

Risk Assessment and information for all visitors and groups to Poole's Cavern and Country Park

This information enables group leaders to assess the risks to their own groups whilst visiting Poole's Cavern and the Country Park

Car Park Area

The entry to Poole's cavern is from a tarmac car park. Coaches can unload to the footpath adjacent to the visitor centre. There are traffic ramps and a 5mph speed restriction. We expect group leaders to ensure that their group behave responsibly in areas where vehicles are present.

Visitor Centre

Entry to the visitor's centre is on a level path. Access to the visitor centre is through automatically opening doors with low level push opening pads for disabled users. The reception desk is just inside and group leaders are asked to report here upon arrival to liaise with the cavern staff.

The visitor's centre includes an exhibition area, Audio/visual presentation room and teaching/group room where we expect groups to be supervised at all times by a teacher/ assistant. There are male, female and unisex disabled toilets. There is a rock, minerals and gifts shop in the visitor centre. To avoid overcrowding, numbers are limited to the shop at any one time.

The visitor centre restaurant is open for visitors to purchase and consume food on the premises. The seating area is not available for consumption of food and drink not purchased on the premises except for exceptional circumstances.

The visitor centre buildings are equipped with fire extinguishers and a fire alarm system which is regularly maintained and tested. Should the fire alarm sound, visitors should leave by the nearest exit, clearly marked. The assembly point is at the far end of the car park.

Poole's Cavern

N.B. IT IS THE RESONSIBILITY OF THE TEACHERS AND LEADERS TO MAINTAIN DICIPLINE AND ORDER WITH IN THE GROUP UNDERGROUND.

The guide who will conduct the tour into the cave will meet the group at the exhibition area and escorts them to the cavern entrance which is 30 metres from the visitor centre. We require a minimum ratio of one adult to ten students (excluding the guide). If students with special needs or disabilities require additional assistants, these will be admitted at no extra charge.

Access to the cave from the visitor's centre is on a level path. Wheelchair users can access the cave for the first hundred metres, beyond which there is an upward slope with six steps. We do not normally allow wheelchair users to be carried or lifted up or down steps unless the staff with the group are trained to do so and provide necessary safety equipment. There are 28 steps over the length of the cavern (14 up and 14 down). The cavern path is 300 metres long and groups return the same way through the cavern.

Underground the guide expects the teachers/leaders to control the behaviour of the group. The guide has the authority to take an unruly group back to the surface if he/she considers that the group's safety may be compromised by their behaviour. At all times the guide will expect students and group leaders to adhere to any instructions which are given.

Should an accident occur underground the guide has responsibilities to all group members. Senior staff are qualified in first aid and staff will work with group leaders to take appropriate action. The nearest hospital with an accident and emergency department is one mile from Poole's Cavern.

The cave has a natural underground stream, which is fed by surface drainage. The water level does not reach the cave paths and therefore the risk of the cave flooding is negligible.

The cavern path and the chambers are illuminated as the group progresses by the guide. There is an auxiliary battery powered lighting system which will illuminate the cavern should there be a power failure. The guide also carries a torch. The cavern lights are never completely turned off but areas can be made dark for effect. If this is not required e.g. with very young groups, please inform the guide.

The cavern is equipped with an underground to surface communications system operated by staff only.

The cavern floor is constantly wet, due to the natural underground environment, therefore footwear suitable for outdoor activity is recommended. The cavern footpath is constructed of natural limestone and flagstones. There is a safety handrail through out the cavern. The temperature underground is 7°Celsius.

There are two short low areas which have warning notices, one at the entrance which is 2 metres high for 10 metres and one midway through the cave 1.8 metres for 3 metres.

For general safety reasons do not allow anyone in your group to run around the area, climb on walls; sit on tables or to discard litter.

PLAY AREA

There is currently no formal play area at Poole's Cavern. There is a grass area at the far end of the car park next to Go Ape which can be used for team games if required.

Buxton Country Park

Should an accident occur in the woodlands the Poole's Cavern visitor centre staff should be notified immediately and give a location and details of the incident. The telephone number is 01298 26978.

Senior staff are qualified in first aid and staff will work with group leaders to take appropriate action.

Poole's Cavern staff will notify the emergency services including the Mountain Rescue team. The nearest hospital with an accident and emergency department is one mile from Poole's Cavern at Buxton Cottage hospital, London Road, Buxton.

The Country Park comprises of one hundred acres of deciduous woodland on a hillside, rising to four hundred metres above sea level. Due to the nature of the terrain there is no wheelchair access.

The entry from the woods is from the car park via a flight of steps with handrails. There are many interconnecting footpaths in the woods, a woodland leaflet and map is available from the visitors centre. The main trail leads through the woodland to a stile, which leads across open grassland, which is a working farm, and may contain livestock.

At the summit is a viewing tower called Solomon's Temple, which has a spiral staircase and a handrail and is about ten metres high. The land beyond the woods and Solomon's Temple is the property of Derbyshire County Council (for details the Derbyshire County Council Ranger Service can be contacted on 01663 746222.

There are a number of orienteering routes through the woods. Groups are advised to follow the trails in small teams. Leaders should position themselves at points on the trail to monitor the group's progress and behaviour.

Go Ape high wire course

There is a Go Ape High wire adventure course in Buxton Country Park. Unless groups are taking part in this activity they should not use or handle any of the equipment or attempt to access the course. There is a viewing area from the footpath.

Grin Low Quarry

To the south of the woodland boundary is a quarry face to a caravan site, (Derbyshire County Council Property). This is well fenced and sign posted. Group leaders are expected to ensure students adhere to the countryside code, not to climb walls, damage fencing, disturb wildlife or farm stock or to pick wild flowers. Grin Low is a Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI)

Poole's Cavern complies with relevant Health and Safety law and is routinely visited by the Health and Safety Executive and local Council Inspectors. Our insurers are NFU Mutual Ltd.