

Underground Tour

Hands-On Tour

In order for your class to make the most of their visit underground we suggest that each accompanying adult read these notes carefully before your visit.

Before going underground

The underground tours at the Museum will take you through genuine former underground workings at Caphouse Colliery. The following rules are for the safety of you and your group, as well as for that of our other visitors and staff.

- **Make sure you arrive at the lamp room at least 5 minutes before your tour is due to start.** Your tour will last about 1 hour and 20 minutes, including time taken to put on cap-lamps and hard-hats. If you miss your tour, you may lose your slot.
- **Remember that there are no toilets in the lamp room or underground.** Teachers are advised to make time for a comfort break before going to the lamp room.
- **Each tour will be led by an experienced miner-guide.** Stay with your guide at all times. It is essential that group-leaders supervise their pupils whilst underground.
If a guide feels that the behaviour of a group is threatening their own safety or that of our other visitors or staff, they will be brought to the surface immediately.
- **There is a maximum of 17 children in each tour group** and each tour should be accompanied by at least two adults from the school (including teachers, classroom assistants or parent helpers).
- **No contraband is allowed underground.** This includes all items with batteries such as watches, cameras, mobile phones, mp3 players, flashing shoes, portable electronic games, central-locking key-fobs, etc. Also, there are no smoking-related items permitted underground, including matches and lighters.
Schools are advised to discourage pupils from bring these items, or to leave them on the coach or in lockable storage cupboards whilst you are underground.
- **Sensible clothing and footwear is strongly advised.** This is a former industrial site and underground roadways can be uneven. The temperature underground is a cool 12°C all year-round; in summer this will feel quite cold. Flashing trainers and shoes are not permitted underground.

Organising your group

In order for your group to make the most of their interactive underground experience, we hope that school staff will assist the miner-guide in facilitating some of the interactive exhibits.

Many of the underground activities happen in sets of threes. Please have your tour-group split into 3 roughly equal smaller groups before going underground. Although you will always be together, it will save time when dividing up the activities underground.

Introductory activities

The Cage

The ride in the cage to get underground takes a few minutes. It starts with a slight jolt and will be dark. It can sometimes feel a little crowded, but doesn't last too long. Younger or more sensitive pupils may need a little reassurance.

Pit Bottom

The guide will talk about ventilation in mines and will point out the emergency exit, via the drift.

Furnace Shaft

You will get the chance to look 140m up the shaft to the glass ceiling in the lamp room. The guide will talk about the history and use of the furnace shaft.

Choose from the following interactive areas:

Nineteenth-Century Family Area

The guide will talk about families working together. Everyone will be asked to turn their lights out to show how dark it is. Adults should assist pupils in doing this.

Nineteenth-Century Working Life

After a brief introduction, pupils will be divided into groups of 3 and asked to 'mine' coal. They will need to use shovels to load the coal into the woven corves and then move the coal through a ventilation door.

Horse & Pony Stabling

Pupils take on some of the roles required to look after horses in the underground stables: feeding the horses, 'mucking-out' the stalls and harnessing the model pony. Pupils will need to be in groups of 3 to do different activities. If time permits the groups may rotate. Adults will need to supervise the groups.

Lamp Relighting Station

The guide will use a cap-lamp to demonstrate several different types of historical lighting. Adults should help children switch off their cap-lamps. Using our coal tub interactives pupils will work in groups of 3 to investigate how light moves in straight lines. Pupils will also explore how coloured light can be filtered by using their cap-lamps to illuminate signs and read a secret message. Adults will need to assist the groups.

Geology Area

The guide will use exposed rock strata, including coal and mudstone to begin the demonstrations. There is a jigsaw of strata for the whole group to attempt and sets of rocks for pupils to identify. The guide will also demonstrate how sediments settle. In their 3 groups, pupils can identify a set of rocks, fossils or coal. If time permits the groups may rotate. Adults will need to assist the groups.

Machinery demonstration

The guide will work a compressed-air powered haulage machine to show how compressed-air could power machinery underground. This gives an authentic insight into the noisy working environment of a mine.

Return to Pit-Bottom

Your group will walk back to the pit-bottom, before ascending in the cage to the surface.