



Beginner's
Handbook
of the
Sydney University
Speleological Society

<http://suss.caves.org.au>

Updated: Feb 2012



PROVIDED BY
UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY UNION

Welcome to the wonderful world of caving!

And welcome to the Beginner's Handbook! This Handbook has been compiled by a number of Sydney University Speleological Society (SUSS) members to help newcomers to the club find out what we do, where we go and what you need to know if you want to come along. The Handbook contains detailed information about each of the caving locations we visit and the recommended clothing and gear needed when you come caving.

Table of contents

- [Introduction and Basic Information](#)
- [Equipment](#)
 - [General](#)
 - [Cavequip](#)
 - [Camping](#)
 - [Canyoning/Wet Caves](#)
 - [Technical](#)
- [Food Suggestions](#)
- [Costs](#)
- [Jewellery and Hair](#)
- [Caving Areas](#)
- [Canyoning](#)

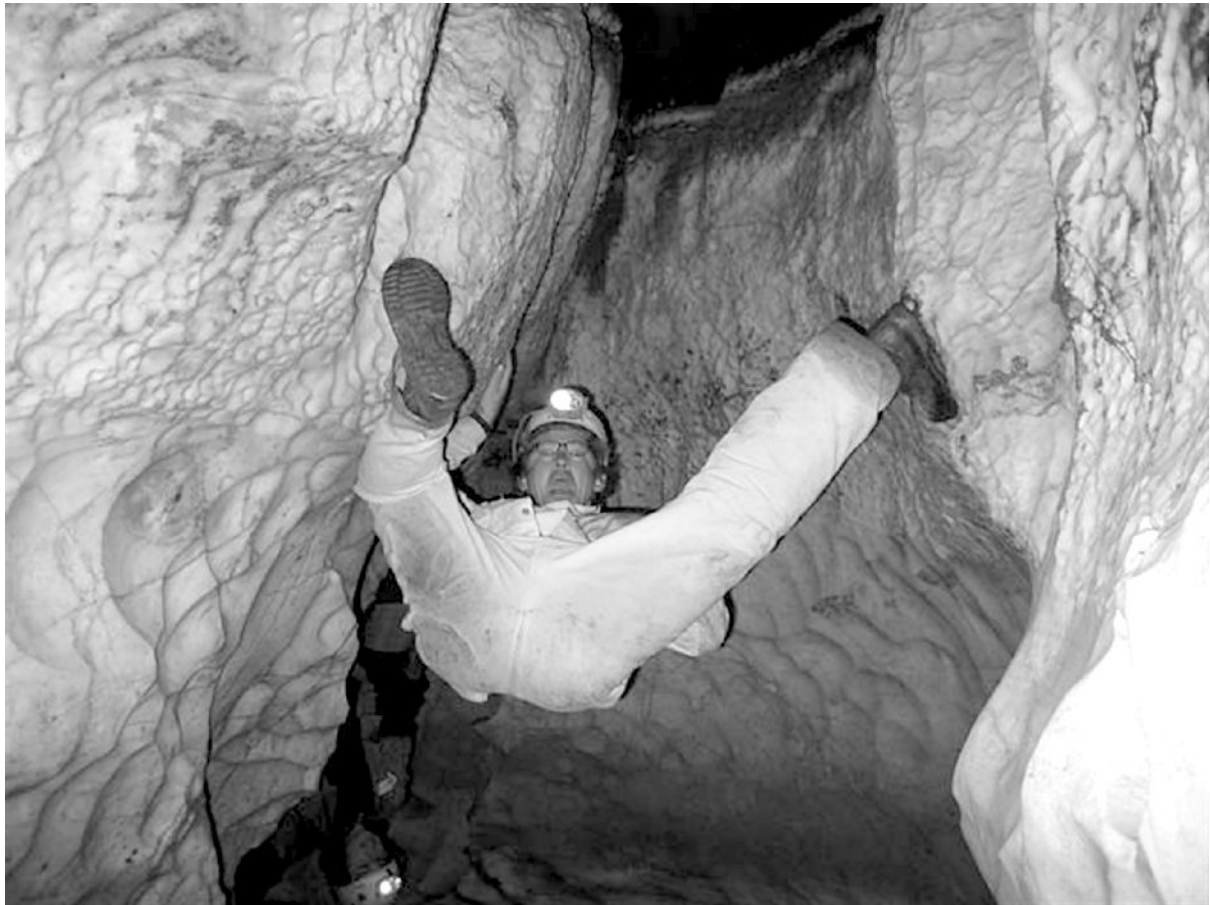


Photo by Tina Willmore

INTRODUCTION AND BASIC INFORMATION

1. [What on earth](#) is caving (i.e. what have I gotten myself into)? What are the caves like?
2. [Isn't caving dangerous](#) ?
3. [What trips](#) are on? How do I sign up for trips?
4. [I missed the O-Week/Beginner trips!!!!](#)
5. [What do I need to bring](#)? What gear do I need?
6. [How do I get there](#) by car? if I don't have a car?
7. [How much](#) will it cost?
8. [Where](#) will we stay?
9. [Do I need special training](#)?
10. [Does my first trip](#) have to be at the beginning of the year?
11. How can I [get involved](#)?

1. What on earth is caving (i.e. what have I gotten myself into)? What are the caves like?

Caving (known in some countries as spelunking, potholing or caverneering) is the exploration of underground passages, tunnels, caverns and shafts. There is high diversity in the caves and caving areas visited by SUSS around Sydney. Some caves are warm, some cooler. Some caves are dusty, some muddy. Some caves consist of large passages you can walk through, others are more suited to crawling and pulling yourself along the ground. Often a single cave can have all these features.

The variety of caves around Sydney means no caver will ever be bored of caving, with a lifetime's worth of different experiences awaiting them. On each trip, the Trip Leader picks the caves to visit that best suit the trip participants, making sure that everyone has a great time.

2. Isn't caving dangerous?

Contrary to what Hollywood has told you there are no monsters living in the caves! Caving is as safe as any other outdoor activity when trips are run properly. In fact, by caving you can actually avoid many of the common hazards of the great outdoors. Accidents and injuries are uncommon in SUSS and the results are generally very mild such as bruises from slips, trips and falls. By far the most dangerous part of any caving trip is the drive there and back! Caving is also a great opportunity to learn more about different environments and how to best travel through them safely.

All SUSS trips will have a Trip Supervisor who is an experienced caver with a current first aid certificate. To be a SUSS Trip Leader you must pass a lengthy and rigorous

checklist demonstrating a wide variety of skills. All Supervisors are experienced in leading trips, including beginners' trips, and have training and experience in dealing with situations that may arise. Your Trip Leader will always carry a full first aid kit and a complete rope rescue kit (on trips where abseiling is required). SUSS runs a wide variety of trips almost every weekend and can boast an impeccable safety record. Safety is never compromised on any SUSS trip.

3. What trips are on? How do I sign up for trips?

You can find an updated list of upcoming trips and events on our online [trip list](#). Trip lists are generally published every month, with the details of where we're going and who to contact. If you want to come on a trip, MAKE SURE YOU LET THE TRIP LEADER KNOW so that they can make arrangements. Their contact details are included on the trip list.

It is a good idea to secure your spot early to avoid missing out. Some trips are very popular, particularly at the beginning of the year, and the number of people permitted on trips is usually limited.

It is helpful to let the Trip Leader know the following in your email:

- Full name
- Member or non-member (include Next of Kin contact details if you are a non-member)
- Your telephone number
- Which trip you want to join AND which days you'll be there
- If you need a lift OR if you can offer others a lift (including how many people you can take, the suburb you're leaving from and what time you'll be leaving)
- Any club gear you will need to borrow for the trip (e.g. helmet, headlamp, camping gear)
- How much caving experience you have
- Any injuries/medical conditions (e.g. asthma, dodgy knee, allergic to bees - this information is private and only used to choose the best caves to visit)

4. I missed the O-Week/Beginner trips!!!

Many new members fear that they will miss out on special beginner orientation or training at the start of the year, but fear not! Beginners are welcome on all trips at any time of the year and we welcome new faces at any time.

Don't be scared of signing up – on most trips we have people with little or no caving experience. Our Trip Leaders will arrange for you to do activities that should be within your level of ability. So unless the trip list says that experience is required, just sign up for any trip and let the Trip Leader know you haven't done much caving before. Bring a friend and have a ball together!

5. What do I need to bring? What gear do I need?

YOU ONLY NEED THE BASIC GEAR for many trips so don't rush out and spend hundreds of dollars unnecessarily. After you've been on one or two trips and talked to more experienced members you can decide what extra gear you want. The club can provide you with a helmet, headlamp and backpack for inside the cave, as well as ropes and ladders if required.

The exact gear required depends on the area you are visiting. A helpful checklist of basic [caving equipment](#) and [camping equipment](#) can be found here.

You can find out what other equipment is required by checking the [caving areas](#).

6. How do I get there by car? if I don't have a car?

Trip Leaders organise carpooling for all trips. If you need a lift or can offer seats in your car, simply let the Trip Leader know when signing up (including how many people you can take, which suburb you will be leaving from and around what time you'll be leaving). Generally we drive to the caving area on Friday evening, sometimes stopping for dinner and groceries on the way.

If you are driving ask your Trip Leader for detailed directions to reach the camp as there may be no phone reception to call them if you get lost on the way.

7. How much will it cost?

Generally the only costs for members are your share of the petrol and whatever groceries you bring! At some caving areas, such as Jenolan, there is a small fee for accommodation. Non-members are usually welcome on trips (however make sure you confirm this with the Trip Leader first as members get preference if there are limited places) and are asked to pay a \$30 non-member fee to cover insurance and gear usage. See [Costs](#) for more information.

8. Where will we stay?

Accommodation varies across the different caving areas. Check the [Caving Areas](#) section for full details. But a glance at our most visited caving areas: at Jenolan Caves we have a caver's cottage near Caves House and the tourist caves, with great views, hot showers, a full kitchen, bunk beds, electricity, flushing toilet and a fireplace. At Wombeyan caves we use their campground with campfires, hot showers, a kitchen with cooking facilities and fridge, and recreation hall. Bungonia caves are the same except that there is no fridge or campfires. On canyoning trips, and some caving trips, club

members generally go back to basics and camp, although they are generally close enough to towns that you could stay with friends if available.

In most of the caving areas mobile phone reception is weak or non-existent so let anyone that would worry know that they might not be able to reach you.

9. **Do I need special training?**

As mentioned previously, most SUSS trips require no previous training and are beginner-friendly. Unless a trip on the trip list specifies prior experience then it is suitable for everyone. Most cavers gradually build up their skills and ability through regular caving trips with SUSS's trained and experienced trip supervisors. You can also learn or practice more technical skills at our training/field days throughout the year.

10. **Does my first trip have to be at the beginning of the year?**

Not at all! Often new members fear that they will miss out on special beginner orientation or training at the start of the year but fear not! Beginners are welcome on all trips at any time of the year. We love seeing new faces on trips.

11. **How can I get involved?**

Besides coming along to any of our awesome trips, throughout the year we have monthly **general meetings (GMs)**, which members and non-members alike are invited to attend. GMs are held on the first Thursday of every month (except January) at 7pm for a 7.30pm start to the formal part of the evening. They are held in the Holme Building Common Room, on the first floor of the Holme Building in Science Road at Sydney Uni (just south of the Parramatta Road Footbridge).

These meetings are a great time to meet your fellow SUSSlings, find out what trips SUSS has been on, and ask any burning questions you have about caving. We also have a presentation of special trips that SUSS members have recently been on (awesome slideshow included).

After the GM we generally head to the pub, which is a great time to chat to the other members and be regaled with yarns caving and non-caving related.

There are also exciting opportunities for you to learn and practise your technical skills (e.g. abseiling) on our **field days**, or to meet fellow members at our on-campus **barbecues** and other get-togethers. And if you have an idea for a great trip or training day, let one of the committee members know! There will most likely be someone you can persuade to go...

EQUIPMENT

1. [General](#)
2. [Caving](#)
3. [Camping](#)
4. [Canyoning/Wet Caving](#)
5. [Technical](#)

1. General Equipment

This is a checklist of basic things that we recommend you bring on any caving trip:

- Food (see [Food Suggestions](#))
- A water bottle – 600mL minimum
- A pillow if you use one
- A sleeping bag and mat
- Non-caving clothing and shoes
- Underwear! – don't laugh, people often forget to pack this!
- Toiletries – toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo and soap, towel, medications, antibacterial hand gel, etc.
- A beanie – most of the body's heat is lost through the head. A beanie will help keep you warm and cosy in cold caves or canyons and overnight
- Gloves – to keep your hands warm at night and for collecting firewood
- Shoes and socks – to wear around the hut or camp
- A wrist watch – if you intend to take it into the caves, don't bring your most expensive or even your favourite watch, or you will watch it get scratched, mangled and generally trashed
- A camp chair (if camping) – something more comfortable than a log to sit on around the campfire
- A light rain jacket – just in case! These can also be carried to keep you warm in windy canyons
- Spare batteries – ESSENTIAL for your head torch and/or camera
- A hat and sun cream - you may want these for the walk to and from the caves/canyons
- Insect repellent (especially if camping)
- Garbage bags - ESSENTIAL for your wet/dirty clothes on the trip home
- All of your [Caving Equipment](#)

Non-caving clothing and shoes

A complete change of clothes to wear outside the caves (including shoes!) is essential. These clothes can just be casual, comfortable clothes (jeans, etc.). You will definitely want a clean set of clothing to wear after getting your caving clothes dirtied, and this second set of clothing should also keep you in the good books of whoever's car you've helped keep clean. Remember, the temperature on the surface may be very different from that underground, so check the weather forecast, and bring a jacket for the cooler nights.

2. Caving Equipment

This section describes the basic caving equipment that we recommend you bring on any caving trip. Other suggestions are made if you want to spend more money and this may make your trip more enjoyable.

Only the most basic gear is needed for many trips so don't rush out and spend hundreds of dollars unnecessarily. After you've been on one or two trips and talked with more experienced club members you can decide what extra gear you want. The equipment needed for overnight stays at each of the locations can vary, so check the [Caving Areas](#) section for more information about what you might need for the trip you're planning on signing up for.

Club gear

This gear is available to all members for club trips. Make sure you let your Trip Leader know in advance if you need to borrow anything.

- Helmet (a climbing/caving helmet, not a bicycle helmet)
- Headlights (you will need to supply your own AA batteries, minimum 8 per trip)
- Caving packs
- Some camping gear including tent and roll mats

SUSS suggests you bring:

- A spare torch and batteries (all cavers must have TWO independent light sources for every trip, with batteries in each)
- Overalls or long-sleeved shirt and pants that can get damaged
- Clothing to wear under overalls (usually thermals)
- Footwear (either gumboots, dairy boots or Volleys)
- Gloves (cotton with latex/rubber covering is best)
- Kneepads
- Socks (preferably not cotton)
- A water bottle for the cave (min. 600mL, preferably 1L)
- A sturdy, cheap lunchbox or other container for lunch that can get knocked around
- A camera (shockproof and waterproof) – remember to bring spare batteries and a waterproof bag/case if you are doing wet caves or canyons
- First aid kit – Your Trip Leader has a current first aid certificate and will be carrying a full first aid kit, however you may wish to bring a personal kit with band-aids, bandages, headache tablets, etc.

Spare torch (\$5-\$70)

Whilst SUSS can provide you with a helmet and light for the caves, it is essential to own a small headlamp for your personal use, as a backup light source in a cave and for around the campsite. Many cavers have cheap LED headlamps which are not powerful but are adequate back-up lights if required.

Head-mountable lights that would make good back-up lights include the Petzl Zoom, Duo or Mega, which can provide up to 17 hours of light using a 4.5V battery and a standard globe. Estimated cost: \$5 – \$70. They are also generally robust enough to be used as a main light. LED lights are popular because they are very efficient, giving a long-term saving on batteries. A single LED light is often carried by cavers for emergencies although they are not really suitable for use around the campsite. These cost anywhere from \$5 to +\$30.

Make sure you also bring batteries enough to power your lights and to have a set spare!

Clothing

Overalls (\$25-\$100)

For virtually all NSW caves, full body covering is a must. Overalls/coveralls (combination, not bib and brace) are great, and you can sometimes find them at army disposal stores or opportunity shops. SUSS doesn't recommend purchasing these full-price (~\$90) as they are not likely to last many trips anyway, so the cheaper the better! And before buying your overalls, make sure they give you a full range of body movement. Test them out by lifting your arms above your head, touching your toes, and crawling around on the floor if need be. You do *not* want any sort of restriction of body movement when climbing or crawling through a cave.

If you don't want to get them immediately, we recommend full-length trousers and either a full-length t-shirt or a full-length jumper (i.e. one that covers your arms). Caves are often quite harsh and without adequate body protection you increase the possibility of minor injury (e.g. grazes, bruising etc.). In general, cotton products do not offer good insulation, and absorb water. We do not suggest wearing just cotton for warmth. Since most overalls are made of cotton, you will need something warm underneath, like a woollen jumper or thermals.

Clothing for under Overalls

The number of layers of clothing you should wear depends upon the region in which you are caving, so read about the conditions of the [Caving Area](#) you are visiting before packing. [Yarrangobilly](#) for example is very cold, and we would suggest wearing several layers of warm clothing, particularly on the torso. Other regions however (e.g. [Cleifden](#)) are quite warm, and you do not want to overheat (a t-shirt and shorts under the overalls are fine). Remember that cotton and denim are not very good in muddy, wet conditions.

Any clothing you take caving is likely to get very dirty, and/or ripped. It is quite possible that the clothing will simply end up destroyed. Don't wear your best clothes to go caving. If you don't have any old clothing, some very cheap second hand clothes can be purchased from St Vincent de Paul or other op shops.

Thermals/Woollens (\$40-\$300)

Thermal underwear or 'thermals' are strongly recommended, particularly for cold climates. They are like 'long-johns', but unlike the so-called 'thermals' you purchase at your local department store, the best thermals for caving are made from fabric with high insulation and fast-drying properties. Thermals for both the upper and lower body are available (as well as hands, feet and head) – however, it is most important that your torso remains near a comfortable temperature. The type of thermal you purchase should be influenced by the caving area you intend to visit, and how easily you get cold. Any of the following thermals would be adequate for most of the caving you will do in NSW:

Most cavers wear polypropylene thermals which have high insulation properties, and help to drain water away from your skin. Polypropylene thermals are available in at least two thicknesses, either summer or winter weights. Estimated cost: \$20 – \$40 per garment.

Chlorofibre thermals insulate better than polypropylene, and dry more quickly. Chlorofibre is generally not necessary for most beginner trips. Estimated cost: \$50 – \$60 per garment.

Merino thermals are generally more expensive, more comfortable and can be worn for much longer before they start to smell! However Merino thermals are also less durable and can rip easily when worn caving. A merino balaclava is an excellent addition to your personal first aid kit.

Woollen jumpers will often suffice for warmth, as wool is versatile and water repellent. However, woollen clothing is much more prone to destruction, and does not offer good wind protection.

For those who can afford more luxurious fabrics: Polartech garments are made from Polarfleece, a good insulating material. Polartech jackets, jumpers and long pants can typically be purchased in a number of weights, 100gsm, 200gsm and 300gsm; which represent successive increases in thermal insulation. A special type of polarfleece called 'Windstopper' is good for windy nights. Estimated cost: \$100 – \$300.

Shoes or boots (\$15-\$30+)

Sturdy and comfortable shoes with good grip are a must for caving. Caving often involves a lot of climbing, crawling and wriggling (not to mention walking) through passageway. Combine this with a lack of peripheral vision (due to poor light), possible slippery and muddy tracks, and uneven ground, and you can see why good grip is important.

Accept it – your shoes will get very dirty. Do not wear your dress shoes underground. For most trips we recommend wearing either gumboots, bata industrial dairy boots, or Dunlop Volleys. Volleys are reasonably cheap sneakers for caving and cost around \$15-30 at Target-type stores and are widely used because of their superior grip. You could try using other types of sneakers, but they are often not as good as they have a very sparse tread which is likely to get filled with mud very quickly. When this happens, you will lose a lot of grip. They are also slippery on wet rock. Gumboots are recommended for wet or muddy caves where you will do a lot of wading and scrambling across mud- Volleys lose grip in these caves and the mud might even pull them off your feet.

Bata Superglug Dairy boots are waterproof rubber boots that stand about 15cm high. They are made of tough rubber, and have a coarse tread on the sole (which is ideal for caving). The only downside with these boots is that the eyelet holes, being made of rubber, can be ripped fairly easily. Some people put metal eyelets in to strengthen the holes. Estimated cost \$30+.

Gloves (\$5-15)

Gloves are not essential, but can often make a caving trip much more pleasant. Opinion is divided as to whether they improve your grip, but they will certainly keep your hands clean and dry- after several hours of caving you don't want to eat lunch with hands covered in cave dirt. A cheap option is light leather gardening gloves from variety stores or Bunnings. The better types of gloves are heavy duty rubber gloves, usually lined with cotton. These types of gloves should last several caving trips before breaking and can be bought for around \$5 from the kitchen aisle in your local supermarket. Glazier's gloves from Bunnings are a more expensive option that combine excellent grip, flexibility and durability, and are also a good fit for smaller hands (\$5-15). Normal latex kitchen gloves are unlikely to last one trip.

Kneepads (\$15-20)

Kneepads are not necessary, but if you don't have them you will seriously regret it. We spend a lot of time on our knees, crawling, squeezing and kneeling. Also climbing can be a lot easier if you use your knees, and you will want some padding on them!

3. Camping Equipment

The gear required for each camping trip depends on what facilities the location has. Your Trip Leader can confirm these details for you.

A basic list of camping gear required includes:

- Tent
- Sleeping mat
- Sleeping bag
- Raincoat
- Personal stove (or cook on the campfire)
- Camp chair
- Cooking and eating utensils and crockery
- Water bottle
- Food and water
- Torch for around the campsite
- Towel

Tent

You can usually 'borrow' tent space from other club members, or use one of the Club tents. If you are thinking of buying a tent, speak to some of our more experienced

members for guidance. Generally, that \$40 Target A-frame is fine ... until it rains. Let the Trip Leader know if you need tent space, or want to borrow a club tent.

Sleeping bag and mat

A sleeping bag is essential for all trips in which an overnight stay is required. The warmth of the sleeping bag will depend on many factors, including the time of year, location, and the sleeper's comfort zone. Generally speaking however, a warm sleeping bag is more versatile, as it can be used in a wider range of conditions (it is always possible to undo the zipper in the event that you are too hot). Unfortunately, a good warm sleeping bag (down-filled) can be very expensive, from \$400 upwards. If you can't afford a warm sleeping bag, make sure you have something warm to wear in bed – thermals (single- or multi-layered!) will help keep you warm during the night, and a beanie or other soft warm hat is particularly good for preventing heat loss. An inner sheet or liner will help protect your sleeping bag.

A sleeping mat is essential to prevent heat from escaping through the ground on camping trips. Sleeping mats vary in comfort and price. At the lower end of the price and comfort range is a closed cell foam mattress, which costs around \$20. Much more comfortable, but significantly more expensive (about \$100) is the 'Therm-A-Rest', which is a self-inflating air mattress about 2 – 3cm thick, very light and quite compact. Note that a ¾ length Therm-A-Rest is really just as good as a full length one but significantly cheaper. We don't recommend air beds/li-los on their own – your body heat is sucked out to warm the air in the mattress. Always use a li-lo with a sleeping mat on top. Estimated cost: \$20 – \$120.

Raincoats

Raincoats make camping in bad weather much more pleasant. For those with lots of money, raincoats made of Gore-Tex or a similar type of fabric are excellent as they breathe well and stop the raincoat getting damp through perspiration. Nylon is cheap but breathes poorly and can be uncomfortable for any strenuous activity. Estimated cost: \$50 – \$100 for nylon; \$300+ for Gore-Tex; \$150 – \$200 for fabrics similar to Gore-Tex.

Cooking stove

When camping, it is often possible to cook over an established BBQ/campfire (note that the creation of new campfire places is an environmentally destructive activity). Rather than use a campfire, many members prefer to use a lightweight stove. There are various types of fuel cooking stove you can purchase, but we recommend either: a shellite/kerosene stove (e.g. MSR, Coleman, ~\$200); a small, lightweight hiking gas stove that uses a butane and propane mix (e.g. kovea, Optimus, MSR, ~\$100); or a cheap but larger butane stove from Bunnings-type stores (~\$20).

Cooking utensils

When camping, or where cooking utensils are unavailable, you will have to bring your own cooking crockery and cutlery. For cooking needs, a billy and small saucepan will generally suffice (depending on the food you intend to cook). If cooking for yourself only, then the billy need be no larger than 2L, and the saucepan no larger than a small dinner plate. Also, get a set of billy tongs, which are metal tongs used to pick up hot crockery. Billies and saucepans are traditionally made of something lightweight and cheap, such

as tin or aluminium. Stainless steel sets will cook food more evenly and are more durable, but also more expensive. Estimated cost: Billy (tin) \$5 – \$15, (stainless steel) \$25 – \$40, saucepan \$10 – \$30, billy tongs \$5 – \$10. Cutlery you should have includes a metal knife/fork/spoon set, bowl, plate and mug.

Water bottles

These can be anything from a PET bottle, through to nalgene (a heavy duty plastic) or aluminium bottles. PET bottles are by far the cheapest, as they are just empty soft-drink bottles. Nalgene or aluminium bottle will cost more, but will last longer and are less prone to destruction if you take them underground. Estimated cost: \$1 – \$20.

Other things to bring

Backpack – most SUSS trips do not involve hiking with your gear, so a pack is usually not necessary. However, backpacks are a good way of transporting gear to a trip. If you are into bushwalking you may want to invest in a good quality walking pack. We recommend a minimum volume of 70L. Note that some popular carry bags, such as a military duffle bag, are OK for general travel but very poor for walking any distance. They are also not very compact. Estimated cost: ~\$350.

4. Canyoning/Wet Caves Equipment

Bring all your usual caving gear plus:

- A wetsuit to keep you warm (if your Trip Leader advises one)
- Spare thermal clothing
- Dry shoes (to change into afterwards)
- A drybag (if your Trip Leader advises one)
- Spare garbage bags for your wet clothes when going home
- Helmet
- Warm socks (e.g. wool or neoprene, NOT cotton or cotton-blend)
- A harness and descender + prusik loops (if your Trip Leader advises these)

Wetsuit

The wetsuit required will depend on the canyon. Most trips you can get by with a springsuit (short legs and arms). Longer, colder trips will require a steamer (long sleeves/arms). Your wetsuit should be at least 3mm thick.

A new wetsuit tends to be quite expensive. As canyoning wetsuits are likely to get ripped and torn, SUSS recommends buying a second hand wetsuit for under \$30 from second-hand stores, gumtree.com.au or ebay.com.au.

Canyoning/bushwalking clothes

You may need long comfortable pants for canyoning plus walking to and from the canyons. Light weigh, quick-dry material is best. These may get dirty, ripped and/or wet

so don't bring anything you are too fond of! Jeans are heavy and restrictive when wet so we advise against them. Many canyons simply wear board shorts over thermal pants. A long-sleeved shirt will help protect you from scratches and sunburn walking to and from the canyons otherwise any t-shirt will suffice. A light fleece jacket or alternative can also be nice in cooler canyons.

Flotation aids

In some canyons a li-lo (inflatable air mattress) can help you in long swims. For canyons with swims you will also need to waterproof your lunch and spare clothing with a dry-bag. These cost between \$20 and \$50 (depending on capacity) from outdoor stores. Your dry-bag will also act as a flotation aid.

Other things to bring

Warm and comfortable socks – preferably wool, which will keep you warm even when wet (Holeproof explorers are good) or neoprene.

Abseiling gear – this is required in many canyons. See Technical Equipment.

5. Technical Equipment

Harness

If there is any abseiling involved in the caves or canyons selected you will need a harness. If you cannot get a harness then your Trip Leader will make one out of seatbelt tape and a carabiner however these can be a lot less comfortable! Bring your own carabiners if you have them.

Safety lead

If you require a harness then you also need a safety lead. This is a length of rope or tape attached to your harness with a carabiner on the end. It allows you to clip into safety attachment points. Your Trip Leader can bring spare tape to make these if you cannot access one.

Descenders

If there is any abseiling involved in the caves or canyons selected you will need a descender (something to lower yourself down the rope with). If you can access an ATC, rappel rack, Whaletail, Petzl Stop or Kong Hydrobot then bring it along. Descending with carabiners (cross-crabs) or rope wrap techniques will NOT be allowed on SUSS trips for safety reasons.

Please note that figure of 8s are generally discouraged as they damage ropes, and Petzl Stops are not sufficient for canyoning trips (as they cannot take the two strands of rope as required).

FOOD SUGGESTIONS

A vitally important question for anyone coming on our trips is: just what food should I bring? For many, a SUSS trip will be a first introduction to the fun of camp cooking. Hopefully we can provide some useful information to make things a little easier.

As a general rule, BUY ALL YOUR FOOD BEFORE THE TRIP to bring with you. You can never count on finding an open supermarket on the way, or (even more unlikely) a shop actually at the caving location. Talk to the person who will be driving and find out their plans. They may even want to share food for the trip in order to halve the preparation and cooking effort; or you can share food with a friend.

What meals are required?

Most of our trips run for a full weekend, so you will generally need two breakfasts and lunches, but only a single dinner for the Saturday night. For Friday night's dinner, we will generally stop off somewhere along the way, or have dinner beforehand. However you should of course check the plans of your driver before counting on this. If we leave late on Sunday afternoon, we will again often arrange a place to all meet up and eat dinner.

What food is appropriate?

The types of food you bring will depend on the facilities that are available. For example, on camping trips you will need meals that are extremely easy to prepare and cook. It is also preferable to have the use of a portable stove, as cooking on campfires rarely produces good (read 'unburnt') results, and puts nasty black soot all over mum's best saucepans.

Breakfasts

Obviously breakfasts are an easy meal, which will completely depend on personal choice. If you are a cereal eater, remember that only Jenolan and Cliefden have fridges, so small cartons of UHT LongLife milk are strongly recommended for anywhere else. Jenolan and Cliefden also have kettles and toasters. In fact, our long breakfasts and multiple coffee breaks at these areas often mean that we don't get caving until after at least 11am.

Lunches

SUSS suggests:

- Bring a simple, high-energy lunch that can be eaten in a cave
- Transport it in a sturdy lunch box
- Bring at least 1L of water for each day

Lunch is perhaps the meal that poses the most problem on a caving trip. Depending on the length of time you are underground, you may end up eating lunch whilst in a cave. You definitely have to take some food with you. Caving is an extremely physical and

generally rough experience. Any food that you do bring into a cave must be able to survive a significant amount of punishment before you actually get to eat it.

A typical caver's lunch includes a bag of lollies, a protein, muesli or nut bar, some chocolate bars and a simple sandwich (e.g. peanut butter, jam or nutella).

A 'proper' lunch inside the cave is not always necessary, with most cavers preferring an assortment of snacks and munchies to last them the distance. Bring lots – remember that as a beginner you will probably underestimate just how tiring the caving experience can be. It is important not to leave any crumbs in the caves to protect the delicate environment, so avoid crumbly or food that is difficult/messy to eat.

Lunch box

When caving, it is FAR more sensible to carry your lunch or food around inside a strong lunchbox. Do not put your lunch inside a plastic bag and expect it to look anything like its former self after an hour or two of caving – cave packs get knocked around a lot and anything inside that is easily destroyed probably will be. Secondly, if your food is squashed, apart from having a miserable lunch, you will no doubt leave crumbs everywhere. The addition of any artificial foodstuff to a cave significantly affects its ecosystem, and is very environmentally unfriendly. So bring a sturdy plastic lunchbox or similar. The 1.25 litre plastic containers that SPC breakfast fruit (or similar) come in make good lunch containers as the softer plastic means they last longer (i.e. they don't crack as easily when caving). Estimated cost: \$2 – 5.

Water Bottle

Caving is generally thirsty work so a small but sturdy water bottle is essential for most caving trips. We suggest you bring along a 600mL PET soft drink bottle as the cheapest suitable option.

Dinners

SUSS suggests:

- Ensure you know what facilities, equipment and utensils will be available and cater accordingly
- Try to do most of your preparation for dinner before the trip
- Prepare meals that are simple to reheat or cook
- Add fresh ingredients to instant meals to make them more appetising and enjoyable
- Bring a good dessert to round off your meal

All too often our new members end up having their first real cooking experiences after joining our club. Sometimes the results can be good, and sometimes not, but they are almost always educational!

Generally it is best to go for the simplest meal possible, as you will be fairly tired from the day's caving and won't generally feel like whipping up an entire spaghetti bolognese or a complex curry from the basic ingredients. If however you do want nice meals like

these, then **cooking them in the week beforehand** and then freezing a single-serve portion to take away and heat up is an excellent option. You can have a great meal this way, and the only actual preparation on the night will be cooking the accompanying spaghetti or rice. However, this sort of forward planning tends to be rare, and our meals will often be concocted on a much more ad-hoc basis.

The sort of meal you choose will greatly depend on the **cooking equipment** that you have, or the facilities that are available. For camping trips, you will generally need to bring everything: i.e. a saucepan, plate, cup, cutlery, access to some kind of stove (see [Equipment List](#)). There will often be fireplaces, and sometimes BBQs. You can check the specifics for each location elsewhere in this guide. At the Jenolan and Cliefden huts things are far more civilised – there are microwaves, electric hotplates (and a griller), as well as a range of cutlery, crockery and saucepans. But because everyone will be trying to cook at once, the fewer hotplates and things you need to cook your meal the better.

Good, simple meals include:

Steak: Care must be taken with keeping meat though – sometimes an Esky is simply not enough refrigeration in hot summer weather.

Instant pasta dish: do not believe the quantities printed on the packet – if it says "serves 4", it should be adequate for one hungry person. Also, some of these dishes are definitely better than others – trial and error is the only way to find out which are the good ones. And anything fresh that you can add in to these (e.g. capsicum, mushrooms, fresh onion or garlic, real milk etc.) will often greatly improve the meal.

Pasta made using pasta sauce from a jar: A wide variety of sauces (e.g. pesto sauces, spaghetti bologneses, curry sauces and Chicken Tonight-style of things) are available. These will generally require fresh ingredients (e.g. mushrooms, or capsicum, etc.) to be added, but with the right sauce and the right vegies (and possibly meat) the preparation can be kept to a minimum. Good recipe ideas for these can usually be found on the side of the jar, so you can go into the supermarket, find a sauce that sounds good, and then find the suggested bits to go with it. And of course, some of these are better than others... trial and error is again the only way to really find out. As far as **other instant meals** go, if you decide to purchase a 'beef-stew-in-a-can' type of meal, be warned that while they may be easy, and look edible from the pictures, they are rarely appetising when you finally meet them face-to-face.

It is worth remembering that **a good dessert** will always make up for an average meal. Desserts such as custard and tinned fruits, instant chocolate mousses and tinned Christmas-style puddings are all good value. Some supermarkets even stock long life custard, so you can be camped in the middle of the wilderness, and still eat custard all week long!

And a last vital piece of advice:

Don't forget your **can-opener**!! Hacking tin cans open with items such as screwdrivers can be a dangerous pastime...

COSTS

SUSS trips are paid for by the members. You are responsible for paying your own way. Any communal costs of the trip are broken up equally between the participants. Costs you may be expected to pay on a trip are:

- an equal share of the trip's fuel bill for the car that you are travelling in. Estimated fuel costs for the various areas have been provided for each caving area, but please remember that these are estimates only and are at the total discretion of the driver of your car. It's a good idea to ask your driver for an estimate of the cost prior to leaving Sydney in case it turns out to be greater than you expect!
- any accommodation costs, like camping fees or hut fees. Again, these have been estimated below, but these estimates are a guide only. Do not count on them being totally accurate.

In addition to these costs will be:

- your food costs. The amount will depend on what you have bought and how long you stay.
- café or restaurant dinners/lunches. Drivers often stop during the trip for a bite to eat. Ask the Trip Leader or driver before the event if they plan to stop for food anywhere.

Expect the unexpected. After budgeting for the trip, bring at least an extra \$10 than you expect, as the chances are you will end up needing it.

JEWELLERY AND HAIR

Jewellery

We have one a simple suggestion for jewellery: DO NOT wear it. Apart from the jewellery getting damaged and/or lost (for which the club will not be responsible), it may get caught in clothing or the cave itself. Thus, it may damage the wearer, the jewellery, or worse, others. Unless the item of jewellery has strong sentimental value, then it is in your interest, and everyone else's, to leave it at home.

A watch is a useful thing to have inside a cave, so long as it is durable and at least water resistant. Still, it is unlikely that you will need to bring it along, as the Trip Leader will have one on his/her person.

Hair

People with long hair need to ensure that it does not get in the way, particularly when doing rope work, (such as abseiling) during which hair can be caught in equipment. Even when horizontal caving, long hair can easily get caught or tangled around cave formation, or gear. To avoid significant pain and irritation to you (particularly if we have to disentangle your hair, or worse, cut it to get you free), tie your hair up in a bun under your helmet, or at least pull it back with a headband or hair tie. You may not think your hair looks good like that, but it is far better than having someone present your hair to you as a knotted ball, having lopped it from your head.

CAVING AREAS



- [Bungonia](#)
- [Cleifden](#)
- [Colong](#)
- [Cooleman](#)
- [Jenolan](#)
- [Timor](#)
- [Tuglow](#)
- [Wee Jasper](#)
- [Wellington](#)
- [Wombeyan](#)
- [Wyanbene](#)
- [Yarrangobilly](#) ('Yagby')
- [Further afield](#)

Bungonia

Bungonia may not be the prettiest caving area in NSW, but it is the most popular. If you've been caving before, chances are it's been at Bungonia which is open access (no permit is required) and close to Sydney. Everyone can go there, and some weekends it seems like everyone has. Despite the crowds, Bungonia still offers some good, sporty caving trips, with some of mainland Australia's deepest caves.

Bungonia offers a good range of caves for different skill levels catering for absolute beginners, up to the experienced wanting to practice their technical rope work.

There are also many good bushwalks, swimming holes and canyons, including the spectacular Bungonia Gorge which is the deepest slot canyon in the Southern Hemisphere.

Location

About 2-2½ hours south of Sydney, north-west of Goulburn, near Marulan.

Conditions underground

The caves are generally warm, dry and dusty. Some of the caves contain high levels of CO₂, which can cause breathing difficulties (don't worry – we steer clear of caves with this problem!). Because of the high level of traffic, many of the formations are broken, so don't expect awesome displays of natural beauty. However, there are some great sporting sections with lots of climbing, crawling, squeezing and so forth.

Facilities

Camping ground with hot showers, flush toilets, running water. There is also a kitchen building with gas burners, drinking water, and tables and chairs. Camping fees are collected and receipts must be displayed on your tent and car.

Costs

- Camping fees ~\$15-20 per person / weekend (depending on the time of year)
- Petrol money ~\$20-25 return.

What to bring

All the [Caving Gear](#) PLUS [vertical caving gear](#) (if required) PLUS [camping gear](#) (tent, sleeping bag, sleeping mat and camp chair) PLUS cooking gear (pots, cutlery and bowl/cup/plate) PLUS towel and toiletries for the hot showers. *NB:* Bungonia can be very cold at night so bring warm clothes for around camp.

How to get there

To get to Bungonia, you need to get onto the M5/Hume Highway. A few km past the town of Marulan there is a turn-off on the left leading to Bungonia and South Marulan. It is signposted, but it's a pretty unobtrusive sign. (If you reach the Goulburn turn-off from the highway, you've gone too far.)

Almost immediately after turning off the highway, there's an intersection where you turn right, signposted for Bungonia and Bungonia State Recreation Area. Follow this road until it reaches a T junction with "Mountain Ash Road". Turn left (this is also signposted for Bungonia State Recreation Area).

Follow this around to the right, then take the road on the left signposted for Bungonia State Recreation Area and "The Lookdown". This road passes the parks office, and there is a road on the left leading to the campground.

Cleifden

The caves at Cleifden are generally not large but offer some truly spectacular formations. Located on private farmland near Orange, they provide an opportunity for a relaxing weekend away. Usually SUSS visits Cleifden on a long weekend to get the most out of the longer drive and the great caves. They are mostly very easy to negotiate and would make a good introduction for beginners.

Location

About a 3-4 hour drive west from Sydney, near Mandurama, south of Orange.

Conditions underground

HOT! Main Cave is around 20C and is quite stuffy. The other caves are a little cooler, but not by much. Because we don't normally sit still for long periods, light clothing is appropriate (e.g. T-shirt and shorts under overalls). Most caves are generally dry and dusty, but the floor gets quite muddy in places, so boots are probably better than sandals or Volleys.

Facilities

Accommodation is in old shearer's quarters with 240V power, a fireplace, a stove, toaster, kettle, cooking equipment, a fridge, water tank, hot shower and flush toilet. There are 9 mattresses, plus room on some of the couches if the number of participants exceeds this. Hut fees are \$6 per weekend plus a share of the \$20 permit fee (usually \$9 to \$10 in total).

Costs

- Hut fees ~\$10 per person / weekend
- Petrol money ~\$25-30 return

What to bring

All the [Caving Gear](#), PLUS a towel for the shower. Plate and cutlery are a good idea as there is a limited amount in the hut. You will be very popular if you can bring a high-clearance 4WD to save wading the icy river!

How to get there

Drive west over the mountains through Lithgow to Bathurst. At Bathurst, follow the road posted to Cowra, driving through Blayney. About 25km after Blayney is Mandurama. In Mandurama, take the second street on the right, Silver Street, posted as going to Canowindra.

Reset your odometer to 0 at this point. After 15.7km, a road leads off to the right on a downhill stretch of road. It is posted to Boonderoo and Kalimna, amongst other places. Continue along this road, passing across a bridge, past a sign saying "Boonderoo" and past the property "Millamolong" on the right, for 5.1km (reading 20.8) to a turnoff to the left along Davies Ck Rd. Take this turnoff. Continue along this road.

About 2.2km along (reading 23), turn left along a rough road (opposite a derelict house and cylindrical mailbox on the right). The cottage is at the end of this road, past the yards and shearing sheds.

Colong

Colong could be considered as the perfect beginner's cave. It's just like everyone imagines a cave would be like – lovely walk-through passages running in all directions, with some good formation. The drive is quite long, particularly if the road is obscured by fog, so we usually go up Friday night, do the cave on Saturday and drive back Sunday, or aim for a three day weekend. The only thing to look out for is the 4km walk in, with a punishingly steep hill to climb on the return.

Location

About a 4-5 hour drive west from Sydney, at the southern end of Kanangra Boyd National Park (south of Jenolan).

Conditions underground

Pretty well all warm, dry and dusty, although there are occasional wet passages. You can do the whole cave without getting wet feet. Nearly all of the cave is walk-through passage.

Facilities

There is a pit toilet at the roadside campfire, and no facilities if bush camping near the cave. The creek water supply is unreliable so take all water with you.

Costs

- Your share of the permit fee ~\$8 per person
- Petrol money ~\$20-\$25 return

What to bring

All the [Caving Gear](#) and [Camping Gear](#) PLUS toilet paper and all water and food for the duration of the trip. There is a long, steep walk-in and walk-out from the caves so keep your bag as light as possibly without skimping on gear. Your Trip Leader can provide advice for packing if required.

How to get there

Travel west over the mountains and take the turnoff to Jenolan Caves. After passing through Hampton, there is a turnoff on the right signposted to Oberon (at the cross on the map). Travel towards Oberon until you reach the Titania Road (on the left), which is signposted to Edith. This is about 20km from the turnoff and quite close to Oberon.

As you make the turnoff, reset your odometer to 0. At the other end of the Titania Road (odometer 4.3), turn left. There is a turnoff on the right (odometer 6.3) down Butter Factory Lane, which also has signposts to Shooters Hill and the Prison Farm. (If you miss Titania Road and end up in Oberon, don't panic. Turn left in the middle of town along the Jenolan Caves road. Don't take the first signposted road on the right to Yerranderie and the Prison Camp - continue south until you pass Titania Road on the left and reach Butter Factory Lane.)

This road continues as an excellent sealed road for some distance, then passes through Shooters Hill. Past Shooters Hill, the road forks once at odometer 29.6 (follow the left hand, unsealed branch to the prison camp, not the right hand branch to Goulburn); then a second time at odometer 35 (follow the left hand branch to the prison camp again). However, don't turn into the prison camp.

At odometer 39.5 there is a right hand turn to Goulburn - continue straight along into the National Park. Keep driving along this road for a long way. Beware of some sharp corners, particularly those at about odometer 53.4 and 54.1. There is often a thick fog on this road so drive carefully.

Eventually, at odometer 70.7, you come to a swampy area with a sign on the left clearly indicating "Batsh Camp" (called Batts Camp on the map). Turn down this road on the left and follow it for about 1.5km to the campsite.

The campsite itself is on the LHS and is accessible along a road between the log barriers. We usually camp around to the right in the large cleared area - remember to leave room for other cars to arrive.

If you come to a large sign on the left advertising Colong Caves and a blocked fire trail over the creek, you have gone too far. Turn around and go back about 100m.

Warning: It is advisable to fill up with petrol around Katoomba/Medlow Bath as petrol stations further west are often closed by the time you arrive. It is about 70km to Colong from Oberon and you won't be able to fill up again until Sunday afternoon.

Cooleman

Cooleman Caves are located within the Kosciuszko National Park in the Snowy Mountains. The majority of these caves are active rivers and it is a popular cave diving destination, but it has more than enough to satisfy non-diving cavers.

Location

Cooleman Plains is in the Kosciuszko National Park which is about a 6-8 hour drive from Sydney.

Conditions underground

These caves are mostly wet and very cold. Thermals and long wetsuits are recommended for most trips. Neoprene socks, warm gloves and a balaclava are recommended for longer trips.

Facilities

There are campsites with pit toilets but you will be required to provide everything else.

Costs

- Petrol money ~\$30-40 return

Because of the distance, car pooling is recommended and can be arranged by your Trip Leader.

What to bring

All [Caving Gear](#) and [Camping Gear](#), a wetsuit PLUS additional warm gear, a dry bag and all food and water.

How to get there

Because this is such a long car trip, we normally organise to drive up together in a car train. The Trip Leader should let you know about driving arrangements when you sign up.

Jenolan

There are many great reasons to visit Jenolan Caves. The cottage, the nearby tourist caves and range of activities available mean that it is a great place for beginners. Also, it's relatively close to Sydney. SUSS visits Jenolan at least once a month. It's almost a second home to many of us, and is the location of most of our projects. There is a great

range of trips possible; some are quite challenging while others are quite easy, so it is a great destination for beginners and repeat trips!

Location

About 2½-3½ hours west of Sydney in the Blue Mountains, near Oberon.

Conditions underground

Jenolan tends to be one of the colder (12-16 degrees) and often wetter caving areas. You will need thermals as well as shoes that can handle the slippery and muddy conditions. Many members prefer gumboots to Dunlop Volleys or sandshoes for their trips here. Many of the caves at Jenolan are quite wet and muddy, particularly where we go!

Facilities

We are blessed to have a dedicated Caver's Cottage at Jenolan with 240V power, stove, fridge, toaster, kettle, microwave, hot shower, flush toilet, running water, bunk beds with some mattresses and plenty of cooking utensils, plates and cutlery. There is a hose and bench just outside the cottage that you can use to clean your caving gear as well – very handy for week-long trips!

The nearest supermarket is the Coles in Katoomba which is open until midnight on Friday nights. If you are being driven up by someone else check with them as to whether they plan on shopping on the way (ideally before the day you drive up). There is some food available at Caves House in the tourist area, but this is expensive and can be inconvenient to access.

Costs

- Hut fees ~\$8 per person / weekend, \$4 per person / weekday regardless of whether you sleep in the cottage, garage or your car.
- Petrol money ~\$15-20 return.

What to bring

All of your [Caving Gear](#) PLUS a towel for the shower. You should bring warm gear for outside the caves as it can get quite cool late in the day, even during summer. A roll mat can be a good idea on busier trips if all the mattresses are being used.

How to get there

From Sydney, go west on the M4 Motorway, which becomes the Great Western Highway. Drive past Katoomba. Turn left at the Jenolan Caves turnoff and continue along this road.

The Grand Arch (aptly named) is the marker that you've reached the Caves. Drive through the Arch, through the tourist area, and at the top of the small rise at the car park turn right.

Drive up this road for a few bends, and there will be a road coming off it going uphill and to the right. It has a discreet road sign that says 'Fire Brigade'. It should take you past a few cottages. The Caver's Hut is clearly indicated up another incline to your left.

This is quite a steep, rough dirt track, so if you have a car with low clearance, you might like to park on the side of the road at the bottom of the drive way. Parking at the top of

the hill at the cottage is very limited, so if you do make it to the top, make sure you try to park in a way that leaves as much space as possible for other cars.

Timor

This is a great caving area for beginners, with a variety of excellent sporty and well-decorated caves that don't need ropes or ladders to explore.

Location

5 hours north of Sydney near Scone/Murrurundi.

Conditions underground

The caves here vary from the wet to dry, but are mostly walk-through caves.

Facilities

You'll be car-camping on private land. Avoid the cows. There are no facilities available here, so you'll have to bring all of your camping gear as well as drinking water.

Costs

- Occasionally the farmer asks for a camping fee, but it is usually only around \$5.
- Petrol: ~\$20-30

What to bring

All of your [Caving Gear](#) and [Camping Gear](#) PLUS toilet paper and drinking water.

How to get there

Head up the New England Highway, past Scone. Go past The Burning Mountain (yes it is burning - a coal seam ignited 100s of years ago) and turn East (right) at Scotts Creek road at Blandford.

When you get to the end of the road, about 21 km, turn left (north) up Jenkins road, following the sign to Timor Caves. Head to Isaac Creek Rd, where you turn East (right) after about 6km. There is a sign that says Timor Caves. The campsite is about a kilometre up this road where it crosses the dry creek bed.

Tuglow

Tuglow is an exciting caving area with beautiful camping beside the Cowmung River. The best streamway cave in NSW is to be found here, and there is a great swimming hole (fantastic in summer!), complete with platypus. It is located within the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

Location

About 4hrs from Sydney and 45minutes from Jenolan Caves. A 4WD is recommended to reach the campsites by the Tuglow River and to get closer to the Tuglow Cave entrance.

Conditions underground

Tuglow is mostly walk-through passage with some abseiling/ascending or laddering, clambering and some deep wades. Most trips visit the wet section of the cave where a wetsuit is required to stay warm.

Facilities

There are no facilities at Tuglow. There is a river but it is not a reliable source of drinking water.

Costs

- Petrol money ~\$20

What to bring

All [Caving Gear](#), all [Camping Gear](#), [vertical gear](#) (if abseiling), plus a wetsuit.

How to get there

From Sydney, go west on the M4 Motorway, which becomes the Great Western Highway. Drive past Katoomba. Turn left at the Jenolan Caves turnoff and continue along this road.

The Grand Arch (aptly named) is the marker that you've reached the Caves. Drive through the Arch, through the tourist area, and at the top of the small rise at the car park turn right.

Continue to the top of the very steep climb on the road to Oberon. About two kilometres along the road at the top is a signposted turn on the left to Kanangra Walls. Take this turn. Continue ~19km along the Kanangra Road (dirt). On the right is a turn off signposted as the Kowmung River fire trail. Take this turn and continue along the fire trail (dirt). After about ten kilometres there is a parking area and a sign saying "4WD only". You cannot take a 2WD car beyond this point. If you have 4WD, drive down the steep fire trail and cross the river. To the left after the river crossing is a parking area for the campground.

Wee Jasper

Second only to Bungonia as Yobbo Caving Capital of NSW (and would probably be first if it was closer to Sydney), odds are that you've been here before with school, scouts etc. However, if you strike a less busy weekend, it can actually be quite enjoyable. The caves are generally large and spacious with some decent formations (usually the ones out of reach). The caves involve some vertical work and it helps greatly if you can abseil. Wee Jasper is a great location for beginners but also has some spectacular sporty caves, including the now-gated Dog Leg Cave.

Location

About 3.5-4 hour southwest of Sydney (55km from Yass).

Conditions underground

Wee Jasper is generally warm and dusty. We move around a lot so you don't need thermals (except, perhaps, on the surface!). There is the occasional muddy patch, though.

Facilities

Depends on where we camp. Usually, zero; although there is a camp ground nearby with running water and flush toilets (it does cost money to stay there, and is usually full of scouts). There are also huts available for hire and for our winter trips we might take the warm option!

Costs

- Camping fees are possible ~\$15 per person / weekend.
- Petrol money ~\$25-\$30 return.

What to bring

All the [Caving Gear](#) and [Camping Gear](#) and toilet paper. Because there is no water at the campsite the Trip Leader will normally arrange a 20L container of water for communal use - but check on this before you leave. SRT equipment (if you have it - not essential).

How to get there

Drive south along the Hume Highway past Goulburn and take the turnoff to Yass. Just before coming into town, take the turnoff on the left marked to Wee Jasper. It is about 53km to Wee Jasper from Yass, sealed most of the way.

The town of Wee Jasper is just on the far side of a substantial bridge over the Goodradigbee River. Set your trip meter to 0 at this point. To get to the campsite: Just on the other side of town you come to a T-junction (0.9) marked with a big wooden sign pointing to various local attractions. Turn left and drive along the sealed road until you cross a small culvert and arrive at another T-junction (4.7). This is the main Wee Jasper campsite.

Wellington

Wellington is a small caving area that is well known for the large amount of fossils it has produced. Many mega fauna specimens have been found here and the Visitors Centre contains a photograph of guides holding a hip bone the size of half a man. The caves are co-located with a caravan park and unfortunately when the park was constructed many of the caves were filled in and the limestone features flattened. A lot of work by SUSS and other speleological groups have reconditioned many of the caves.

There are 26 known caves at Wellington with most dry areas rather small, requiring only 2-3 hours underground. Experienced cave divers have explored McCavity Cave and found large and well decorated submerged chambers. The caves also boast two tourist caves and a reconstructed phosphate mine from 1918 which are very interesting and

quite beautiful. Due to our past and continuing project work we are often allowed to conduct our own private tours.

Location

About 5-6 hours west of Sydney between Orange and Dubbo.

Conditions Underground

The caves at Wellington are mostly quite short and do not require hardcore caving gear. The dry sections of Wellington are typically quite dry, dusty and warm and a t-shirt and shorts under overalls will normally suffice. However if you are feeling a bit more adventurous a quick swim underground will soon cool you down and a wetsuit is recommended if you have one.

Facilities

We usually camp when we go to Wellington however we still have access to the communal areas of the holiday park such as the kitchen and showers. The kitchen has a stove, sink, 240V power supply and fridge. It also has pots and pans, however you should bring your own cup, plate and cutlery.

Costs

- Camping fees ~\$0-\$10 depending on the time of year.
- Petrol money ~\$30 return.

What to bring

All [Caving Gear](#) including vertical equipment if you have it. [Camping gear](#) minus stove and pots. Remember to bring a towel!

How to get there

Take the M4 onto the Great Western Highway (Route A32). Continue following the A32 through Orange (it turns into Mitchell Highway). 91kms after Orange turn left onto Caves Road, the road with the somewhat unobtrusive brown 'Wellington Caves' sign. Follow Caves Road for about 1km and enter the caravan park. The entrance to the caves is in this caravan park.

Wombeyan

A lesser-known tourist area, Wombeyan also has a number of interesting wild caves. There are excellent formations in many of the caves. We camp in the reserve where there are lots of facilities. Much of our time at Wombeyan is spent working on projects, so if you go on a trip you can expect to be given some job to do. A few of the caves require vertical work but are usually done using ladders, so anyone can take part - ask the Trip Leader.

Location

About a 3-3.5 hour drive south of Sydney. Access is through Mittagong and along a spectacular winding road through the Wollondilly River Valley.

Conditions underground

Some of the caves involve wading in cool water (up to chest deep!) but wetsuits are not required. Upper levels can be rather warm, dry and dusty; however thermals are required for all trips as you can cool down rapidly in these caves, particularly when working on projects.

Facilities

Camping ground with hot showers, flush toilets, running water. There is a kitchen with a hot water urn, toaster and pay BBQ plates, as well as a fridge and freezer. There is sometimes a microwave but do not rely on this. Most cavers cook on the campsite fire.

Costs

- Petrol money ~\$20 return.
- SUSS members assisting with projects get free camping, otherwise it is \$5 per person per night

What to bring

All the [Caving Gear](#) PLUS [Camping Gear](#) including a camp chair.

How to get there

Take the Hume Highway towards Canberra. There are two routes from here. The most commonly driven and quicker way to the caves is to take the turn off at Mittagong and follow the signs to Wombeyan Caves Rd. This will take about 2.5hrs from Sydney however the last section along Wombeyan Caves Rd is a very windy dirt road that may not agree with very low city cars.

The other option is to drive to Goulburn and then via Taralga, which is sealed most of the way. However this will take about 3hrs. We have a corner of the camping ground that we normally occupy on the other side of the creek closest to the old tennis courts.

Wyanbene

Wyanbene is a very interesting streamway cave in southern NSW. We camp within sight of the cave entrance. The cave itself is quite varied, involving lots of scrambling, a little laddering, and one long, cold, wet gravel in the stream. There are some truly spectacular features, including the magnificent Gunbarrel Aven. Wyanbene is also home to the Big Hole which is an impressive 190m cave pit and the Marble Arch Caves.

Location

About a 4-4½ hour drive south of Sydney, near Braidwood (east of Canberra).

Conditions underground

Face it – staying dry is not an option. You will get wet above the knees as you enter, and while you're out of the stream most of the way (apart from the aforementioned gravel) you never get dry again. The water can be quite cold too, so wear warm clothes. A wetsuit is not required but thermals are.

Facilities

Zero (well, a pit toilet). BYO everything – even firewood is in short supply.

Costs

- Petrol money ~\$20-\$25 return.

What to bring

All the [Caving Gear](#) and [Camping Gear](#) PLUS toilet paper. You will need to bring all food and water for the trip.

How to get there

Head onto the M5/Hume Highway towards Canberra and take the Goulburn exit. At the roundabout take the first exit onto Hume St. Turn left onto Garroorigang Rd, then take the next right onto Braidwood Rd.

Continue along this Braidwood for about 55km and turn left onto the Kings Highway/National Route 52 (following the signs for Braidwood/Batemans Bay).

Drive along the Kings Highway for about 27km. Once you enter the town of Braidwood continue driving straight onto Wallace Street and turn right onto Coghill Street (following the signs for Cooma and Araluen). Veer left onto Araluen Road and after about 1.5km turn right onto Captains Flat Rd. Continue along Snowball Road, for 25km and then turn left onto the UNNAMED road after Kain Rd, Krawarree. Drive across the bridge over Shoalhaven River to the end of the road, where the cave entrance is.

Yarrangobilly ('Yagby')

For many, there is no argument – Yarrangobilly is the best caving area in NSW. So why don't we go there more than once or twice a year? Because it's so far away! Usually the site of holiday or long weekend trips, 'Yagby' is full of large, well-decorated caves, and has heaps of potential for finding new things. It's also in a beautiful setting, with a magnificent limestone gorge and a thermal pool.

Location

On the Snowy Mountains Highway in Kosciuszko National Park past Tumut, about a 6-8 hour drive southwest from Sydney.

Conditions underground

COLD!!! Some of the caves have been known to sport ice formations in winter. The lower section of Eagles Nest is particularly notorious for being around 5 degrees Celsius. Thermals are definitely essential. The caves can get quite muddy too.

Facilities

There is a basic campground with pit toilets and a streamway (not drinkable) but no other facilities. This campground is the location of Cotterils Cottage (haunted!) which was the traditional cavers hut, however the hut was seriously damaged in late 2011, losing the whole roof, and it has not yet been repaired. There are also campsites with

showers and kitchen plus cabins in Talbingo (~20minutes drive from the caves) and accommodation available at Yarrangobilly tourist caves which is very affordable but which books out well in advance.

The facilities available will depend on which accommodation is selected for your trip so check with your Trip Leader for details.

Costs

- Petrol money ~\$30-60 return.

What to bring

Check with your Trip Leader as facilities vary between accommodation options. LOTS OF WARM CLOTHES. Oh, and your [Caving Gear](#). You may need all [camping gear](#). All food and water (there are no stores nearby). If you are going in colder months (basically, any time except summer – we have seen heavy snow in April and October) you should make sure your sleeping gear in particular is warm.

Some of the caves are quite pretty and require you to remove your outer clothing before entering some areas. It is a good idea to have a spare pair of clean-soled sandals/ Volleys for these sections. Lastly, don't forget your swimming gear – a daily swim in the thermal pool (and the very un-thermal river for some) has become a SUSS tradition.

How to get there

Follow the M5 towards Melbourne. Take the turn-off for Tumut and drive along the Snowy Mountains Highway south, following the signs to Yarrangobilly. The campground is by Cotteril's Cottage which is on the right hand side of the road just after a bridge over a creek. It is a couple of kilometres before the turnoff for Yarrangobilly Caves House, so if you see a sign for the Caves House you've gone too far.

Further afield

NSW isn't the only place in the world where there are caves! SUSS members often use their holidays to travel the world, going to the best known caves and attempting to discover unknown ones. Favourite locations include:

Tasmania

The home of Australia's 25 deepest caves, Tassie is the Australian centre of hardcore vertical caving. Cavers descend several hundred metres of abseils, often in freezing temperatures next to roaring waterfalls. Tassie also houses some of the country's prettiest caves.

The two main caving areas in Tasmania are Mole Creek (which is home to some of Australia's most famous and beautiful caves including Kubla Khan and Croesus) and Junee Florentine (renowned for having the sportiest and toughest vertical trips around).

Nullarbor Plain

The barren landscape of the Nullarbor hides a number of extensive cave systems, some of which are among the longest in the country. Many of the caves are wet with giant lakes, but dry passages can be warm and dusty. This is a cave diver's paradise – and you get to camp in the desert!

New Zealand

Almost as close as Tassie, but the caves are twice as big and twice as deep (that means it's twice as far back out in the evening!). New Zealand is still the centre of some major exploration, in which SUSS has joined with local cavers to explore systems almost a kilometre deep. IN many NZ caves you can cover kilometres in a day as the larger scale means most the passages themselves are large with no crawling, squeezing or stooping required.

How to join a big trip

If these destinations have caught your fancy, talk to some of the experienced SUSS members to find out when trips are planned to these places. Usually they will take place during Uni semester and mid-semester breaks and span a week or longer. If you're really committed to going, put your name down as soon as the trip is advertised as positions are few and fill up quickly.

If you are no longer able to attend the trip please let your Trip Leader know as soon as possible so they can offer that place to someone else. Remember that there is a lot more planning and organisation with these trips, so the later you pull out, the more difficult (and expensive!) it will be for another member to book their flights and arrange their uni/work commitments, etc.

CANYONING

The sandstone canyons of the Blue Mountains are a regular destination for SUSS in summer (and sometimes winter!). You can look forward to seeing creeks cut deep into the rock, eroding smooth-walled, dim crevasses where light seldom penetrates, full of moss, yabbies and deep pools of cool water.

What is Canyoning?

Canyoning is the sport of descending creeks and small rivers. In the Blue Mountains and beyond, west of Sydney, there are hundreds of deep and narrow canyons, some up to 60 metres deep and only 1 or 2 metres wide! The canyoning areas we go to are famous for their breathtakingly beautiful canyons nestled in amazing wilderness. Many of these canyons are beginner-friendly and can be done in all seasons/weather making them the ideal location for introductory trips.

Negotiating canyons can involve climbing, wading, swimming, floating on li-los, jumping and abseiling. It all depends on the canyon. Most are OK for beginners but some are quite demanding – ask the Trip Leader. What you need depends on the canyon.

How to join a canyoning trip

SUSS will occasionally run canyoning trips, especially during the warmer times of the year. Check the trip descriptions in our [trip list](#) for any upcoming canyoning trips.

As with our caving trips, group numbers on SUSS canyoning trips are restricted to ensure maximum safety and enjoyment. This means you usually need to confirm with the Trip Leader as early as possible to secure a place on most trips. If you are no longer able to attend the trip please let your Trip Leader know as soon as possible so they can offer that place to someone else.

Safety

As with most sports canyoning is very safe when trips are run properly by appropriate guides. All SUSS trips will have a Trip Supervisor who is an experienced caver with a current first aid certificate. To be a SUSS Trip Leader you must pass a lengthy and rigorous checklist demonstrating a wide variety of skills. All leaders are experienced in leading trips, including beginners' trips. Canyoning Trip Leaders have extra skills such as advanced abseiling instruction, rope rescue, navigation and bush survival skills. Your Trip Leader will always carry a full first aid kit and a complete rope rescue kit (on trips where abseiling is required). SUSS runs a wide variety of caving and canyoning trips almost every weekend and can boast an impeccable safety record as safety is never compromised on any SUSS trip.

Location

Most canyoning trips are in the Blue Mountains with drives ranging from 1-3½ hours. If you are interested in carpooling let your Trip Leader know that you need or can offer a

lift (including the number of seats available). Include the suburb you will be leaving from and a rough time frame. If you are driving ask your Trip Leader for detailed directions to reach the camp as there may be no phone reception to call them if you get lost on the way.

Food

There is usually no water at canyoning campsites, so you will need to bring water (2-6L per day) for cooking, drinking and washing. There is usually nowhere to buy food either so you will need to bring breakfast, lunch (squash-proof!) and dinner for each day. Cooking is usually done using our campfire and small gas stoves. There is nowhere to refrigerate food so don't pack the ice-cream! Food suggestions can be found in the [Food Suggestions](#) section.

Facilities

Often canyoning trips involved camping in the wilderness so there is no running water or electricity at any of the campsites. There are pit toilets at some campsites however it is possible that there won't be any where we choose to stay. Mobile phone reception becomes weak- there is no reception not far out of Lithgow for many providers so let anyone that would worry know that they might not be able to reach you.

Gear Checklist

See [Canyoning/Wet Cave Equipment](#) for what to bring.

NB: Please let your Trip Leader know what gear you will need to borrow as early as possible so it can be organised in time. Campsites can get rather cold at night so make sure you have adequate warm clothing.

