

What Scouts Are About to Experience

Your scouts are about to step into one of the most historic caverns in the United States—where thousands of years of history, science, and adventure come together in one place.

This cave has been:

- Used by Native Americans for shelter and sacred purposes
- Explored during early expeditions in the Southeast
- Recorded in 1796 as the first cave in the United States
- Mined during the Civil War for gunpowder
- Even used during Prohibition as an underground gathering place

Before your visit, you might ask your scouts:

- “If you could step into one time period in this cave, which would it be?”
- “Would you rather be an explorer, a Native American living off the land, or someone visiting during the Civil War?”
- “What do you think life would have been like in this space without electricity?”

👉 Let them begin imagining the experience before they arrive.

This helps the cave feel like more than a place—it becomes a story they’re stepping into.

What Scouts Should Wear & Bring

To help your scouts have the best experience possible:

For all visits:

- ✓ Closed-toe shoes with good traction
- ✓ Comfortable clothing for walking and exploring
- ✓ Light jacket (the cave stays around 60° year-round)
- ✓ Water bottle

Important for Overnight Groups:

The cave stays around **60 degrees**, which feels comfortable while walking—but much cooler when resting or sleeping.

👉 Encourage scouts to bring:

- Warm layers for sleeping
- Sweatshirts or hoodies
- Comfortable sleepwear suitable for cooler temperatures

A helpful way to explain it:

“If you think about what temperature you set your thermostat to (or your parent does) at night... this will likely feel cooler than that.”

If participating in attractions:

- ✓ Towel or change of clothes (especially for water activities)
- ✓ Clothes that can get a little messy during adventure play

Set Expectations Before You Go

Respect the Environment

Talk about:

- This is a place that has been around for thousands of years
- Many people have come before us—and many will come after

- We take care of places like this by being respectful and aware

You might say:

👉 “We are guests in a place that has been here long before us.”

Stay Together & Follow Guidance

Set the tone for safety and leadership:

- Stay with your group
- Listen to your leaders and guides
- Be aware of your surroundings

👉 Frame it as:

“This is how we take care of each other.”

Be Observant & Curious

Encourage scouts to:

- Look closely at details
- Ask questions
- Notice things others might miss

You might challenge them:

👉 “Try to notice something today that no one else in your group sees.”

Encourage One Another

Set a culture of teamwork:

- Help someone who is unsure or nervous
- Celebrate others when they try something new
- Stick together as a team

👉 Give them a mission:

“Find at least one person today that you can encourage or help.”

Be Willing to Try Something New

Some parts of the day may feel unfamiliar.

That's part of the experience.

👉 Tell them:

“Growth happens when we try things we’ve never done before.”

Pre-Trip Talking Points

What Will It Feel Like?

- Do you think it will feel cold or comfortable inside the cave?
 - Will it feel different than being outside?
 - Do you think it will be quiet... or echo?
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What Will It Be Like Underground?

- Do you think you'll feel excited... or a little unsure at first?
 - What do you think it will be like being in a space with no natural sunlight?
 - Do you think it will feel big and open, or tight and enclosed?
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Step Into History

- If you lived hundreds of years ago, how would you use a cave like this?
- Why do you think people chose caves for shelter or gathering?
- Which time period do you feel most connected to—and why?

👉 Tell them:

“I’m going to ask you after the trip which part of history you connected with most.”

Observation Challenge

- What do you think you'll notice first?
 - What are you hoping to see or experience?
 - What would make you say, "Wow, I didn't expect that"?
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Personal Challenge

- What is something you want to try that you've never done before?
 - What might push you outside your comfort zone?
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Teamwork Focus

- What does it look like to be a good teammate on this trip?
- How can you help someone else have a great experience?