided into 30-45 minutes blocks for presentations, with regularly scheduled breaks.

### **i. Opening Ceremony**

The symposium begins with a formal ceremony that introduces the host and sponsors.

### **ii. Cocktail Party**

Often there has been an optional cocktail party in the hotel's pub on the first evening. Participants should be informed that they will have to pay for their own drinks

### **iii. Breaks**

Beverages and snacks should be available to participants during the break. Participants should be informed whether or not they will have to pay cash for these items. If such amenities are not available, participant should be notified well in advance that they will need to provide their own beverages and snacks.

### **iv. Commission Meeting**

Near the end of the symposium there should be a 90-minute block in the schedule for a formal business meeting of the Commission.

## **H. Lodging**

Participants should be given a variety of lodging options, if possible, to ensure that all prospective participants can afford one of the options. If a single hotel is required, it should be a clean,

safe 3-star hotel for affordability. Options for double occupancy should be available.

During one symposium the participants had several lodging options that included tent camping, group bunk rooms, economy hotel rooms with community toilets, regular hotel rooms with *en suite* toilets, and luxury hotel rooms with *en suite* toilets and air conditioning.

Participants expect that the hotel will provide all of the amenities that are customary with a hotel, such as *en suite* toilets, bedding, sheets, pillows, towels, soap, and air-conditioning (or heating, as appropriate). If some or all amenities are not available, participants should be notified well in advance what to expect. The hotel should be personally inspected by a host representative to ensure that it is indeed acceptable.

In the case of double occupancy, the hotel should clearly specify if the lodging rate is per **person** or per **room**.

If payment for lodging is not pre-paid with registration, then participants should be informed of the various payment methods that are accepted by the hotel.

Ideally a hotel will be located in an area where participants can easily (and safely) walk to nearby banks, ATMs and stores to obtain cash, food, clothing, batteries, etc.

If the hotel is not located near such amenities, then there should be plenty of free time during the first couple of days to allow participants to travel by taxi to banks and stores. Alternatively, if there are tours during the symposium then the bus should make a 30-minute stop in a shopping area where participants can get to banks, ATMs, food stores, etc. These stops should be noted on the schedule so that participants know when they will be able to obtain items that they need.

## **I. Meals & Dining**



Participants should be informed of their meal options (European vs. American meal plans).

The locations of nearby grocery stores should be noted on local maps so that participants can buy their own meals.

The host should specifically note whether or there are refrigerators and microwaves in the hotel rooms because some participants may opt out of meals plans.

Consider preparing box lunches for tours, if appropriate.

### **J. Free Time**

The evenings after about 4:00 p.m. should be scheduled as free time for participants, especially during the first couple of days. Many participants will be suffering from jet lag and need extra sleep. Others may need some time to work on presentations, purchase medications, snacks, batteries, clothing, etc. Any evening events should be optional.

### **K. Internet Access**

The host should specify all of the options for Internet access (e.g., Wi-Fi, cable connections, etc.) for each of the lodging options,. Some participants will not be traveling with a laptop, so they also need to know if the hotel has a computer for public use, and if there are nearby Internet cafés that are open in the evening.

## **V. Abstracts**

Typically symposium hosts have asked for abstracts and papers to help them plan the symposium presentation schedule.

## **VI. Online Registration**

Online registration is preferred. The registration website should be online 6 to 12 months before the start of the symposium.

The registration website should describe, in detail, the following about the symposium:

- Specific dates of all events
- Specific locations of all events
- Maps
- Specific lodging options and prices
- Meal options (European vs. American meal plans)
- Symposium registration fees
- Tour fees
- Box lunch fees
- Pre- or post-symposium caving excursion fees
- Payment options
- Special requirements

Online registration should allow participants to view and modify their registration as needed, and make online payments securely.

Participants should be able to pay deposits and registration fees by a variety of methods such as credit cards via a secure website, Paypal, bank transfers, etc. Please note that, due to anti-terrorism laws in the United States, banks transfers are difficult and expensive for Americans.

The host should provide a single point of contact (POC) during the registration period. The host POC must be fluent in English and must respond to e-mail inquiries in a timely manner (within 24 hours).

Online registration should have a menu format, where participants can pick and chose various registration and lodging options.

For example:

- Registration fees
- Opening ceremony banquet fee

- Closing ceremony banquet fee
- Tour fees
- Box lunches during tours
- Pre- or Post-Symposium registration fee
- Park entrance fees
- etc.

Due to currency exchange rates, the host should be aware that the actual amount received may not be exactly what is expected. For instance, If someone transfers €300 from the USA, that amount is converted into US dollars at the current exchange rate and then that amount (in U.S. dollars) is transferred. The receiving bank will convert the amount back into Euros at the current rate, and the host will almost surely receive an amount slightly different than exactly €300. The host should decide how they are going to handle these differences, and must notify participants during the registration process of the plan to reconcile differences.

Remind participants to check their particular requirements for travel visas to the host country.

## **VII. Banking**

The host should locate nearby ATMs that accept international credit cards. These should be marked on maps given to the participants.

Additionally, participants should be notified whether or not they will be able to pay for local services and goods by credit card.

We have found that, in certain areas, participants were not able to access most local ATM machines for cash because they did not have a credit card that was issued by the local country. Participants had to travel back to the airport to use the one ATM in the region that accepted international credit cards. This information would have been useful to know before participants traveled 40 km from the airport to the hotel.

## **VIII. Pre- or Post-Symposium Caving Excursion**

Most symposia have an optional caving excursion in the days before or after the symposium. These excursions have been 3 to 5 days in duration.

Some of the excursions have been conducted locally; other excursions have been conducted in areas hundreds of kilometers away from the site of the symposium.

For instance, in Iceland the caving excursion was a 3-day loop in 4-wheel drive vehicles to multiple volcanic sites and caves sites around Iceland.

In Korea the caving excursion was conducted locally from the same hotel as the symposium. Participants were transported daily by a tour bus to local caves and other pertinent tourist attractions (like natural volcanic geological formations and volcanic parks).

In Australia, the caving excursion was held in Melbourne, 3,000 kilometers south of the symposium. Participants were required to arrange for their own airline flights. Locally, participants were transported in numerous vans and trucks owned by local cavers.

In Jordan, the caving excursion was based at a lodging facility that was about 70 kilometers from where the symposium was hosted. Participants were transported locally in small busses owned by the university.

There have been options for vertical caving at some of the symposiums. In Jordan, a large ladder was placed in a cave entrance to facilitate ease of entry for all participants. Participants should be informed whether or not to bring vertical gear.



Example: In Jordan, a large ladder was placed in a cave entrance to facilitate ease of entry for all participants. Photos by Greg Middleton.



Example: In Australia, a few participants had an opportunity for vertical caving. Here, Arni rappels into a 30-meter deep volcanic shaft.



## **IX. Checklists**

These checklists are for host planning purposes only. Not everything on these checklists are mandatory.

### **A. Pre-Symposium Planning**

- Identify a single point-of-contact (POC) for all communication, registration and e-mail.
- Identify a working e-mail address for the point-of-contact (POC).
- Identify an accountant to handle registration payments and bank accounts.
- Designate a bank account to accept bank transfer and hold funds.
- Ensure that the bank can handle foreign currency transfers and deposits.
- Identify methods of registration payments (bank transfers, Paypal, credit cards, etc.).
- For bank transfers, the following information will need to be published for registrants to make a transfer (the USA requires more information than usual for transfers):
  - Bank name
  - Bank address (no post office boxes)
  - Bank account number
  - International Bank Account Number (IBAN)
  - Swift code
  - Account holder's name
  - Account holder's street address (no post office boxes)
- Determine how to handle minor payment discrepancies due to currency exchange rates.
- Identify a web master to operate the registration web site.

- Determine the dates of the symposium.
- Determine the dates of the pre- or post-symposium caving excursion.
- Identify lodging options.
- Inspect lodging for adequacy and cleanliness.
- Determine lodging rates.
- Determine double-occupancy lodging rates (per **room** or per **person**).
- Determine how participants can pay for lodging (included in registration fee or paid individually at the hotel).
- Determine whether to host will arrange for lodging reservations, or whether participants will need to make their own reservations. If the latter option is chosen, participants should be given hotel contact information on the registration website.
- Determine methods of payment accepted by the hotels.
- Notify participants of the amenities that are available and not available with each lodging option (sheets and blankets, towels, soap, toilet tissue, restaurants, internet access, etc.).
- Determine if refrigerators and microwaves are available in each hotel room.
- Identify local grocery stores near the hotel(s).
- Identify local hospitals near the hotel(s).
- Identify pharmacies near the hotel(s).
- Identify local internet cafés.

- Identify ATMs near the hotel(s) that accept international credit cards.
- Identify stores near the hotel(s) where participants can buy other goods such as batteries, clothes, medical supplies, etc.
- Prepare a map of the local area identifying the locations of hotel(s), symposium facility, ATMs, grocery stores, pharmacies, hospitals, internet cafés, etc. Considering sending this map to participants prior to their departure from home.
- Determine and advise participants how to get from the airport to the hotel(s) (taxi, bus, etc.).
- On the registration web site, display a map that shows the relation of the airport to the hotel(s).
- Prepare an interactive registration and information website.
- The registration website should allow participants to log-in, register, modify their registration, and check on their payment status
- Prepare and print a symposium program and guide.
- Identify a facility for the symposium.
- Check and test the facility's computer hook-ups, electrical outlets, projectors, microphones, speakers, lights, and heating/cooling controls.
- Identify laptop computers that will be available for presentations. Many participants will be bringing their own laptops, too.
- Identify other items for presentations such as electrical extension cords and laser pointers. The host can ask participants to bring these items as well.

- Notify participants of electrical outlet and power requirements so that they may bring appropriate power adapters for their laptop computers.
- Identify back-up equipment in case of failure of microphones, projectors, etc.
- Determine whether or not snacks and beverages can be purchased during breaks at the symposium, or whether participants will need to supply their own.
- Call for abstracts and papers.
- Identify a person to whom abstracts and papers should be sent, along with an e-mail address.
- Determine the symposium schedule, which may be published separately from the program guide.
- Identify how to handle check-in of arriving participants. A check-in table can be set up the night before the symposium in a hotel lobby. Alternatively the host can set up a check-in table on the morning of the symposium at the symposium facility. (If the latter option is chosen, then participants need to be given a map and schedule prior to their arrival so they know how to get there and at what time.)
- The registration packets should be pre-arranged in bags for each participant, with a printout of all items for which the participant has paid.
- Identify how to handle discrepancies during the check-in process. Extra copies of maps, programs, etc., should be available.
- Some symposiums have made polo shirts or T-shirts with the symposium logo available for purchase.
- Identify tours, tour guides, tour fees and transportation during tours.

- Identify a method of accounting for all participants during tours so that no one is left behind. Print a list of all participants for this purpose, which can be used as a checklist to account for everyone.
- Participants should be given a business card of the hotel to show to a taxi driver in case they get lost or separated.
- If the hotels are not located near amenities, consider having the tour bus make a stop at a local store for 30 minutes at the beginning of the tour so that participants can purchase snacks, water, batteries, etc.
- If vertical caving activities are planned, identify the equipment that will be provided for the participants (rope, rope pads, ladders, etc) and what equipment the participants will need to supply for themselves (harness, descenders, ascenders, etc.).
- Identify guides for vertical caving excursions who are competent in vertical work.
- Identify whether the rope will be set up on arrival at the site, or whether someone will get there early to set up the rope.
- Identify whether or not carbide will be available for caving lights, and if so, what grade of carbide (miner's grade or nut grade). Generally, carbide has **not** been available and everyone has used electric lights.
- Print name tags for each participant
- Make arrangements for the cocktail party, if appropriate
- Identify someone to be at the main hotel the night before the symposium to assist participants with any problems. This person should speak English and have a list of hotel registrations and payments in case there are problems with hotel check-in. Participants should be given this person's local cellular phone number in case they need to call from the airport or other hotels.

## **B. Immediately prior to the start of the symposium**

- Prepare registration packets for each participant to include:
- Printout of everything for which the participant has paid
- Program guide
- Abstracts
- Schedules
- Name tag
- Maps (ATMs, grocery stores, hospitals, internet cafés, etc.)
- Business card of the hotel
- Tour information
- Local street map
- Set up and check the symposium facility
- Check the operation of lights, computer hook-ups, projectors, microphones, speaker, laser pointers, etc.
- Set up the check-in table
- Reconfirm lodging reservations for all participants, as appropriate

## **C. During the Symposium**

- Print multiple copies of the participant list for use during tours to account for everyone.
- The day before each tour, inform the participants of the duration of the tour, the time schedule, tour activities, and equipment

needs. Participants should be informed if they will get wet or muddy, and what other clothing or food requirements are necessary. Consider including this information in the program guide.

#### **D. After the Symposium**

- Print and distribute the abstracts, if not already done