

LAUREL CAVERNS

LOWER CAVING RELEASE FORM

(A signature is required at end of form.)

Be sure to carefully read each numbered "point to know."

1. Laurel Caverns has 28 programs, only four of which require release forms.
 - upper caving (ages 9 & up) •lower caving (ages 12 & up)
 - Adventure Sports Badge (ages 9 & up) •climbing and rappelling (ages 12 & up)

This form only applies to the LOWER CAVING program.
2. Lower Caving has requirements for group rates, registration, and the like. Open registration caving is available at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on every Saturday and Sunday Laurel Caverns is open. Reservations are not required for the open registration trips. Groups of six or more may enter on other days with prepayment and ten days advance arrangements. Please visit our website at www.laurelcaverns.com or call us at 724-438-3003 for further information.
3. Our cave has four zones: (1) the easy and well-lit portions of the traditional guided tour, (2) the untouched 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 that offers 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 45-story building you should not engage in this program
5. Participants must have reached their 12th birthday, no exceptions.
6. Participants under 18 must have a parent or legal guardian sign this form in addition to the participant.
7. Participants who appear under chemical influence or are resistant to rules 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 FIVE things. (very important) **1. Participants must be wearing shoes with good tread and good ankle support. 2. Participants should wear long pants and a long sleeved shirt. 3. Participants must bring their own lights. Two sources of lights are required, no keychain lights, please. 4. Knapsacks will be searched. Picnic food and weapons 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.**

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 some have occurred in Laurel Caverns even 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 for 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 will be taken as consent by all involved. IF ONE PARENT CONTESTS APPROVAL, OR IS IGNORANT OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS FORM, THE OTHER PARENT OR GUARDIAN MUST NOT GIVE APPROVAL.

I (we) affirm that I (we) have carefully read and understand ALL FOURTEEN of the above points and that I (we) will neither hold Laurel Caverns, nor its owners, nor its agents responsible for the any problem or injury due to anything covered in the above fourteen points.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Parent: _____ Birthdate (if under 18): _____

Please present this form when you check in.