

Caving Equipment List for Indiana

Helmet

Your primary piece of equipment is a helmet equipped with a chinstrap and mounted with at least one light source. A climbing helmet with a hard plastic shell is best. An inexpensive bicycle helmet will work (don't bring your expensive one!). You can find bicycle or skateboard helmets and headlamps pretty cheap at Wal-Mart and many have elastic headbands you can put on the helmet and attach with duct tape. Make sure your helmet does have a chinstrap.

Light

Primary A headlamp must be mounted to your helmet. You can use duct tape or zip ties if necessary.

Secondaries Bring two secondary lights. They can be small flashlights or headlamps.

Extra Batteries Bring extra batteries for your light sources. Place them in watertight containers (doubled Ziploc bags are okay).

Clothing

It is unlikely that you will wish to wear these clothes outside a cave again. A thrift store is a great source. It is a good idea to avoid cotton as it will retain water and remain saturated and heavy. The typical conditions inside caves in Indiana are 55F with 95% humidity.

Top A long sleeved, polypropylene (or polyester) shirt is ideal. You might bring an extra insulating fleece shirt/jacket, kept dry in doubled plastic grocery sacks, in your pack.

Bottom Polypropylene (or polyester) bottoms are ideal. Add nylon/polyester pants or shorts over top. Jeans will work but do hold water more than polyester fabrics.

Coveralls They are excellent for some caves (especially if 100% nylon), but not required.

Wetsuit Some wet caves require the use of a wetsuit. Talk to your trip leader to find out if a wetsuit is needed and if so, what thickness is appropriate.

Socks Wool socks are good. Neoprene socks are very nice in wet caves. Or regular athletic socks will do.

Balaclava Not necessary but nice to have especially on long, wet trips. When you get cold, a balaclava will help warm you immensely.

Footwear Old army or hiking boots are great. Rubber Wellie boots also work

well. Boots should have good ankle support and plenty of tread. Tennis shoes will work but are very slick and do not offer much support.

Gloves Inexpensive work/gardening gloves with rubber fingers and palms work great.

Knee pads Volleyball or roofing knee pads work fine.

Elbow pads Elbow pads are not necessary but highly suggested for caves where a lot of belly crawling is required. Small volleyball pads work fine.

Trash bag A large plastic trash bag should be carried in your pack to be used if necessary for additional warmth. It will be used for dirty clothing and gear after exiting the cave.

Clean clothing Bring a complete change of clothes including shoes for when you exit the cave. Pack these in a separate bag that you can put your dirty cave clothes into when you get out of the cave. **DO NOT FORGET THIS.** It happens more often than you would think!

Nutrition

Food Bring something to snack on. Granola bars and candy bars work well. Your hands will be muddy, so bring something that can be eaten right out of the wrapper. Remember to remove any trash, organic or man made, you bring into the cave.

Water Wide-mouth Nalgene bottles work well to carry water or items you don't want to be crushed or wet (food, batteries, secondary lights, etc.). Bottled water bottles also are fine and you can crush them to take up less room in your pack after they are empty.

Other Gear

Pack A small pack is useful to carry your water, food, extra shirt, secondary lights, and any other equipment. Army surplus is a good choice. Heavy duty material is required! Zippers generally don't fare well but can be used for beginning. Don't take a nice backpack in a cave that can not be ruined.

Camera Be careful about bringing your camera or your mobile phone into the cave and understand the risk that it could be destroyed. It will likely get wet and be in situations where it could be crushed. Some "ruggedized" cameras work well if handled carefully. An option may be to secure it in a watertight container (OtterBox, Pelican case, etc).

Miscellaneous Medication, duct tape (rolled on itself), Small knife, carabiner, 1" tubular webbing for a hand line. Talk to your trip leader to find out if bringing any of these items is appropriate.

"Cave safely, cave softly. Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, kill nothing but time."

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