

Risk Assessment and Access information for Visitors To Treak Cliff Cavern

Reviewed and Updated June 2020

Treak Cliff Cavern is located in a rural area on the side of a steep hill with 'Open Access'. Due to the natural contours of the hillside above and below ground, the cavern is not suitable for wheelchairs. Walking disabled can be accommodated and extra helpers where necessary are maybe allowed into the cavern at no charge.

All visitors should be aware that open countryside can be dangerous and can include hazards such as steep slopes, sudden drops, prickly plants, exposed weather conditions etc.

The cavern site is accessed via a public footpath and steps with handrails from the roadside car park & is exposed to all weather conditions. There are 80 steps in blocks of 4, with handrails (not barriers), and seats at intervals leading to the Cavern Entrance. The entrance is approximately 276m above sea level and the exit is approximately 306m above sea level. The car park is a gravelled area parallel with the road. Parking is free to cavern visitors. Parking on the tarmac road is in marked parking bays only, which at the current time is free. A coach turning circle is provided 500m up the road at Odin.

Disabled Access. As a general rule, if visitors are able to climb the hillside to the cavern entrance they will be able to visit inside the cavern. Information about Treak Cliff Cavern's cave formations and Blue John Stone can be seen on our website www.bluejohnstone.com.

As a result of the COVID-19 virus, tours now operate based on self-guided audio which operates digitally from visitors' smartphones. Hand sanitiser and social distancing measures are enforced along the tour route as well as on the premises of Treak Cliff including the gift shop and the site museum. Visitors are reminded consistently throughout the tour to adhere to government measures by regularly using hand sanitiser after touching hand rails and to maintain the 2 metre distance from other groups where possible. Bookings are made online in which a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 people are eligible to book on one tour group at a time. If necessary, group information can be accessed and used by Track and Trace if an outbreak occurs.

A personal loop system for people with hearing difficulties is no longer available for the guided tour due to lack of demand, however we do have available for those with hearing difficulties, laminated picture & word guides, specially produced by the Silverdale School Deaf Unit. There is reserved parking for disabled visitors.

The underground temperature is 11 degrees centigrade. There is no underground river inside Treak Cliff Cavern and therefore the risk of flooding is negligible. The entrance tunnel is low and narrow in places for 38metres. Parents using backpack baby carriers are advised to remove the baby whilst walking through the entrance tunnel. Pushchairs and prams cannot be accommodated underground but can be left in the bag area at the entrance. Inside there is a climb of 100 steps in easy stages.

There is a gradual climb down of 45 steps to see the stalactites, which must be climbed up again on the return out of the cavern. There is a shorter low tunnel to reach the outside, and a steep walk back down the exit path with the occasional step to reach the site buildings. There is the return to the car park of the original 80 steps. There are handrails (not barriers) mostly everywhere including

access paths to the toilet facilities, which also include steps. Anti-slip path covering is installed. Steps and paths inside the cavern are concrete and are always wet. Anti-slip measures are installed here also.

The cavern floor is constantly wet due to the natural underground environment; therefore suitable footwear must be worn within the Underground Area. Be aware that the most 'sensible' footwear can cause an individual to slip. Appropriate hazard warning signs are in place, and safety information is given by the audio guide during the tour. Handrails are provided throughout and visitors are advised to use them.

School Visits. Visiting Group leaders, especially those with school and educational groups are entirely responsible for the numbers and behaviour of their individuals whilst on site, including enforcing no smoking by students especially in the toilets. Inside the Cavern visitors are not allowed to leave the concrete paths/visitor route or to take any rock or mineral samples, nor to interfere with switches, locks, doors, fire extinguishers and other safety equipment. School authorities will be invoiced for damage caused by any individual from their group. A minimum of 2 adults is required with each group going underground, one of whom must be at the back to ensure people keep together.

Group leaders must be aware of the numbers of people/students they are responsible for, and they must be able to account for them in an emergency at Treak Cliff Cavern site. If anyone leaves the tour before the end, they MUST inform the guide, and report to the entrance area back at the surface.

Underground, the guide expects the teachers/leaders to control the behaviour of their students/group members. The guide has full authority to take an unruly group back to the surface at any stage of the tour. Should an accident occur, the guide has responsibilities to all the tour members. The guide shall work with group leaders to take appropriate action. Common sense will prevail throughout.

Treak Cliff Cavern has safety procedures that are carried out by staff in the event of power failure or other emergency.

To avoid overcrowding, for visitor comfort and to allow students to carry out written work and to hold handrails whilst underground, bags/rucksacks should be left in designated areas at the cavern entrance, entirely at their owner's risk. Valuables such as money and cameras should not be left in the bags. During school visits we try to limit the number of students in the shop at any one time to avoid overcrowding and we request that school bags are not taken into the shop. Group leaders are expected to supervise their students in the shop.

For general safety reasons do not allow anyone in your group to climb on walls, sit on the tables, run around in the entrance area and especially not to run down the exit paths.

Dogs are welcome in the Cavern on a lead and Photography is permitted.

Treak Cliff Cavern complies fully with all relevant health and safety laws and is routinely visited by HSE and local council inspectors.

If you have any further questions please call any day 01433 621487 10am to 3pm.

We look forward to welcoming you to Treak Cliff Cavern, Castleton.