



Florida has long been the vacation destination of choice for millions of visitors annually. With beautiful beaches, nice weather and more places to see and activities than a tourist could accomplish in a life-time. Not to mention the tourist destination of all destinations – Disney World!

There is one tourist however who comes to Florida every year that looks for something different. No crazy, overcrowded theme park for him. No, he prefers long, deep passages carved out of limestone a hundred feet or so beneath the surface of the earth...and underwater. And one last thing; he often does this all alone.

His name is Marius Frei, he's a 44 year old, Swiss cave diver and explorer. He decided he wanted to try to find the link between *Little River Spring's 'Florida Room'* and the back of the *'Harper Tunnel'*. He felt certain that a connection existed

due to water flow and cave composition. The question: Was the connection big enough to accommodate a diver? Not just any diver, but one who also drives a truck for construction work back home in Switzerland?

Frei, who last year made some headway

exploring part of *Ginnie Springs*, decided this year he would tackle – among other things – this often talked about but never seen link at *Little River*. He had noticed that some of the cave at the back of the *Harper Tunnel*, (named after original explorer John Harper), looked suspiciously



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like the same formation and type as what he saw in the back of the small siphon tunnel off the *Florida Room*. That, coupled with diving in both areas during the same dive prior to making the connection, and seeing some silt flowing into the *Harper Tunnel* from where he had been minutes earlier confirmed he was on to something.

It took just a couple of dives to finally answer this question once and for all, and a claustrophobic's nightmare of a no-mount spot; but Frei did it. On February 27th, 2009, he was able to gently push his way through a very tight restriction, where he had to go from side-mount to no-mount and carefully negotiate his way

through, where, not only was it small and tight, but also had part of a cave formation blocking his way. It was somewhat reminiscent of what John Chatterton had

narrow vertical slit which eventually put him into the back portion of the *Harper Tunnel* beyond the line. Once he saw the line he knew he had finally made the connection.

As Frei said, "this is an intense and tight dive that definitely is not for everyone, and if I was any bigger at all, especially around the waist, I could not have made it".

During these dives, which he did solo, he followed all safety and cave conservation rules being careful not to damage any



done to get into the engine compartment of *U-869* to find the proof of what U-Boat it really was.

After getting through the one really tight area, Frei then had to move along a

cave formations.

Marius was on a roll. A week after making *this* connection at *Little River* he also added some line in the deep section of the cave, as well as, even more line past the well casing.

It was a good week for cave exploration in Florida and one can only wonder what Frei has in store for his next visit to Cave Country.... ►



Marius Frei has been a certified scuba diver since 1999 in Switzerland. In 2001 he started his overhead certifications by getting ice diver certified followed by cave in 2002 with CMAS in Switzerland and France. This was his fifth trip to Florida, which he began in 2003.



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