



School Visit Information Pack

So you're thinking of bringing your school to the Heights of Abraham? That's fantastic! We have put together this useful guide for you to ensure that you know everything that there is to know about making a visit to the Heights with your school.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to email us at office@heightsofabraham.com or phone us on 01629 582365.

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Familiarise Yourself

We can only begin to imagine the planning and co-ordination that goes into booking a school trip, and we want to make the process as easy as possible for you. Therefore, we offer a complimentary familiarisation ticket for you and one other teacher to scope out the site before you come so you can plan your day down to the last detail.

Please contact office@heightsofabraham.com to arrange your pre-visit.

Booking Your Trip

We take bookings via our [website](#), fill in the booking form on the page. Once this has been filled in, we will review your booking and input it into our system. We will then send you a confirmation email with your booking details attached. We accept payment on the day or by invoice afterwards. We do not take deposits, just in case your numbers change, we don't want you to be out of pocket. Once you have booked, our school bookings co-ordinator will be your direct point of contact for any questions you may have.

How It Works

A trip to the Heights of Abraham is a self-led trip, with the school staff leading their class around the estate and supervising activities. This is across all aspects of the visit except the cavern tours; where the group is taken underground by a cavern guide, who will tell the history of the caverns through talks and visual demonstrations. The school staff are responsible for the children whilst underground, and the guide leads the way. The children are not left alone with the guide at any time.

Before the visit, we ask that the school arranges the children into groups of 5 plus 1 adult for the cable car journey. This helps speed up the boarding process on the day.

The day is flexible and schools are welcome to do the activities we provide in any order they choose- with exception of the cable car which is the first and last part of the visit. A suggested itinerary is available to view on page X. School teachers are encouraged to indicate a favourable time for the cavern tours at the point of booking the trip.

Our school bookings co-ordinator will be in touch the week before to firm up the details of the trip and check for any last-minute changes.

Risk Assessments

School staff are welcome to make their own risk assessment as a result of their pre-visit. Alternatively, we do have an Educational Visits Risk Assessment available on our website for you to download, which covers all areas of a visit, from the cable cars to the cavern tours, playgrounds and general site safety.

Worksheets

We have been working alongside local teachers to produce some brand-new worksheets and learning resources which we encourage you to download from our website and use pre, during or post visit.

These worksheets and resources all have learning objectives that are linked to the National Curriculum. Some of the worksheets are available for different abilities of student- either assisted learning, partially assisted or not assisted.

Please contact the school bookings co-ordinator for more information on the worksheets available.

Getting Here

Most schools tend to visit us by coach or minibus. There is coach and minibus parking in the Matlock Bath train station car park. The car park is run by the council so there is a cost of £5.50 per 3 hours of parking for coaches. There are nine coach bays. The coach driver is welcome to come along and enjoy the visit too, their ticket is complimentary.

Alternatively, if possible, your school could travel by train. It is a much cheaper way to travel compared to getting a coach, and group rates are available on the train when you book in advance, meaning you could save up to 26% on train tickets. The trains run hourly with a direct line running from Nottingham, through Derby and the Amber Valley before arriving at Matlock Bath.

We have a direct access walkway from Matlock Bath train station to the Heights cable car base station, which takes no more than 5 minutes to walk to, either from the coach park or getting off the train. Simply follow the signs from the station or the coach park, walk along the river towards the cable cars, head under the railway bridge, and you'll find our ticket office. There is a single toilet at the cable car station if needed.

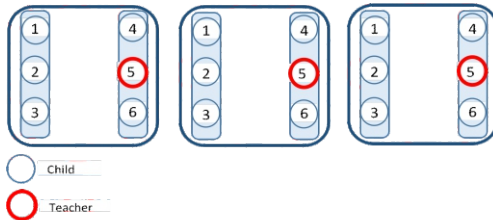
Boarding the Cable Cars

Once you arrive, we kindly ask that the trip organiser or one member of staff make themselves known at the ticket office and ask the rest of the teachers/adults and children to make their way to the queuing pens where they will be met by a member of the cable car team. This is where you can organise yourselves into your pre-organised groups of 6 ready for loading into the cabins.

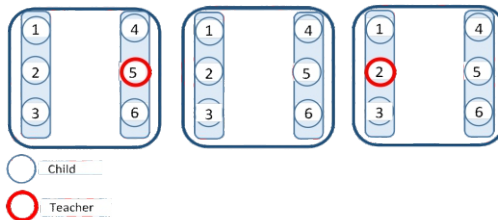
The trip organiser will hand the booking confirmation in at the ticket office where they will be asked to confirm numbers and finalise any payments.

There are 3 suggested options when organising children into groups, depending on the age of the children and your own risk assessment. These have been designed to get everyone to the top as quickly and as safely as possible and reducing the children's waiting time. It is up to you which you choose to do, the Heights of Abraham is not responsible for the choice of boarding option.

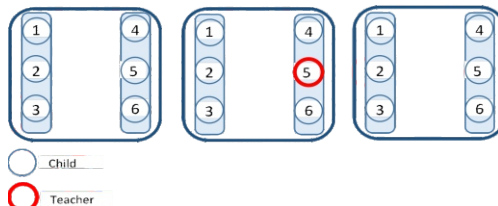
Option 1 (Pre-school and key stage 1)



Option 2 (recommended for key stage 2)



Option 3 (recommended for key stage 3 and above)



Timings

The cable cars take around 7 minutes to reach the summit. They come in four sets of three. There's never any longer than three minutes wait between each set. Depending on the size of your group, this could mean that it may take up to half an hour to get the whole group to the summit. For groups of 30 or less, it may only take around 15 minutes to get the group to the summit.



The cable cars ascending Masson Hill

Cavern Timings

Once you arrive at the summit, there is a wealth of attractions to see. Most schools like taking their children on a guided cavern tour. In busy periods, these tours can run every 15 minutes. In quieter periods they run every half hour. The Masson Cavern tour takes 35 minutes to complete so we suggest factoring this into your timings for the day. The Great Rutland Cavern tour is shorter and takes around 25 minutes to complete.



A guided tour in the Rutland Cavern

Usually, we will arrange a tour time prior to your visit, but this can be discussed on the day if you're not sure.

Other Activities

There are two adventure playgrounds that you might like to allow the children some free time to play on- perhaps half an hour or so. We have exhibitions on site too- the Long View is about social history, and the High Falls Film Theatre shows short films about the construction of the cable cars, and the natural creation of the caverns. Our newest exhibition is a period costume exhibition showcasing reproductions of what visitors would have worn to the Heights on their day out, between 1787 and 1920. These exhibitions take between 5 and 15 minutes each to explore.

The Victoria Prospect Tower, built in 1844, is also a popular attraction to visit here. On a busy day, this tower can get full very quickly and may require queueing. Once at the top of the tower, you needn't spend any longer than 5 minutes up there.

All together, we suggest allowing 3-4 hours for a visit.

A Typical Itinerary

You are free to do the day in any order that you'd like to, we understand some schools only make a 'flying' visit, whereas some spend the entire day with us. Depending on your curriculum, if you're short for time we suggest cutting time spent in the exhibitions, and only doing one cavern tour.

10:00 - 10:30

Arrive at the Matlock Bath train station car park, by coach or train, and head to the cable car ticket office and base station. Allow time to visit the loo before boarding the cable car if necessary.

10:30 - 11:00

Take the children up on the cable cars. This could take 15 minutes with a small group (30 or less) and half an hour for a bigger group.

11:00 - 11:45

Take a guided tour down into the Great Masson Cavern. The tour is around 35 minutes, and you'll need to allow 10 minutes to walk back to the main site afterwards.

12:00 - 13:00

Free time for lunch and playing on the adventure playgrounds. Time here also for purchasing souvenirs.

13:00 - 13:30

Head down to the Great Rutland Cavern for a Victorian guided tour. This tour takes 25 minutes, allow 10 minutes for walking back up the hill.

13:45 - 14:00

Visit the Victoria Prospect Tower, built in 1844 with a 360 degree view of the Derbyshire Dales at the top.

14:00 - 14:30

Visit the two exhibitions on site.

14:30 - 15:00

Head back down on the cable cars and back to the coach or train.

Cable Car Learning

The main purpose of boarding the cable car is for transportation to the 60-acre hilltop park, where the cavern tours, exhibitions and facilities are located. The cable car is also a fun, memorable and unique experience for children of all ages.

However, the cable cars also present an opportunity to learn about design, technology, innovation, transport and science too.

If you are planning to offer pre-visit lessons based around the Heights of Abraham, you may find it useful to show your class a snippet of a television programme on BBC iPlayer named 'Maddie's Do You Know'. Maddie Moate (presenter) visited the Heights in 2021 and filmed the cable car as part of her show. The resulting video is a great introduction to cable cars for children. Maddie explains how the cable cars work and the main functions of the system.

You may then find it useful to download our Cable Car - How It Works worksheet for your class to show what they have learnt from watching the video.

Once you are here on your visit, we also recommend heading to the Film Theatre to watch the exciting video on how the cable cars were built and installed. This 15 minute film tells the story of the daring engineers who first installed the cable car in 1984, and explains the reason behind the cable cars being here in Matlock Bath.

Aside from technology, the cable cars also provide a unique almost 'birds eye view' on the world, so some schools use the cable cars as an opportunity to get their children to imagine what it is like to be a bird, as part of a nature topic.



Maddie Moate presenting her show, series 5 episode 2.



A photograph of the daring engineers installing the tower pylon by helicopter in 1984.

Exhibitions

We have two historical exhibitions which both give a good context about the 230 year story of the Heights of Abraham. **The LongView** exhibition is more literal, giving a history timeline of Matlock Bath from the 1700s early visitors, who visited Matlock Bath for the thermal waters, the famous faces who visited during the 1800s, right through to the 1980s when the cable car was installed. The purpose of a visit to this exhibition is to understand the historical relevance of Matlock Bath as a tourist destination.

The second exhibition, **A Mirror on the Past**, gives a timeline of the clothes that visitors to the Heights would have worn on their day out. The purpose of the exhibition from a learning perspective is to identify differences in time periods and also social classes as to what they may have worn. For example, there is an interpretation of what a working class miner family would have worn, and the wealthy Georgian tourists who would have visited their mines at the time. Linked to the period costume exhibition is a worksheet which is free to download, with the learning objective to draw contrasts between two different lifestyles of a certain time period.

Victoria Prospect Tower

The Victoria Prospect Tower is one of the first purpose built tourist attractions in the UK. The tower was built in 1844 to celebrate the reign of Queen Victoria. The tower is accessed by a spiral staircase and gives a 360 degree view of Derbyshire from the top. The real purpose of the tower was to entice tourists in the village to walk up to the Heights of Abraham. One of the old owners of the Heights used to light fireworks from the top to evoke curiosity from tourists below.

Some schools use the tower as a historical activity, asking their children to imagine being a tourist in Victorian England, climbing the steps. Other schools use it as a 'birds eye view' activity and incorporate a nature topic into their visit.



The Victoria Prospect Tower



Differing period costumes shown inside the Mirror on the Past exhibition.

Two Guided Cavern Tours

Taking a trip underground is always an exciting prospect for children (and adults too!). Our two show caverns are often a highlight of a trip to the Heights. These tours are included in the cost of the trip.

We do try to take schools down on a separate tour to the general public, however this is subject to visitor numbers on the day. Our welcome host will meet you at the summit and discuss timings with you and see if it is possible to take your school down on a separate tour. You can pre-arrange a time by emailing jess@heightsofabraham.com if you'd rather.

Tours can be adapted to different age groups and abilities and can be made to focus on certain elements such as geology or history on request.

The Great Rutland Cavern

The Great Rutland Cavern tour is the shorter of the two tours and takes around 25 minutes. The cavern is located on the lower half of the site. This tour focuses more on the topic of History.

In this tour, you are taken underground around by a Victorian Cavern Guide! Our guides will tell your class their story of how they ended up working for the Heights of Abraham, what tools the miners used to extract the lead, the fantastical entertainment that was put on in Victorian times to entertain guests, wondrous geological formations, and more stories of the underground world.

The learning approach used here is immersive roleplay, with the learning objective being to improve listening skills and for the students to use what they have learnt to answer questions, therefore also developing confidence and questioning skills. Our guide will ask for participants to hold certain historical items and explain what they were used for.



A tour in the Great Rutland Cavern, led by Victorian guide Samuel Croft.



Victorian guide Joseph explaining the Rutland Cavern Rules.



Eliza the Victorian guide exiting the cavern by lantern light.

The Great Masson Cavern

The Great Masson Cavern tour is the longer tour of the two and takes around 35 minutes to complete. These tours run every 15-20 minutes. There are 175 steps on this tour, so it's a good work out! The topic focus in this cavern is geography, geology (fossils) and an element of history.

During the tour pupils will be informed about lead mining practices, fossilisation in the carboniferous period, the history of the lead mines and the formation of rocks and natural caverns. There are always a couple of cheesy jokes thrown in too!

The tour ends with a beautiful lighting display, telling the history of how the Victorians used to light the cave and how we have updated this for 21st Century visitors. The cavern guide does turn all the lights off at one point, but they will warn your class of this before they do it.

The learning approach is experiential, with students taking in their natural surroundings and understanding from the talk given by the guide how these surroundings came to be. If you have any specific topics or learning objectives you'd like to cover, please let the school bookings co-ordinator know in advance and our guides will aim to adapt the tour to this specific topic. Our guide will also ask questions throughout the tour to ensure listening skills are being used.

A quiz style worksheet is available to download and print before your visit for the children to fill in. We recommend you bring clip-boards and pens if you wish to download this worksheet.



A tour group enjoying the lighting display in the Great Masson Cavern.



Cavern guide, Kaleb, showing a group the fossilised sea creatures in the cavern roof.

Remember, if you are on a tight schedule it is best to reserve your cavern tour time in advance by contacting the school bookings co-ordinator
jess@heightsofabraham.com

Living History

Meet Mrs Brassington, she is a Victorian visitor to the Heights of Abraham. She often interacts with our school parties to give them her Victorian perspective on the world, and her comments on the 'workhouse' children are often well received. The purpose of speaking to Mrs Brassington during a visit is to gather understanding of a historical period, through the learning approach of roleplay. We also have the Victorian owner of the Heights, Benjamin Bryan in residence too, you may spot him on your visit.



Mrs Brassington the Victorian visitor.

Lunchtime

Most schools bring a packed lunch with them, and we have many picnic sites across the estate. You can reserve the Woodland Corner by emailing jess@heightsofabraham.com. We can store lunch boxes in our cold room, please ask at the Gift Shop if you'd like to use this facility.



The Woodland Corner, one of our two sheltered picnic areas.

We do have a café to purchase hot drinks and snacks (including cakes and hot food) for teachers and adults in the group. This café does get quite busy in peak periods, so we do advise that time is allowed for potential queuing. There is also a mobile catering unit selling drinks if there is a large queue in the café.

There is also an ice cream kiosk if children (and adults) wish to purchase an ice cream.



The Pergola, our second sheltered picnic area. The Pergola cannot be reserved.

Souvenirs

We have two gift shops that stock a range of pocket money souvenirs and toys for children. One is a rock themed shop selling minerals, gemstones and different rock themed souvenirs. The other is a general gift shop selling stationery, keyrings, small toys and other typical souvenirs.

You may like to advise that your pupils bring a small amount of pocket money with them to purchase a memento of their day out. We would recommend between £3.00 and £10.00.

Toilets and Facilities

We have three toilet blocks on site. One located at the summit by the Masson Cavern, one in the visitor centre next to the Café, and one located on the lower half of the site by the Rutland Cavern. The toilet blocks aren't huge, with each holding up to 4 toilets per male/female block and one accessible toilet per block. We recommend you do toilet runs in small groups of 4.

There is also a small portaloos toilet by the base station just in case anyone needs to use it before boarding the cable cars.

There is a water bottle filling station located just as you arrive at the summit which we encourage you to use instead of using the sinks in the toilets. We can also refill water bottles for you at the Tavern, next to the Rutland Cavern.

Health and Safety

We want your school to have a great and memorable day out with us, however we understand that teachers need to do a lot of pre-visit health and safety assessments. We have put together a risk assessment to help you with your plans.

The Heights of Abraham was built over 230 years ago for the enjoyment of Georgian tourists. When the show caverns opened up in the 1800s, the ex-miners didn't take into account the needs of 21st Century visitors. Some areas of the grounds are steep and uneven, so you may need to keep your class under close supervision to avoid any scrapes and scratches!

Accidents do happen no matter how hard you try to avoid them, so we have several trained first aiders on site to help you when an incident occurs. Our risk assessment can be downloaded from our website on the school visits page. This covers every aspect of the site including the cable cars, the caverns and the grounds.

Accessibility

Due to the nature of our estate, not all areas are accessible. The Masson Cavern tour is not accessible due to the steps involved, but we do have a film showing the tour which can be seen in the High Falls film theatre. The steep slopes on site do also present an accessibility challenge. If you are bringing a disabled child, especially one with mobility disabilities, we highly recommend you read the accessibility statement on our website, or get in touch prior to the visit and we can plan the day with you.