

GUYdelines

A few thoughts for outdoor lovers and leaders from

WILD GUYde Adventures, LLC

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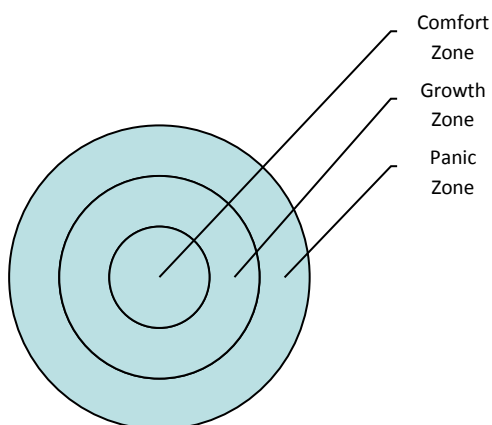
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Warm-up and Engage: One of the truisms I was given when I entered the entrepreneurial world was, “*Rewards gleaned are commensurate with risks taken.*” Have you had a recent experience of “taking the plunge” (vocationally, educationally, relationally, financially)? Did it pay off for you? How?

Go Up, Go Down, or Stay Here?

The dull indiglow of my watch says 4:58 AM, and I know in about 15 minutes, I am going to have to unzip the sleeping bag, shiver into my clothing and stiff boots, and wake the crew to start the day. My assistant instructor is snoring lightly, and I’m sure he won’t appreciate my nudge any more than I will enjoy delivering it. But the thing that makes it all harder today is that sound – rain pattering steadily on the tent. Everything is difficult on days like this, from keeping your insulation layer of clothing dry to cooking to packing up. And we must hoof a bunch of miles today to connect with the van, so cold soaking days like this in the mountains are just morale busters. That renegade thought skitters through my brain: “*It would be SOO easy just to ...*” Here I am, facing another “*mind over mattress morning!*”

He shimmied and shook across the cable walk, and now he is seated on the edge of the zip line platform with a fixed stare. I have him rigged and ready to jump, and we have been here twenty minutes, but he is stuck. His cabin-mates below tried chanting: “*BIL-LY, BIL-LY...*” but that rattled him, so now just the occasional call from forty feet below breaks the stillness: “*C’mon Billy, you can do this!*” I have tried it all – “*Do you want me to lower you back to the ground? Do you want to downclimb the staples? Shall we count down together – 3 – 2 – 1?*” Occasionally, he will shift his weight forward and grab the lanyard, and then he hits that invisible wall, and backs up again.



Crossing zones

My mentor Eugene referred to events such as these as *encounters* – times when something disrupts the homeostasis and comfort of normalcy. Billy’s experience would be a *planned encounter* – a ropes course experience designed to bring participants to this

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moment of challenge and commitment. My dismal soggy mountain morning would be an *unplanned encounter* – facing a reality that I could not have known was coming, and would not have chosen if I did. And as you might expect, Eugene considered both planned and unplanned encounters as opportunities for growth.

The Comfort Zone is where we feel relaxed and competent. Different for everyone, your Comfort Zone might include dozing on a beach, playing your favorite instrument, or lifting weights. The Panic Zone is where we are fairly well discombobulated. We exhibit physiological symptoms of fear – sweaty palms, shaking, quavering voice, digestive discomfort. And our responses tend to be in the Fight, Flight, or Freeze realm – evading or running away, getting belligerent, or freezing in place. We don't want to stick around, and we are certainly not interested in learning. Similar to the Comfort Zone, what inhabits your Panic Zone is unique to you. Lifting weights might be easy and relaxed for you, but my poor body image may make this traumatic for me. Singing or performing in public may be your happy place as an entertainer, while the prospect of standing in front of a large group puts me in a sweat.

But the value proposition is that between these two zones is another – *the Growth Zone*. When I test the outer boundaries of my comfort Zone, I may begin to experience fears, but if I am not overwhelmed, this is where growth can happen. In other words, when I start to feel the dissonance from my steady state, it is really an invitation to experiment with a new behavior or response.

Growth is not always comfortable; staying comfortable is not growth

An encounter can be new people, new information, or new experience. When children go to summer camp for a week away from home, they are undertaking a lot of new experiences – sleeping in cabins with others, taking care of their own health and possessions, being away from Mom, Dad, and the teddy bear. When we encounter dissonance and make the positive personal changes to re-establish equilibrium in our lives, those changes – new attitudes, new behaviors – we call *growth*. So, researchers have validated for decades the positive effects of a residential outdoor camp experience in the lives of children and young people – increasing their self-esteem, strengthening their self-concept, and teaching them skills. One key explanation for these effects has consistently been the educational and developmental benefits of being in a new and unfamiliar place, either geographically or emotionally or both. Corporate and executive leadership retreats also try often to get off-site, for similar, if not fully understood, benefits.

The two stories at the start of this article illustrate the tremendous temptation to stay in the Comfort Zone. Growth Zone sounds sexy and enticing, but being there is not always comfortable. And we need to remember this as leaders, particularly when we start taking our people into new territory. People will be responding in different ways, because everyone has different boundary definitions. But we know that rewards gleaned are commensurate with risks taken, so we are obligated to move our organizations out of the Comfort Zone. Rosalyn Carter makes this distinction: “*A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.*” But it is never my intention as a mountain guide to terrify people, and it should never be our practice as leaders to propel people in their Panic Zones.

There is a similar experience in climbing. Beginning climbers will get to a spacious ledge or a comfortable handhold – a big horn of rock they can wrap their hand around, or a nice deep in-cut shelf. And they will park there – “*falling in love with a handhold*” is what I call it. You will often see them there, moving up slightly, and then retreating back to what feels safe. I took a mom and her two teenage sons climbing up at Little Stony Man on the Blue Ridge, and after the boys had tried the route, I invited Mom to rope up. This is a beautiful but steep 90' face with the spectacular Page Valley panorama falling away behind us, and the town of Luray far below. She got up to a large stable rock pedestal about 30 feet up, looked out over her shoulder at the amazing but somewhat intimidating view, and said, “*I think I'm done.*” “*Keep going Mom, you can do it*” the chorus of teenage cheerleaders took up. After a few minutes, I offered, “*Would you like me to come up and climb with you?*” “*Can you do that?*” she ventured.

So, I transferred to a Gri Gri – a belay device that allows me to protect both her and myself as we ascend, and I scrambled up to join her on the pedestal. Some coaching: “*Try that ledge for your feet right there. Maybe a side-pull with that hand.*” She moved up about 6 feet, and I followed. Never forget that people need **presence** when they are undertaking something difficult. Another few moves, and the top anchors come into sight, about 40 feet above us. “*I think I can try it now,*” she offers, so I stabilized myself on the ledge, and continued to belay her all the way to the top. Lowering her back down to me, I tethered her in, and we descended the rest of the way together. By the time we touched down on terra firma, she was crying her eyes out (relief mainly) and the kids are screaming and cheering and hugging, and it was a total win moment. You can park on the comfortable ledge in the middle of the route, gripping the big chunks of comfortable rock if you want to, but don’t call it climbing!

Challenging our students, clients, and staff is not easy to do, and it is not always for the sentimental. Charles Elliot, former president of Harvard University, remarked that the most important quality a leader needs is “*the capacity to inflict pain.*” It is crucial, when we as leaders see our people struggling, that we dare not condescend or ridicule. At times on my Wilderness Seminar trips, we would intentionally use deprivation to challenge our students toward growth. This must occur with prior informed consent – the students need to be informed that on this trip, there will be times when we have limited food rations, where navigational information will be withheld, or where we don’t just run indoors when the weather turns raw. All this is done with the positive intention of encouraging them to experience consequences, utilize resources and work through problems – in short, to disrupt their equilibrium. And they need to have agreed to this before embarking. In the adventure world, we call this *Challenge by Choice*, and when done well and documented, it strengthens commitment, and even has some legal foundation. But they must never see us, the instructors, gloating, or seemingly laughing at them in their distress and confusion. Eugene used to talk about “*the essential and awful humility required when leading people into suffering.*” Imposing necessary pain on our followers must be a pure expression of love. This takes a lot of care and wisdom on the art of the teacher. Abraham Maslow prescribed it thusly:

“[There is a necessity for] discipline, deprivation, frustration, pain, and tragedy. To the extent that these experiences reveal and foster and fulfill our inner nature, to that extent they are desirable experiences ... The one who hasn’t conquered, withstood, and overcome continues to feel doubtful that he could.”

In addition, I think some of the most powerful life to life influence happens when we participate in their sufferings with them, or when they witness us struggling. This is presence again. It is the unvarnished you – when your real character is evident. In what is probably the most intimate letter of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, the mentor, says to Timothy, his protégé: “*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, the persecutions I endured.*” (II Tim. 3:10-11)

Finally, in our personal lives, and in the lives of our team members, we can attest that when we confront our homeostasis, when we challenge ourselves to change, and when we step across the uncomfortable growth zone boundary, it may be scary, but there appears a new horizon in our personal landscape. “*Petri-fun*” is how one of my client families described it. This is true when we respond to planned encounters with openness, but maybe even more so, when we take what life delivers us unexpectedly, and turn it into learning and growth. On the far side of unplanned encounters, we discover that we have elevated ourselves and our perspective, and we can see more of the world.

Leadership Toolbox

Some additional reading resources in this area are [Processing the Experience: Strategies to Enhance and Generalize Learning](#) – 2nd Ed. (John Luckner and Reldan Nadler, 1997), and [The Conscious Use of Metaphor in Outward Bound](#) (Stephen Bacon, 1983). Here are a few related helpful ideas:

If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. (Thoreau)

An obstacle is something you see when you take your eyes off the goal.

*Our grand business in life is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what clearly lies at hand.
(Thomas Carlyle)*

Viktor Frankl, on one's freedom to choose one's response to life (from Man's Search for Meaning, 1959, p. 86):

"I may seem to give the impression that the human being is completely unavoidably influenced by his surroundings. In this case, the surroundings being the unique structure of [concentration] camp life, which forced the prisoner to conform his conduct to a certain set pattern. But what about human liberty? Is there no spiritual freedom in regard to behavior and reaction to any given surroundings? Is that theory true which would have us believe that man is no more than a product of many conditional and environmental factors – be they of a biological, psychological or sociological nature? Is man but an accidental product of these? Most important, do the prisoners' reactions to the singular world of the concentration camp prove that man cannot escape the influences of his surroundings? Does man have no choice of action in the face of such circumstances?"

We can answer these questions from experience as well as on principle. The experiences of camp life show that man does have a choice of action. There were enough examples, often of a heroic nature, which proved that apathy could be overcome, irritability suppressed. Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress.

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts, comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way." 1

Invictus* (William Ernest Hensey)

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

* This poem served as Nelson Mandela's credo during his long unjust imprisonment on Robben Island.

Are you coming to Virginia for a family vacation, church group trip, troop event, or escape weekend? Why not experience Virginia adventure with **WILD GUYde Adventures!** **WGA** offers guided beginner level outdoor adventures and competent instruction in activity fundamentals. We can take you **hiking, rock climbing and rappelling, caving, or canoeing**. We use various activity areas in the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, along Virginia's Blue Ridge, and in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia. Check out the 2021 trip options below, or call to talk about your own creative adventure idea!
(540-433-1637 or lester@wildguyde.com)
You may also visit www.wildguyde.com

CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE: 2021 Daytrips with WILD GUYde Adventures, Harrisonburg, VA

Top-Roping at Hidden Rocks, Virginia: This is the rock climbing trip for the adventurous beginner – you don't have much experience, but you want a great outdoor day with your family or special friends. Thirty minutes west of Harrisonburg, we'll park just inside George Washington National Forest, gear up, and hike a scenic 20 minutes through rhododendron and hemlocks and across some mountain streams to a secluded sandstone cliff. There will be pink and white mountain laurel in June, and wild huckleberries in August. You'll be introduced to harnesses, knots, helmets, and the *belay system*; then we'll try some easy warm-up climbs to remind you that the kid inside you still likes to clamber on things. We can go on to some harder climbing that invites you to try new skills and movements. And we'll finish the day with a rappel – backing over the edge, with nothing between you and the ground below but 60 feet of air and a great view! Closer to Luray or Northern Virginia? We'll visit **Waterfall Mountain** in the Massanutten Range, or **Little Stony Man** on the Blue Ridge for TALL climbing and spectacular Shenandoah Valley panoramas! Closer to Lexington or Roanoke? We'll visit **Goshen Pass** and climb above the gorgeous Maury River!

(Full day \$225 for 1-3 people; \$50 for each additional. ½-day \$150 for 1-3, and \$35 for each additional)

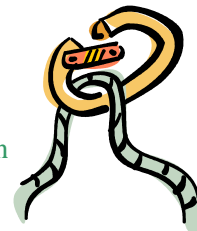


Beginner Climbing at Seneca Rocks, WV: After 90 minutes of curving mountain highway (okay, *country two-lane*), you'll gasp to see a spectacular blade of Tuscarora Sandstone, whose summit sits almost 1000 feet above its North Fork Valley floor. Seneca Rocks is a scenic place for the beginner or family to learn the rock climbing basics, top-roping and rappelling to an awesome West Virginia backdrop. Easy routes guarantee early success, but more challenging climbs also wait to test your skills. Seneca Rocks is an awesome place to climb, just beyond the sign: "*Here ends the realm of the hiker!*"
(Full day \$275 for 1-3 people; \$65 for each additional. ½ day \$200 for 1-3; \$50 each additional)

Multi-Pitch at Seneca Rocks: A little more experienced in climbing? Maybe you tried it at camp or the local rock gym? Ready for the next step? Join me for the multi-pitch experience, seconding the route as we lead-climb to the top of the fabled South Summit! This is the only technical summit in the U.S. east of the Mississippi. Seneca has routes at all ranges of difficulty, from starters like *Old Ladies Route* (5.2) to mid-range classics (*West Pole* 5.7) to old school hardman routes like *Crack of Dawn* and *Madmen Only* (5.10). Every one of them will give you a new appreciation for the expression "*high and vertical.*" Register your accomplishment and ruminations in the summit journal, wave to tourists way down in the valley, and then head down to *terra firma* via the three-pitch rappel. Finish the day with a splash in the North Fork River swimming hole at "Gravel Beach"; then pick up a cold drink and a West Virginia memento at Harpers General Store before sleeping the ride back to Virginia and "the Burg."

(Full-day: \$225 1st person; \$150 each addl.)

Instructional Climbing: This is a tutorial for those who have a little exposure to climbing, and want to gain eventual autonomy. Lots of instruction in current best-practice and hands-on trying it for you in rigging top anchors, belaying skills and equipment alternatives, movement coaching, and rappel setup



and protection. There will be individualized attention and repetitive practice, as well as some exploration of the historical evolution of climbing equipment and protocol. You will finish the day with a lot more confidence in your basic skills. Bring a partner so you'll have someone to climb with later.

(\$175 1st person; \$125 each for 2nd and 3rd)

WILD GUYde Adventures offers two other rock climbing options: a **Boy Scout Rock Climbing Merit Badge** tutorial for troops and leaders. We send a booklet to get troops started on their knots and First Aid requirements ahead of time, and then spend two days going through all the climbing, gear spec., and rappelling activity requirements (\$90 each). We also offer the **PCIA (Professional Climbing Instructor Association) Top Rope Climbing Instructor Certification** course and exam. This 3-day course (\$450) and 1 day exam (\$150) is for recreational climbers who want to add an instructor certification on their resume. It's also very useful for individuals guiding with club, camp, or university outing programs.

Peaceful Paddling: Canoe a ½ day stretch of the **South Fork River**. This Class I and II water is ideal for families with elementary school children – just long enough to be engaging without getting boring. As we wind through pastures in the Shenandoah Valley, you'll learn basic canoe strokes and maneuvering. Dangle your feet or plunk your head to cool off. And keep watching for blue herons, turtles on logs, and cows in the water!

(\$140 1-3 people; \$35 each additional)



Pick-up-the-Pace Paddling: A fuller day of canoeing awaits further down the **South Fork**. This provides a little more excitement for teenagers, adventurous parents, & other paddle pilgrims! A casual start allows a review of canoe strokes and partner teamwork.

An amazing rope-swing breaks the quiet – you won't believe what comes out of your mouth when you let go ("Geronimo!"). More paddling through runs and pools, always under the shadow of Massanutten Mountain. Lunch on the bank and then back into the boats. Finally, at Milepost 17, *Compton's Rapid* – a great shoot-through with some higher standing waves! Paddlers call it a "Fat II," but stay wide of Pillow Rock! Below, there's a jumping rock for another cool-off before paddling the final mile to the take-out. Load the boats and start the drive home – happy, tired, and maybe a little sun-tanned! West Virginia travelers may want to visit the gorgeous "Trough" on the **South Branch of the Potomac**. High and remote mountain walls on each side of the river, and keep your eyes open for bald eagles!

(\$175 1-3 people; \$45 each additional)

Half-Day Caving: The underground sidewalk and the tourist cave light show are not for you. You want to see it the way it was before the electrician got there! Primitive caves have all the features of the subterranean world – *speleothems* (stalactites, flowstone, soda straws, and columns), *lots of real mud*, and sometimes even *bats* (but most of them are asleep, and all of them are harmless). Pull on your coveralls, clip on your helmet, adjust your headlamp, and down we go. There are squeezes if you want them, and belly crawls for the adventurous --- but there are also corridor ceilings higher than your house, and large cavern rooms for the claustrophobic. Learn cave travel safety, underground navigation, and some "total body movement." Find out what the year-round underground temperature is, and then finally emerge back into sunlight with a new appreciation for what happens underneath Virginia when limestone and groundwater meet. The gleam of your smile might be the only thing shining through the mud on your face! Caving trips can be **Beginner Caving** (mostly horizontal movement – walking, stooping, or crawling) or **Intermediate Caving** (for folks fit enough to handle strenuous vertical moves, and more sustained physical effort). Various locations are available in both Virginia (20 minutes from Harrisonburg), and West Virginia (between Franklin and Elkins). *Caving trips are not advised for individuals who might be unfit, excessively overweight, or who live an extremely sedentary lifestyle, or for very young children.*



(\$125 for 1-3 people; \$25 for each additional)



Design Your Own Adventure: Numerous other options exist, including hiking and climbing guiding along **Virginia's Blue Ridge** or at the **NROCKS (WV)**, group orienteering challenges in the National Forest, a climbing self-rescue clinic, outdoor fitness training, and flatwater paddling instruction for beginners and children. We can customize to meet the interests of your family, scout troop, or youth group. Call to talk about your needs.

Things you oughta know:



- **Lester R. Zook** is the **WILD GUYde**. He is a *Wilderness First Responder*, and is a certified member of the *American Mountain Guides Association (Single Pitch Instructor)*. He has been leading wilderness adventures and training camping leaders for 30 years, and loves to take people outdoors! **Ethan Zook** has been a camp counselor and adventure leader at numerous camps. He is a *Red Cross Lifeguard* and a *Virginia Paramedic*. **Aaron Zook** is a climber, caver, and paddler, a *Red Cross Lifeguard*, and has been through *Wilderness First Aid*. **Mary Tapolyai** is a *WFR*, and a *Leave No Trace Master Educator*. Together, we are a small family business that strives to provide exceptional service, and create value in the lives of our guests.
- More detail on activity possibilities is available by visiting www.wildguyde.com. Call or e-mail to ask questions and to arrange dates, rates, and meeting points:

(540) 433-1637 or lester@wildguyde.com

- **WGA's** guiding season is 7 days a week. Rock climbing is March through October, paddling is best in the spring and summer, and wild caving is year-round. Call early to reserve; weekends in particular can fill quickly.
- **WILD GUYde** will provide all technical equipment (ropes, harnesses, helmets, etc.). A personal *things-to-bring list* (clothing, water, lunch, etc.) will be provided.
- We can also help with **lodging ideas**. We can recommend from *primitive* to *posh* – National Forest campgrounds, drive-up motels, and some delightful Bed and Breakfast inns!
- For groups of 10 or larger, we disregard the starter fee and simply bill the per-person rate.
- Payment is by cash or check, payable to WGA; unfortunately, credit cards cannot be accepted at this time. Gratuities are never expected, and always appreciated!
- Some activities have inherent risks – that's the meaning of the word *adventure*. Participants will be asked to fill out a *Medical Form*, and sign a *Participant Agreement* acknowledging certain dangers. Some activities are physically strenuous, emotionally demanding, or require sustained cognitive attention to task and detail. We make every effort to create a great day, but **WGA** guides do reserve the prerogative to deny access/participation if, in our judgment, the client is not likely to be successful, or might pose undue hazard. Clients also may not be “under the influence” or “feeling the effects” of alcohol or recreational drugs at the time of the event.
- **WILD GUYde Adventures** incorporated in Virginia in 2004, and is fully insured. **WGA** is a permittee with the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, and along Virginia's Blue Ridge. **WGA** is an equal opportunity provider and employer. **WGA** practices environmental stewardship, and is a member of the *Access Fund*, the *National Speleological Society*, the *Virginia Tourism Corp.*, the *Christian Adventure Association*, the *Shenandoah Valley Travel Assoc.*, and the *Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce*.

How was your trip with the **WILD GUYde**?!

Thanks again for guiding us – the trip was awesome! I'm a little sore and bruised today but it makes me happy because it reminds me of everything we did. The info was clear and the location appropriate. I also really enjoyed how you incorporated learning and team building elements into our trip. (Sarah)

We arrived back in Florida late Thursday night. We had a wonderful time on our adventure with you and we have all been raving to everyone about how great the trip was! Your professionalism and encouragement allowed us to continue on even when some of us were reluctant to try (me, of course)! The boys raved about the caving and the fact that it looked scary, but once you got through it, it wasn't as difficult or scary as you thought it would be. Todd and I were both thrilled with the learning experience for the kids and feel that we have all grown as a result of facing our fears. Everyone talked about what a great

guide you were for us! Overall, our adventure was a wonderful experience and the highlight of our trip to VA! (Christine)

We had a blast, everything was perfect, and you did an amazing job! The pictures are AWESOME! We would recommend you to any outdoor lover! We agreed that we learned so much from you. (Nina)

Thank you so very much for a wonderful adventure rock climbing last week. It was wonderful to share the time with my daughter. We both really appreciated your teaching style and the knowledge you imparted. I found a whole bucket-full of sermon illustrations. The location was excellent. We appreciated the fact that we were alone on the climb (except for the beautiful hawk). The photos you took came out well, and we showed them to my wife who appreciated our joy, but was thankful that she chose a more Hobbitish way to spend the day (reading). (Pastor Chris)

Your customer service was outstanding. Despite my late contact, you found a way to get us in on an adventure. The experience was excellent. The kids had a blast but you were appropriately serious in your approach. Safety was a clear priority as it must be. The experience was well structured and presented a number of great challenges. (Mark)

Our rock climbing afternoon with Lester was awesome. After requesting information by email Lester replied very fast, and even though the season is usually done by the end of November he was very flexible in arranging this for us due to the great weather forecast. Lester is very knowledgeable and knows how to motivate everyone. The kids had an amazing experience with their first climbing outside, and they immediately asked when we could go again. Not only did we had a great time, we also learned a lot. Stay positive, respect nature and be safe at all times! We will definitely go back to him for another adventure. (Annemeike)

What a fabulous adventure!!! I was a little apprehensive because I am 64. and this was my first caving experience. But it was exciting, fun and doable no matter your age. Lester was not only a great guide but a great teacher. He imbedded info about caving, geology, and cave navigation into the trip. I learned so much. I have raved about my adventure to my friends and we are going to sign up for another trip soon. Thanks WILD GUYde !!! (Roberta)

Lester was a tremendous host for us. Many of the Scouts and Scouters had never been caving before. Lester explained what to expect, ensured everyone understood the necessary safety precautions, and the real fun began after we entered the cave. He helped us explore a wonderful cave that provided a lot of stories for the Scouts later in the evening and following weeks.

Lester gave us some understanding of how caves form, why they exist and the life that can be found in a cave.

We came away with a better appreciation for the eco-system of caves and learned about caving as an activity. We had such a wonderful time the Scouts decided they want to do it again!

Thanks Lester for making this adventure possible for the Scouts of Troop 13. (Michael)