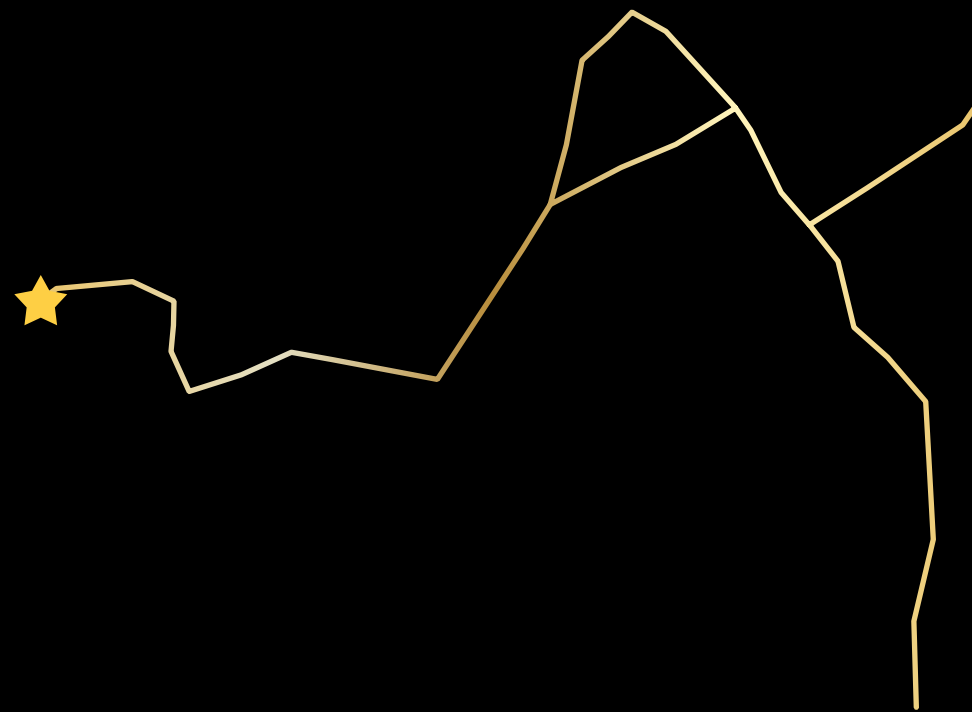


# Ak K'U'



★ Cenote Entrances

— Cave Passages

⋯ Former Cave Passages







*Page 101: Map of Cenote Ak K'U' (red lines) with Guadalupe shown to its south (yellow lines). Ak K'U' extends from the northern-most part of the canal system towards the Rosewood lobby. The stars indicate other cave entrances, including one in which we found a small crocodile.*

*Left and right: Matt joins the turtles in the Ak K'U' cavern.*

Back at Mayakoba for an intensive ten days of diving before Thanksgiving 2020, Matt and Ivo completed the cave sketches and survey for Burrodromo with time left on our hands. Our 25-minute scooter runs through the canals from Matt's house to Turtle Party had inspired us to search the canals for more cave entrances, as we'd already seen many holes on our journey to Turtle Party and knew we'd be able to find more.

Wrapping up our last dive at Burrodromo on November 17th, we scooted for another kilometer or so up to the northern terminus of the canals. And while it wasn't immediately obvious, we knew we'd hit the jackpot when we started feeling cold water coming from the top of an area we called "Lollipop," due to the shape of a circular part of the canal that was nestled between the Andaz and Rosewood property.

Poking around, we soon found a medium-sized cave entrance. Shining our lights into the cavern, we were excited that we couldn't see any line or cave arrows indicating that this cave had ever been explored. We made a gear staging area with a spool tied to some rock outside the cave, and left our scooters and stage tanks behind, preparing to start a new exploration.

Making a primary and secondary tie-off, we descended into the cave, taking a good look around the nicely-sized cavern. There were turtles everywhere. These reptiles were full-blown cave divers, swimming past the light zone and into the cave. Because of their relatively large size, we tried to steer clear of the turtles' beaks, which seemed capable of inflicting sharp bites. We were also cautious about the visibility issues these turtles might create with the silt that they kicked up with abandon.













*Left:* This cave had intricate decoration in many places.

*Right:* The canals around Cenote Ak K'U' were full of cave formations, some existing above the water level. Ivo floating just outside the cavern entrance.









*Left:* A tight squeeze through a passage near the front of the cave.

*Right:* Ak K'U' was absolutely full of turtles. Some swam a substantial distance into the cavern—not all the way out of the light zone, but close.



Laying line into the cave, we carefully twisted through a tight section of highly decorated passageway. This cave was very different from Burrodromo's soft and crumbly limestone. Appreciating the enhanced visibility due to the hard rock which didn't percolate as much as Burrodromo, we navigated into the cave, laying more than 100 m (330 ft) of line in a northeast direction as the cave became increasingly narrow. We found two branches of cave and created a *T intersection* between our lines. Wrapping up the dive for the day, we took survey measurements on our way out. We were excited about the potential of the cave, but cautious that its small proportions could indicate that this one might not go very far.

We came back the next day, hoping we'd be able to lay more line. We did a 3.5-hour dive, checking every lead we could find. It was tough going, and we spent time in some very small places as the visibility slowly went to zero while we looked for the passage that might lead to more glory. In the end, we didn't find much, having added another 75 m (250 ft) to our survey. After this dive, we were pretty sure the cave was walled out, but we were willing to do one more dive just to be sure.

On our final dive, we spent another two hours pushing into a very tight and silty area we thought might lead to more passage, as we could feel water flowing from the area. After this approach yielded nothing, we decided that further progress wasn't possible without taking on unacceptable risk.

In the end, this was a very pretty but relatively short cave. Located in an interesting area, the cave doesn't quite make it to the Rosewood lobby, but gets close.

Claiming the honor of giving each new cave its own name, we called this cenote Ak K' U', the closest Yucatec Maya translation that we could find for "Lollipop." ♦