



# Mammoth Cave Resto Camp Protocol & Info Guide

Hello, and welcome to the Mammoth Cave Restoration Field Camp! We've prepared the following document that hopefully will answer your questions and help familiarize you with the general protocol and what to expect at Resto Camp.

## Intro

Presumably, you've already registered for the free event at the Eventbrite link that can be found at [www.restoremammoth.com](http://www.restoremammoth.com). If you haven't done so yet, please do because we need your emergency info, etc.

Resto Camp takes place over the first weekends of March, May and November, and the first full week of August. The three weekend camps officially start on Saturday morning, and most participants arrive at Mammoth Cave's Maple Springs area Friday afternoon/evening (the day before the camp) in order to set up your sleeping arrangements and to meet the other cavers—camaraderie and friendship are big components of the camp.

The week-long August camp officially begins on Monday morning of the first full week in August. Please refer to the section, later in this document, that has specific info about the week-long camp.

There are a limited number of spots (40) for each Resto event, so be sure to sign-up sooner rather than later. Go to [restoremammoth.com](http://restoremammoth.com) and navigate to the Eventbrite sign-up page for that event. Sign-up opens at 11:01pm on the last day of the month preceeding the month prior to the camp. For example, if the Fall Resto weekend is on Saturday, Nov. 4, then sign-up opens at 11:01pm on the last day of September. If there's a Resto weekend on Saturday, Mar. 2, then sign-up opens at 11:01pm on the last day of January.

The facility where we stay is a private area of Mammoth Cave National Park located a road called the Maple Springs Loop. The spot is near the Maple Springs Group Campground and the Maple Springs Trailhead. On Google Maps, navigate to "The Mammoth Cave International Center for Science & Learning." After turning off the Green River Ferry Road onto the Maple Springs Loop road, it's the house about a quarter-mile down on the right (north) side of the road.

Keep in mind that the Green River passes through the middle of the 80 square miles that encompass Mammoth Cave National Park. The Visitor Center and cave entrances lie in the south portion of the park, while Maple Springs is on the north side. To get there, you must either drive around the outside boundaries of the park where there are major roadway bridges, or use the Green River Ferry within the park, which sometimes does not operate due to low water conditions on the river. See the end of this document for more information on the ferry.

Some participants choose to stay at a hotel in Cave City, which is their prerogative, but the Maple Springs accommodations (house, bunkhouse, camping area) all are free of charge.

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## **Maple Springs facilities**

The Maple Springs facility consists of three buildings for participants (and a storage barn). The “main house” (heated and air-conditioned) has four bedrooms that can accommodate nine people. Unless someone has special needs, it's 'first come, first served' and the four bedrooms usually fill with participants who arrive early. Located inside the house are two small bathrooms, with (single) showers (one of them has a bathtub), and there are two bathrooms with showers (one of them being two-person, two-nozzles) accessible directly from outside the house. ALL four bathrooms may be used by ALL participants, regardless of where you bunk.

The main house also has a small kitchen with a microwave, a stove/oven and a full-size refrigerator/freezer that participants may use to prepare and store food and drinks. The house also features a living room with two couches and an outdoor front porch seating area.

Maple Springs also features a good-sized bunkhouse (heated and air-conditioned), composed of two large rooms containing both single and bunk beds—group housing for about 20 people or so. Next to each bed is a tall metal hang-up closet/shelf unit for that person's clothes and gear. The bunkhouse also has a couch, a television and a tall mini-fridge, but it does **not** have a bathroom. The beds are 'first come, first served,' but (like the bedrooms in the main house) you generally will not spend much time there except for sleeping.

Maple Springs also has plenty of level, shaded ground for tent camping. (Bring a long extension cord if you need electricity.) There's also a small concrete pad that is an RV hookup (w electricity).

In addition to the main house and bunkhouse, there is a classroom/kitchen building that is used as a gathering spot and dining area. Its kitchen has a microwave, two full-size refrigerators/freezers and two stove/ovens. During the weekend camps, this building and the kitchen are available to all participants for storing food or preparing your own meals. During the week-long camp, however, the kitchen and refrigerators in this building are used by the cooks to prepare meals for the participants and are off-limits, please.

Both kitchens (in the main house and the classroom/kitchen building) include full sets of pots, pans, plates, glasses, coffee cups and cutlery (and coffee makers).

Wi-fi is available and strongest inside the main house. However, it may be more reliable to use your cell phone's wi-fi hotspot if trying to use a laptop computer. Also, not all cell phone networks have good coverage over the Maple Springs area or in certain areas of the park (like down by the river). Verizon is one cell network that seems to work well enough at Maple Springs.

## **Protocol**

Upon arriving at camp, you should first find and 'check in' with the Resto Director. Next, locate an open bed in the main house or bunkhouse and 'claim' it with your sleeping bag and pillow—or just set up your tent wherever you wish. Participants who are camping outside or staying in the bunkhouse typically make use of the two outside-accessible bathrooms (but, as previously stated, if those bathrooms/showers are occupied, it's perfectly okay to use the bathrooms inside the house).

If you brought any food or beverages that must be kept cold, feel free to move them to a refrigerator in the main house or the classroom/kitchen building.

On Friday evening of the weekend camps, many of the early arrivers car-pool to Cave City (on the south side of the Green River) and enjoy dinner and conversation at a local restaurant. However, keep in mind that the Green River ferry (if running) shuts down at 6pm and you'll need to make a roundabout 45-min. drive back to Maple Springs if you're out past 6pm. Remember, you can always remain at Maple and take advantage of either kitchen to prepare your own dinner meal.

Friday evenings are spent conversing and catching-up either in the main house living room, on the outdoor patio outside the kitchen building or around the campfire ring (—don't forget to bring a 'camp chair').

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Weekend Camps officially begin Saturday morning at 8:30am Central Time (Mammoth Cave is in the Central Time Zone) at the Visitor Center picnic area (north) pavilion. Be sure to arise early enough to make your own coffee and breakfast (in either of the kitchens). Some folks get up extra early and drive all the way into town for a restaurant breakfast (Cracker Barrel, Watermill, McDonald's), and sometimes the Mammoth Cave (Visitor Center) Lodge restaurant has a buffet breakfast, but their hours of operation have been erratic the past couple years. But unless you're willing to make the long drive around the park boundaries, keep in mind that the ferry (—when in operation) opens at 8am on Saturday and Sunday (6am Monday through Friday), so there would not be enough time for a sit-down breakfast and still make the Resto Crew's 8:30am meet-up time.

### **Camp begins**

Keep in mind that when the Green River Ferry is in operation, it takes no less than 20-min. to drive from Maple Springs, cross the river on the ferry (which only holds three cars at a time), and make it to the meeting spot. Allow 30 minutes, ideally, but it could take 40-45 if there are lots of vehicles in line to get across.

If the ferry is not in operation, allow 45 minutes (or more) to reach the meet-up pavilion on time.

Regardless of whether participants stay at Maple Springs or a hotel in town, everyone meets at 8:30am on Saturday at an outdoor pavilion located in the Picnic Area off the back edge of the Mammoth Cave Visitors Center parking lot. It's labelled as the "Mammoth Cave Visitor Hangout Picnic Area" in Google Maps. From the rear of the Visitor Center parking lot, turn right on the Picnic Area access road and then make an immediate left.

Be sure to bring all the gear you'll need for a day of caving (you'll be able to change before entering the cave) but leave it in your car for now. (Also don't forget a lunch!) The group will then assemble under the pavilion and you'll be asked to sign a waiver form (or two). The Camp Director and our NPS liaison will then talk about work objectives for the day and discuss any additional issues that participants need to know for the weekend.

You'll find out at that time whether you'll eat your lunch inside the cave or back at your car. It may depend on how deep in the cave we'll be working, and it also might depend on the weather outside. But more often than not, you'll exit the cave to eat your lunch (and bathroom break) outside the cave, back at your car. In case the work is in a remote area with too long of a trek back to the cave entrance, be prepared in case you need to take a basic lunch and beverage that can fit in your cave pack, and eat lunch in the cave if need be.

At the end of the Pavilion meeting, a 'show of hands' will be requested to see how many participants wish to meet for a group dinner that evening—which usually is held at 'El Mazatlan' restaurant in Cave City. (A leader will call ahead and make our group reservation.) Most people go to the Mexican restaurant for the great food, service and camaraderie (and margaritas)—however, remember that the ferry closes at 6pm and you'll have that 45-min drive back to Maple. Feel free to remain at Maple Springs to prepare your own dinner.

### **In-cave work**

From the Picnic Area pavilion, participants return to their cars and drive to whichever parking spot is closest to the area where we'll be working, which could be one of the remote Mammoth Cave entrances or the overflow parking lot behind the Lodge. You'll 'gear up' at your car, then walk to the cave entrance.

What kind of work? It can vary from wire removal to trail maintenance to off-trail scouting. Participants may be divided into smaller teams to accomplish multiple objectives. Whatever needs to be done, it will be rewarding and will help the NPS and historic Mammoth Cave, and it will be with your Resto caver friends and with access to otherwise restricted areas of the world's longest cave. How cool is that!

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See the 13-min. YouTube video (made by Resto Camp Director Brian and Gary) that explains what happens at Resto Camp: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3uvekc>

You'll accomplish your work tasks and then break for a one-hour lunch around 12 noon. You'll either sit down right where you're at and start eating or (more likely) exit the cave—which will allow a bathroom break, you then grab your lunch from your car, eat, and then return to your in-cave work site.

The work day generally ends around 3:30pm. After exiting the cave, you're free to do anything you like for the remainder of the day—perhaps check out the Visitor Center, which has a book store and (free) museum exhibit. Most participants head back to Maple Springs to clean up, relax and freshen up before dinner. Remember, the ferry closes at 6pm. So if you 'go to town' for dinner and are out late, be prepared for the 45-min. drive back to Maple.

After dinner, some participants choose to gather around the campfire with their favorite beverages, some hang out in the main house living room to chat and others spend a quiet rest of the evening on the front porch or around the campfire.

### **Sunday**

On Sunday morning, you'll break camp, straighten your beds/bedrooms and pack your vehicles before/after eating breakfast on your own. Just like Saturday, allow enough time for traveling to the Picnic Area pavilion for the 8:30am rendezvous, but occasionally it's decided that we meet directly at the objective parking area (details will be made known to everyone on Saturday). Work inside Mammoth on Sunday typically goes until 1pm, after which camp is officially 'over' and participants are free to immediately get on the road to head home.

Some participants, regrettably, have extenuating circumstances and are unable to participate in the Sunday half-day of work.

### **Week-long Resto Camp protocol**

Spending an entire week at Maple Springs and being underground six days in a row at Mammoth Cave is a truly rewarding experience. In addition to five work days underground, as described above for the weekend camps, you also get two 'reward trips' to visit sometimes remote, rarely-seen areas of Mammoth and other closed caves (like Floyd Collins' Crystal Cave).

The week-long camp takes place beginning on the first Monday in August. Participants are required to arrive in time for a mandatory on-site 'group dinner' on Sunday evening where we get a rundown of work projects from the Resto Director and sometimes a 'thank you' speech from a Park official.

On Monday morning, you'll meet at the Picnic Area pavilion at 8:30am, as usual.

Another big difference with the week-long camp is that there is a participant fee which covers three meals a day for the week. It's a bargain, too! For \$90, you get a hot breakfast and a hot dinner, prepared and served for you (buffet style) Monday through Friday at the kitchen/classroom building (plus five days of lunch fixins, plus the initial Sunday dinner—16 meals).

Vegetarian and gluten-free meals are available for those who require them.

After breakfast, lunchmeat, fruit, chips (and other options) are laid-out for everyone to make their own sack lunch—which is then placed in a large cooler and transported to the cave entrance for you to eat when you emerge at lunchtime.

Wednesday dinner is always a 'pizza party' that takes place at an enclosed (air conditioned) Picnic Area pavilion, after which is the first 'reward trip.'

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On Friday, there's a half day of work, with the afternoon 'off.' The on-site dinner that evening is usually something extra special (like pork chops, etc.), which is followed by the Resto awards ceremony where we recognize newcomers and present other thank-you gifts to participants.

There may also be specially-printed t-shirts commemorating the week-long Resto Camp available, which you have the option of paying for when you register, which will be distributed at the awards ceremony.

Saturday of the week-long camp is a 'reward trip' day, where you can choose a shorter (1 to 3-hr.) trip or a longer (up to 8-hr.) trip to a remote and sometimes 'extreme' area of Mammoth Cave. After your Saturday reward trip, you're free to get on the road and head home. But you can stay overnight until Sunday, with the Resto Director's permission.

### **Green River ferry operating hours**

Remember that Maple Springs is located on the North side of the Green River. As such, you'll be using the Green River ferry to reach Maple Springs if you're driving from I-65 and Cave City through the National Park. The ferry typically operates from 6am to 6pm on Monday through Friday, and from 8am to 6pm on Saturday and Sunday. Unfortunately, the ferry is sometimes closed due to weather, low river levels or maintenance. Be sure to check the ferry status (call the phone number, below) and take that into account with your travel.

The National Park Service maintains a phone line with an updated recorded message on the Green River ferry operating status: **(270)-758-2166**. There also is a Facebook page, located at:

**[www.facebook.com/pages/Green-River-Ferry/235564863234637](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Green-River-Ferry/235564863234637)**

It should be mentioned that Maple Springs also is accessible from the north via two-lane roads that wind through Hart County. See a map for details.

### **Weekend Resto Camp "Don't Forget" List:**

- Breakfast food for Sat + Sun
- Lunch for Sat (sandwich, chips if out of the cave; cave pack crushable lunch food if inside the cave) Bottle of Gatorade or water
- Food for Fri + Sat dinner, if you're not 'going to town'
- Cave gear: helmet, multiple lights, batteries, coverall, gloves, boots, cave pack (men: emergency 'pee bottle')
- Sleeping bag and pillow
- Clothing (in-cave layers + outside the cave casuals) and footwear
- Towel (for showering) and toiletries
- Your favorite snacks and beverages
- Camp chair
- Your phone charger!

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**Week-long Resto Camp additional “Don’t Forget” List:**

- Extra everything (cave gear, clothing, towel)
- Camera
- Musical instrument

If you wish to stay apprised of Resto Camp activities, subscribe to the MacaResto email chat group (on groups.io) by sending a request to **MACAresto+subscribe@groups.io**

If you have any further questions about Resto Camp, please contact Camp Director Brian Hunsaker at **macarestocamp@gmail.com**