

Imperial College Caving Club Guide for Freshers



Clothing: You will have been issued with a one-piece fleece body warmer. The material is designed to stay as warm as possible when wet. For this reason, we recommend that you wear just (preferably non-cotton) underwear underneath. A wet cotton t-shirt will make you significantly colder than having no t-shirt at all. The changing conditions are also somewhat exposed & the cave mud soon stains everything brown – choose underwear accordingly! For trips in the winter, you will probably want to acquire a pair of polyester thermals.

Food: We buy food as a group to cook together – for weekend trips we generally produce a fried breakfast in the mornings (the only way to squeeze in enough calories to go caving!), have a small snack for lunch while in the cave (i.e. A chocolate bar or two), and then cook a communal meal once back at the hut. Daytrips are generally a bit more ad-hoc; check your email to see what's being organised. A bit of cash is useful for motorway service stations on the journey, and in case a group gets stranded in a tea-shop while waiting for the others to finish caving! £10-15 should be ample.

What will it be like?: Your first trip will be in a 'horizontal' cave, where mostly one gets around by clambering around & walking along passages. The leaders will try and point out interesting sights – but don't forget to look around yourself, it's difficult to remember what it was like to first see a Stalagmite!

For a lot of cavers, the real excitement comes when you start tackling vertical caves with the use of Single Rope Technique – abseiling down waterfalls & so on. So if your first trip lacks the adrenaline rush you were looking for, it's still worthwhile coming on an SRT weekend later in the term...

Safety: Even relatively minor injuries (such as a sprained ankle) can have serious repercussions underground due to the difficulty of rescue. Above all, **you** are responsible for your own safety; if you have concerns about what you are expected to do – talk to the leader. Not everyone has the same size legs or the same strength, and though we try and plan routes at a suitable difficulty and assess people's progress, you must always consider what you're capable of.

After a caving trip, you should expect to be very tired & feel it in your muscles – if you don't feel suitably stretched on your first trip, make sure you go with the more challenging trip on the Sunday!

Hypothermia: If you feel yourself getting chilly it is absolutely essential that you take steps to stay warm and **TELL THE LEADER**. This may seem a trivial matter, but one can very easily slip from 'a bit cold' to hypothermic. Similarly; do not get unnecessarily wet, avoid sweating by undoing your suit when moving around, but don't forget to fasten everything up when you stop to avoid getting cold! All simple common sense stuff – but it will make your trip far more enjoyable & safer.

Enjoy your trip with ICCC; and if there's anything you're curious or unsure about – ASK!
We were all novice cavers not so very long ago...