

LAUREL CAVERNS

LOWER CAVING RELEASE FORM

(Everything on both pages must be read. A signature is required on page 2.)

This form is to be presented at check-in.

Be sure to carefully read each numbered “point to know.”

1. Laurel Caverns has 28 programs, only six of which require release forms.

- ★ lower caving (ages 12 & up) ● upper caving (ages 9 & up) ● climbing and rappelling
- Cave Explorer badges (ages 9 & up) ● Webelos Cave Explorer Pin
- ★ This form only applies to the LOWER CAVING program or a program involving lower caving.

2. Lower Caving has requirements for group rates, registration, and times available.

Open registration caving is available at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on every day that Laurel Caverns is open. Reservations are not required for the open registration trips. Please visit our website at www.laurelcaverns.com or call us at 724-438-3003 for further information or group rates.

3. Our cave has four zones: (1) the easy and well-lit portions of the traditional guided tour, (2) the maze of unlit but safe crawl passages off the guided tour, (3) the untouched, unlit, huge rooms below the guided tour path, and (4) the mile of untouched, unlit, forty-foot high corridors that go to the bottom of the mountain.

4. Lower Caving involves zones (1), (3), & (4) and is strenuous.

Laurel Caverns is the only developed cave in the northeast United States to offer exploring. It is Pennsylvania’s largest, with three miles of passages having over 2.5 million cubic feet of volume. Laurel Caverns has a total elevation drop of 464’, the deepest in the Commonwealth. Most of the cave is left in a natural state and it is its large, deeper, passages that necessitate this form. Be prepared for steep slopes, slippery mud, streams and hard sharp rocks. None of the lower caving passages is lighted and no conveniences exist in this section of the cave. It is just as it was a thousand years ago. As a rule of thumb, if your health prevents you from the ability to climb the steps of a multi-story building you should not engage in this program.

5. Participants must have reached their 12th birthday, no exceptions.

6. All participants must read and sign this form. Laurel Caverns cannot be responsible for illiteracy, lapses in comprehension, or an inability to read English.

7. Participants who appear under chemical influence or are resistant to rules as described in paragraph 10 will not be allowed to enter.

8. Lower caving is dangerous.

We cannot make the cave safe for those of you going into its undeveloped areas. To do this would mean complete commercialization and the idea of the exploring trip is to let you see the cave in its natural state. Accidents have occurred involving broken bones and the removal of an injured person is extremely difficult, taking as long as twelve hours. In that we cannot research each one of you we must rely on your word that you have sufficient background and physical ability to handle yourself in the cave. Please be aware that participants go into an underground area completely in its natural state and that in many places the footing is slippery, uneven, and treacherous.

9. Participants not properly prepared will not be admitted.

10. Proper preparation involves SIX things. (← very important)

1. Participants must be wearing shoes that have deep tread and reach above the ankle.
2. Participants must wear long pants and a long sleeved shirt.
3. Participants must bring their own lights. Two sources of lights which will each last two hours are required. Keychain lights are not acceptable sources of light.
4. Knapsacks will be searched. Picnic food, spray cans, weapons, and the like are prohibited.
5. Hard hats are required and Laurel Caverns will supply hard hats at no extra charge, for anyone not having his or her own hard hat.
6. This is a real caving trip involving some crawling. Bring a change of clothing!

11. Your Exploring Director has the sole task of showing you the best route through the cave’s maze and making sure you do not get lost. He or she can neither provide discipline nor medical advice.

12. It is humanly impossible for your Exploring Director to watch every movement and every step of every caving participant.

It is humanly impossible for the Laurel Caverns staff to know the physical abilities of each participant. Responsibility for such things as the tread of shoes, loose clothing, poor ankle support, medical history, physical ability, medical vulnerabilities, the brightness of lights, the fit of hard hats, discipline failures, the rocks and drops before each participant, and all other things which fall under the immediate purview of a participant must be, and in all fairness can only be, the responsibility of each participant.

13. Injuries are inevitable in caving and some have occurred in Laurel Caverns involving broken bones.

Something as simple as a twisted ankle may require a long tortuous removal process involving up to twelve hours of immobilization in a rigid basket, thirty or more rescue personnel, an ambulance ride and hospital stay at the participant’s expense, X-rays and observation at the participant’s expense, and finally, exposure to unbelievably hyped media attention on your “dramatic cave rescue.”

14. Parental signature is required for participants ages 12 through 17.

Laurel Caverns has no power to research any participant’s family situation. A signature by one parent or guardian will be treated as consent by the other, if one exists. By signing for a participant, a parent or guardian is representing that the participant is at least 12 years old and agrees to indemnify Laurel Caverns, its owners, or its agents, from a tort created by the fact that the participant is a minor at the time this release is signed. IF ONE PARENT or guardian wishes to sign this release and the second parent or guardian objects to the participant's involvement in this activity, or is unaware of the contents of this form, the first parent or guardian must not give approval for the participant.

I (we) affirm that I (we) have carefully read and understand ALL FOURTEEN of the above paragraphs of this form. I (we) understand ALL FOURTEEN of the paragraphs of this form. I (we) understand that this activity involves risks of injury and I (we) voluntarily accept and assume all such risks. I (we) will not hold Laurel Caverns, its owners, or its agents, responsible for any injuries, accidents or problems arising out of any of the matters described in the fourteen paragraphs of this form.

Participant: _____ Yes, participant has reached 12th birthday

Parent: _____ Date: _____

Print names of the above signed: _____
