

Student Caving Trip Options in the Yorkshire Dales

This is a document detailing various caving trips that are useful to know about when planning caving weekends or day trips in the Yorkshire Dales. It does not attempt to replace the excellent guides that are available in several other sources, which are listed below. These guides should be your first port of call to gain greater insight into the exact details of the route finding, pitch rigging etc involved in a given trip. The aim of this document is to outline, in a readable and distilled way, the relative suitability of a given caving trip to the highly variable circumstances that a student caving group in need of a caving trip may find themselves operating under.

The document contains 40 caving trips from across the Dales. Of these, 10 either require no rigging of pitches or if there are pitches they are commonly descended by using ladder and line, without employing SRT. The rest of the trips require SRT knowledge, or require a lot of ladder and line (I tried to get some students to do Bar Pot on ladders once: it was not a success, but 10 years before this was commonly done by student cavers in my club so this was probably because of me rather than the ladders). Six of the trips are commonly undertaken in wet weather (not to say that they may not be hazardous); the rest have passages that are hazardous in wet weather to varying degrees. There is some overlap between caves with no SRT and caving trips that can be undertaken in most weather conditions; these trips often have a substantial route-finding component. This complexity is part of the joy of caving and is what makes it an adventurous sport. No trip listed is completely novice-friendly all of the time, and in any case if that trip existed it might be quite boring.

No attempt is made to describe a given caving trip in detail, though particular difficulties involved in completing a given trip are given. It is assumed that all trips being undertaken involve a group with an experienced leader and competent second accompanying less experienced student cavers as a minimum. The leader and second are assumed to have the necessary skill and experience to select a trip sensibly (with the help of the planning resources listed below); to be able to equip the team and rig the cave appropriately and safely; to be able to make informed and sensible decisions in the cave environment and, most importantly, to recognise their own strengths and limitations and make good decisions based upon these.

If you, or any of your team, begin to feel uncomfortable or as if you are losing control of a situation, stop, rationalise the situation and consider an appropriate response. In some cases, this may be turning round and going back to the hut. There is no shame in this. Additionally, seeking advice from others those in your caving club (or other cavers in the caving hut you are staying in) who have a higher level of experience than yourself is always encouraged. If you have doubts about any aspect of a trip's suitability or safety, consider a different objective. Even if that objective is a walk to the pub.

And when planning a trip, always remember: the way out is usually more tiring than the way in...

Cave Ratings for Trip Planning

The caves in the guide are 'rated' according to three categories that student cavers should always consider when planning trips. These are:

- susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions;
- SRT difficulty;
- route finding difficulty.

The reason for including these is to allow cavers who are not very familiar with Dales caves to compare caving trips easily and to help cavers select trips suitable for themselves and others. However, it is extremely important that you consider information from other resources such as caving guidebooks and the CNCC web resources very carefully to better inform your decision. The numbers are intended to be a user-friendly way of highlighting the key difficulties involved with a particular caving trip, not a one-stop summary to rely on for all trip planning. Every cave has unique challenges that such a numbering system cannot describe. In some ways, this is an evolved interpretation of the original grading system for caves (read, for example, the introduction to Northern Caves for an explanation of this grading system).

Roughly speaking, the numbering system should be interpreted as follows:

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions

1: Possible to complete the trip safely in most weather conditions. This does not mean you should not be aware of the expected weather conditions prior to and during the trip, or that very extreme weather will not make the trip unsafe.

2 - 3: Although the cave is regarded as commonly not affected by adverse weather, the situations found in the cave would be made much more serious by adverse weather. This is particularly the case in caves where SRT is required: the way water moves through caves is very variable, so during extreme weather events, water may be present where it is not usually, creating serious hazards if you are on the rope under the flow of this water. Worth consulting someone more experienced in Dales caving about your trip choice if the weather is bad.

3 - 4: the cave has passages which are known to flood in wet weather. So although in stable weather such passages are not a noticeable obstacle, in even moderately wet weather the risks posed by them are exponentially more severe. Good examples of this are the passages of Ease Gill Main Drain and Kingsdale Master Cave. Definitely consult someone more experienced in Dales caving about visiting these caves if the weather is bad.

5: the cave is very wet and many passages will flood badly in wet weather. A wetsuit may be suitable for such a trip. No trips of this grade are listed; an example would be Penyghent Pot.

SRT difficulty

0 - 1: one or two short (< 20 ft) pitches which are regularly accessed with no tackle or by using ladder and line, though SRT could be used instead if preferred. Possibly some free climbs where a handline may be advisable. Suitable for novice cavers.

2: a couple of simple single-drop pitches with traverse lines at the pitch heads, usually with no flowing water, of moderate length. SRT is easily supervised by experienced members of the party at key points. Suitable for newer cavers who have demonstrated SRT proficiency indoors before.

3: multiple pitches which may contain technically easy rebelay (not hanging rebelay) and deviations. Water may be a hazard to safe SRT practice in wet weather. Suitable for newer cavers who have demonstrated SRT proficiency in caves before.

4: multiple pitches which may contain multiple rebelay, hanging rebelay and technical deviations, and which are hazardous in wet weather. All of the group should be self-sufficient in SRT if attempting these caves.

5: similar to 4, but the cave is wetter and the pitches often deeper. A more serious undertaking.

Route finding difficulty

1: the trip is largely linear or mostly on rope, following a streamway to its conclusion. If you get lost in here then you were perhaps drunk or trying to become lost on purpose.

2: there is potential for getting lost if hungover, but reversing the route taken should be pretty straightforward even if you have failed to pay attention on the way in.

3: there are a few key junctions where if the wrong turn is taken and it is not quickly noticed there is potential for getting very lost and pushing your callout time. However, if you have a good route description and survey and pay attention to them then this shouldn't happen.

4: there are many junctions where if the wrong turn is taken and it is not quickly noticed there is potential for getting very lost and pushing your callout time. You will need to consult the route description very regularly and navigation will consume a large amount of the trip if you are visiting the cave for the first time or have an especially shit memory.

5: a very long and complex route where it's a good idea to carry a route description even if you have done the trip before several times and think you know the way. None of these trips are listed; an example would be the Ease Gill Traverse.

Resources for Planning Trips: Cave Descriptions

CNCC Website Route Descriptions

<https://cncc.org.uk/caving/>

These descriptions are your go-to when looking for easily accessible, online, user-friendly descriptions for trips in Yorkshire. Route descriptions and rigging topos are specific to a particular trip. This specificity is extremely useful for getting an idea of what exactly you will be doing in a particular trip and is much more readily usable for navigation, but also has its limitations. All of the trips given here have descriptions and (where appropriate) rigging topos available on the CNCC website, unless it explicitly states otherwise. Simply search the name of your desired trip in the top search bar.

Northern Caves, Volumes 1 - 3

These books are still the bibles of Yorkshire caving. Always worth consulting to check what a cave is actually like to be in. A description of the cave as you find it rather than how to navigate a particular trip. The guide for the area around the Three Counties System (formerly Northern Caves 3) has been updated to include SRT rope lengths and descriptions of newer parts of the system.

Not For The Faint Hearted

Although marketed as a book for 'harder' Yorkshire caves, this book has some fantastic route descriptions of more student-friendly caves and caving routes, particularly in Easegill.

Weather monitoring

Cave systems in the Yorkshire Dales can respond **VERY** rapidly to rainfall in a dramatic and dangerous way. For example, water levels in Lancaster Hole Main Drain in Ease Gill Caverns regularly rise by over 20 m within a few hours to fill the floor of Fall Pot if rainfall is heavy and in even more biblical conditions have been observed to rise over 20 m above this.

Avoid wet caves in unsettled weather: if it's brown, don't go down!

Check the Met Office website or app regularly (every hour!) before undertaking your trip:

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

Good locations to search for: Ease Gill (for Three Counties System), Whernside (for Kingsdale), Ingleborough (for Gaping Gill and caves nearby), Penyghent (for caves further east). You can also get an idea of current water levels by looking through present and past webcam footage of the river level at Horton-in-Ribblesdale: <https://webcam.io/webcams/zKaEg9/day>

Weather fronts in the Dales often move from west to east (the rain falls on the hills instead of towns further east such as Skipton or Leeds). So bear this in mind when looking at forecasts.

Conditions can change very quickly. If you have any doubts about the suitability of a caving trip to the current and forecasted weather conditions, you can contact one of the committee for advice on whether a trip is feasible or not at a particular time. If we don't know, we will know someone who will know. Alternatively, you can post on the CHECC facebook page, ask on UKCaving or email the mailing list.

Ease Gill Caverns

Trips with No SRT Required

Wretched Rabbit round trip via Spiral Staircase Passage, Holbeck Junction, Stop Pot and Four-Ways Chamber

This trip is a great way to see some varied and interesting passage without any tackle being needed at all, so is a good faff-free option for a small team. However, there are some tricky free climbs and Spiral Staircase Passage can flood in wet weather so avoid if rain is forecast during the trip. A route description for Spiral Staircase has just been added to the CNCC website's Easegill Caverns Route description; one already existed for exiting via Four Ways Chamber.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 4

County Pot - Wretched Rabbit through-trip via Manchester Bypass

This caving trip is suitable for an interesting Sunday trip when many other trips may be unwise due to wet weather (assuming Eureka Junction is avoided when exiting Wretched Rabbit, by exiting via Four Ways Chamber). It is relatively short, essentially tackle-free if you rig the County Pot entrance pitch as a ladder, and has a huge variety of passage for such a short trip.

However, as is often the case in Ease Gill Caverns, route finding is likely to present problems to first-time visitors - pay attention to your route and be prepared to turn back if necessary. There are a huge number of ways to vary the route taken after you have a basic knowledge of the trip - have fun with it!

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 1

SRT difficulty: 0 - 1

Route finding difficulty: 4

Mistral Hole

This is a very popular cave to explore with novices as it requires no tackle, is passable in all but the most extreme weather and the group can be turned around easily. It is however quite boring and is unlikely to inspire many new people to return to caving over other outdoor pursuits. Avoid if you are not willing to clean lots of mud off your club gear and yourselves. Possible to get very lost at a couple of turn-offs, so carry a good survey/route description, available on the CNCC website and in Not For the Faint Hearted.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 1

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 3

County Pot round trip via Manchester Bypass and Upper Trident Passage

This is the simplest round trip that can be undertaken in County Pot, and is a great introduction to the joys of Ease Gill Caverns. Unlike the Wretched Rabbit through-trip, this trip requires Eureka Junction (the place where County Pot meets the Ease Gill Main Drain) to be passable, and hence is much more susceptible to wet weather. Upper Trident has a free climb that requires some confidence: if this is a problem, consider rigging a rope/ladder on Pierce's Passage instead, an alternative exit to Upper Trident that is simpler but will take a similar amount of time. As is often the case in Ease Gill Caverns, route finding is likely to present problems to first-time visitors. After you are familiar with the route, a vast variety of permutations are open to explore - the Trident Series of County Pot is the most complex concentration of passages in Ease Gill Caverns.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3

SRT difficulty: 0 - 1

Route finding difficulty: 4

Trips with Simple SRT

Bull Pot Of The Witches

A very popular beginners cave which can be accessed in most weather conditions with minimal tackle, especially if the entrance pitch is laddered. A reasonable variety of passages is available and difficulty can be varied quite a bit depending upon the groups desire - pitches can be rigged lower down for a different route to the sump, for example.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2

SRT difficulty: 1 - 2

Route finding difficulty: 3

Lancaster Hole → Wretched Rabbit (Ease Gill Caverns High Level Traverse)

This caving trip is a very popular choice as a first SRT trip which is accessible in all but extreme weather conditions (assuming Eureka Junction is avoided when exiting Wretched Rabbit, with

cavers instead exiting via Four Ways Chamber). It involves a simple entrance shaft where it is easy for leaders to safely observe less experienced team members at rebelay; some entertaining rope climbs and handlines; and some excellent formations and very impressive passages. Route finding is likely to present challenges to those unfamiliar with Ease Gill Caverns, though it is still relatively straight-forward especially if the CNCC or Not For The Faint Hearted route descriptions are used. There are, however, a lot of passages to get lost in if you stray from the route, so be very wary. It could take a very long time for a rescue party to locate a lost team in this cave. It is advised that you keep SRT kits on for the trip as some of the fixed aids require cowstails to safely navigate, and take jammers in case you have to turn around!

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 1

SRT difficulty: 2

Route finding difficulty: 4

Trips with more advanced SRT

Cow Pot

This is a popular choice for those looking to extend a group's SRT experience (though discretion is necessary on the main pitch into Fall Pot, which is dangerous in wet weather). This entrance can be combined with a look at the spectacular Lancaster Hole Main Drain between Fall Pot and Stake Pot (or Oxbow Corner) and a return along the High Level Route, or alternatively as an exchange with Lancaster Hole. Use the CNCC route descriptions for inspiration - for example (in settled weather) a visit to the Downstream Sump via Wilf Taylors Passage is a great trip. Cow Pot has an awkward free climb down a slot which could be tiring and time-consuming on the upward journey.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2 - 3

Pool Sink

An entertaining SRT route into the Ease Gill Main Drain with some fine passage. Once you are familiar with the route, it is possible to undertake the route as a pull-through and to then exit via Wretched Rabbit - an excellent trip. An exploratory wander around the Main Drain and the nearby passages of Straw Chamber, Easter Grotto and Nagasaki (use the CNCC description) are great additions to a return trip. In wet weather, the entrance and pitches can flood, so avoid in unsettled conditions.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 3 - 4

Shuttleworth Pot

Although this cave is really on Leck Fell, it is more usually approached from Bull Pot Farm. A normally dry entrance pitch series leads to a beautiful network of passages with some incredible formations: please read the conservation guide on the CNCC website to make sure you minimise your impact upon this unique environment. A good option for a Sunday trip.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2

SRT difficulty: 3 - 4

Route finding difficulty: 2

Leck Fell

Trips with No SRT Required

Notts 2 (aka Committee Pot)

A famously beautiful cave with a fantastic streamway and loads of cool geology to match; an inspirational trip for newer cavers. A trip to both downstream and upstream sumps (good description on the CNCC website) is a great outing for novices and experienced cavers alike. No SRT is required as the entire entrance can be climbed, standing on the shoring (its an artificial entrance). However, it's worth taking a rope to belay newer cavers down this. Also the flow in the streamway can be very dangerous in high water - avoid if heavy rain is forecast.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 2 - 3

Trips with Simple SRT

Short Drop - Gavel Exchange

A cute little trip, involving one short pitch down (Short Drop), an SRT traverse, and a short pitch back up (Gavel Entrance), with great views of Gavel and some nice formations. A good first SRT trip. Short Drop entrance can flood so not one for very wet days.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3

SRT difficulty: 1 - 2

Route finding difficulty: 2

Trips with more advanced SRT

Lost Johns Cave: Cathedral-Dome / Mud-Centipede exchange

A really good SRT-heavy cave which has some excellent passage. The suggested trip, a Cathedral-Dome / Mud-Centipede exchange, has completely dry pitches which are good places to practice SRT. The entrance streamway can apparently sump the entrance in really extreme weather and will be hazardous in wet conditions, so avoid if a lot of rain is forecast. The Valhalla pitch below the Battle-Axe Traverse and the Leck Fell Master Cave below that are well worth the extra hour or two to visit in dry, settled weather. Read the descriptions on the CNCC website for inspiration for more trips in this cave: possibilities for exchanges and through-trips are endless.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 3

Notts Pot

A seriously vertical cave with a bewildering offering of SRT routes to the bottom. The majority of first time visitors will use the Central and Left-Hand Routes down to the lower streamway. The cave offers a great chance for experienced SRT users to polish their skills and get some rigging practice. Not for anyone who is new to SRT: there are a lot of rebelayes and they will get tired!

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2 - 3

SRT difficulty: 4 - 5

Route finding difficulty: 2 - 3

Deaths Head Hole

Another vertical offering which if done as a return trip is considered an option for wet weather, but be cautious as there is a lot of SRT. The return trip offers a great chance for experienced SRT users to polish their skills and get some rigging practice and the cave is close to the road. If you want to do an exchange with Big Meanie or other caves in the Leck Fell area connected by the master cave much drier conditions are needed.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2 - 3

SRT difficulty: 4 - 5

Route finding difficulty: 1 - 2

Marble Steps and Ireby Fell

Trips with Simple SRT

Ireby Fell Cavern - Duke Street Return Trip

Quite simply one of the best trips in Yorkshire with a great variety of passage and something for everyone. This cave is another good place to take people to practice rigging for the first time as

it is easy to closely watch what the rigger is doing at all times. However, the way that the cave responds in flood is very variable depending on how water sinks, and its response to heavy rain has changed a lot in the last year (the former 'flood route' at the entrance is taken by water in much less wet conditions now). So avoid shortly after heavy rain and if rain is forecast.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 3

Route finding difficulty: 3

Trips with more advanced SRT

Rift Pot (aka New Rift Pot)

A great sporting trip with a few awkward squeezes followed by a deep SRT pitch to a big chamber (Coates Cavern) and old, stomp passage (All Fools Passage) below which has some good formations. Avoid in wet weather as the crawl after the entrance pitch is flood-prone.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2 - 3

Kingsdale

Trips with No SRT Required

Valley Entrance

A nice bimbble to have a look up Kingsdale Master Cave and its inlets is a pleasant way to get a trip in. There is one small pitch (down into the Master Cave) that can easily be laddered. The Master Cave becomes dangerous in wet weather: do not descend into the water if it is high as the sump is right there and people have been washed into the sump and died in wet weather in the past. Possible to visit some extensions in Toyland for added interest if you want to do some more advanced ropework (description on CNCC website), there are fixed ropes and new anchors have recently been added (2020).

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2 - 4

SRT difficulty: 0 - 1

Route finding difficulty: 1

Illusion Pot

A very pretty non-SRT trip that offers a simple route into the Expressway passages at the end of Dale Barn Cave. The entrance can flood very rapidly, however, and some of the passage will sump, so avoid if weather is unsettled. If the weather has been wet this sump can take several

weeks to drain and even if the weather has been dry, it may need bailing. No CNCC description, but it is described in the new Northern Caves and Caver Keith has done a video of the trip on YouTube so you can get an idea of what is involved.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2 - 3

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 2

Trips with Simple SRT

Heron Pot

This trip is a very refreshing excursion not far from the road that offers a nice introduction to pull-through trips. There are two pitches and both are short. However, the exit is a duck through a low crawl in the water that can sump: you should check the level of this water on the walk up before committing to the pull-through! If in doubt, it can be rigged as a return trip.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2 - 4

SRT difficulty: 2 - 3

Route finding difficulty: 1

Trips with more advanced SRT

Aquamole Pot

A trip where almost all your time is spent on rope so good for practicing those skills. Often said to be a good option in wet weather, but even then the fact it involves so much rope should make you think twice about its suitability in torrential conditions.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 2 - 3

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 1 - 2

Rowten Pot Return Trip via Eyehole Route

A great trip in a very impressive vertical cave. In high water the trip becomes dangerous - a member of CRO died here on a rescue in 1986 due to drowning on a traverse line so exercise careful judgment. A good place to polish SRT and rigging skills, though probably not a great idea to do this with a group larger than 5 people as they will likely get quite cold and miserable. In dry and settled conditions the Gully Route is a great alternative to the Eyehole.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 4 - 5

Route finding difficulty: 1 - 2

Simpson Pot

A really splendid trip which follows a stream all the way through to Kingsdale Master Cave. The final pitch, Slit Pot, can be difficult to rig and descend for those not confident in their SRT skills. Often done as a pull-through but there is no reason not to do it as a return trip. There is a duck part way down that can sump in wet weather. If undertaking the pull-through do not descend Turbary Pot! Entrance can be hard to find - consider using a GPS and have a photo.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2 - 3

Swinsto Hole

An excellent trip which follows a sporting stream all the way through to Kingsdale Master Cave. Often done as a pull-through but there is no reason not to do it as a return trip. The long crawl is not nice in wet weather and the pitches can be intimidating with lots of spray. Entrance can be hard to find - consider using a GPS and have a photo.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2 - 3

Chapel Le-Dale

Trips with No SRT Required

Great Douk Cave to Middle Washfold Cave

Classic little bimbles that are ideal for complete novices. Avoid in wet weather, the cave floods.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 1

Trips with Simple SRT

Sunset Hole

Follows an active stream down a series of short climbs/cascades (handlines advised) to a 25 m pitch into a final chamber. Avoid in wet weather as the climbs will become hazardous.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 1 - 2

Route finding difficulty: 1

Trips with more advanced SRT

Tatham Wife Hole

A classic trip which follows an active stream down a series of short pitches (could be done on ladders if you like) to a duck and more stream passage and a final pitch to wet passages beyond (wetsuit advised for these final passages). Avoid in wet weather as the pitches will become hazardous. Entrance can be hard to find: have a GPS/map and compass and entrance photo. Even if visibility is good when heading underground, have a plan for navigating back to the car for if the weather comes in while you are underground.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 3

Route finding difficulty: 2

Gaping Gill

Trips with Simple SRT

Bar Pot to Main Chamber via Small Mammal Entrance

Bar Pot is a classic SRT trip which, due to being pretty weather-proof, is usually very busy on wet days. Unfortunately, there is a bottleneck at the entrance pitch which is constricted at the top. A simple way of avoiding this tedious pitch is to make use of the next-door entrance of Small Mammal which is open and uses a similar amount of rope. After you have done this once you will never use the Bar Pot entrance again.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 1

SRT difficulty: 3

Route finding difficulty: 2

Trips with more advanced SRT

Flood Passage Pot to Main Chamber via Wades Entrance

This trip is not as flood-prone as its name implies but it does take a stream and has a lot of SRT so be cautious in wet weather. The final pitch has a tricky hanging rebelay that will cause a lot of delays for those inexperienced with SRT so unless you want to get very cold then keep your group small and select. Good to do as an exchange trip with Bar Pot for a more varied trip.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2

Stream Passage Pot to Main Chamber

A real Yorkshire SRT adventure with lots of swinging about on ropes doing big deviations to keep you clear of the water. The last sentence should tell you that if you aren't experienced at SRT this is a trip to avoid. Great for those who have done the other trips listed for GG and want to try something a bit more challenging. Navigating to Main Chamber via Sand Caverns can be a bit confusing for first-time visitors.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2 - 3

Selside

Trips with No SRT Required

Upper Long Churn Cave

Classic little bimbie that is close to the road and ideal for novices. Avoid in wet weather, the cave floods severely and rapidly.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 2

Trips with Simple SRT

Upper Long Churn Cave to Alum Pot via Dolly Tubs

A classic SRT trip which is usually busy because it's a short walk from the road, the SRT is simple and the views into Alum are very beautiful. Again, the entrance is flood-prone.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 2 - 3

Route finding difficulty: 2

Trips with more advanced SRT

Alum Pot

A classic pothole with two main SRT routes to the bottom. Both involve a long hang with quite a lot of prussiking and hanging rebelayes so if you have a slow or large party have a group shelter

ready for people to wait in when they are on the surface. At least everyone will be able to see what they're doing - the shaft is in broad daylight most of the way. Very beautiful on a winter day.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 3 - 4

Route finding difficulty: 1

Penyghent and Fountains Fell

Trips with No SRT Required

Birkwith Cave

Classic little bimbles that are ideal for novices. Avoid in wet weather, the cave floods severely and rapidly. Parking arrangements changed last year: the landowners no longer allow parking at High Birkwith Farm so you should now park in Horton or Selside, increasing the walk time to the cave considerably.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 1

Old Ing Cave

Classic little bimbles that are ideal for novices. Avoid in wet weather. Parking arrangements changed last year: the landowners no longer allow parking at High Birkwith Farm so you should now park in Horton or Selside, increasing the walk time to the cave considerably.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 0

Route finding difficulty: 1

Calf Holes to Browgill Cave

A nice wee through trip that is ideal for novices if the Calf Holes entrance pitch is rigged as a ladder. Avoid in wet weather as the cave floods. Parking arrangements changed last year: the landowners no longer allow parking at High Birkwith Farm so you should now park in Horton or Selside, increasing the walk time to the cave considerably.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 0 - 1

Route finding difficulty: 2

Trips with Simple SRT

Sell Gill Holes: Dry Entrance

A classic SRT trip which has simple and dry pitches, though waiting on the surface for the first pitch to be rigged can be cold - have a group shelter for this. Not the most inspiring cave but very good as an introduction to SRT, much better than Bar Pot for this.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 1

SRT difficulty: 2 - 3

Route finding difficulty: 1

Trips with more advanced SRT

Sell Gill Holes: Goblin Route

A worthwhile alternative route into Sell Gill if weather conditions and SRT experience allow (not for wet days or those new to SRT).

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 3 - 4

Route finding difficulty: 1

Hunt Pot

Botch's favourite cave. A good one for a lazy sunny day where a nice walk and lounging on the surface waiting for the rigger are very pleasant. An interestingly-shaped entrance as well. Worth a visit to avoid more crowded destinations.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 3 - 4

SRT difficulty: 3 - 4

Route finding difficulty: 1

FOUL Pot

A very good and relatively recently discovered cave, with a long pitch and a couple of squeezes, good formations and some interesting passage shapes. Not for inexperienced cavers as there is quite a bit of loose rock and parts of the cave are flood-prone. A great cave for experienced cavers to test their all-round cave fitness in before trying the more gnarly offerings across Fountains Fell.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2

Little Hull Pot

An excellent SRT adventure with some good technical sections for rigging practice. The pitches are very aesthetically pleasing and there is a nice little stream followed all the way. Not for inexperienced cavers as there is quite a lot of SRT and some loose rock and parts of the cave are flood-prone.

Susceptibility to rainfall and prevailing wet conditions: 4

SRT difficulty: 4

Route finding difficulty: 2