

Description of the proposed Big Pit visit

The Big Pit National Coal Museum was a real coal mine and is one of Britain's leading mining museums. It still retains many features of its former life as a coal mine, standing high on the heather-clad moors of Blaenavon.



On arrival we will be split into two groups of approx. 15 and assigned a guide for the underground tour. Our underground tour is booked for 11.30 and we are aiming to arrive by at least 11.00 to allow time for “kitting out” prior to going underground.

Our guide will be a former coal miner who will take us on a 50-minute walk around the coal faces, engine houses and stables. He will explain the different ways in which coal was mined and transported and he will share some of his own experiences.

After being kitted out with all the necessary equipment – helmet, cap lamp, belt, battery and ‘self-rescuer’ (as used by the miners when the pit was a working coal mine) we will enter the cage and be lowered 300 feet (90 metres) underground.

General Advice for Visitors

The Big Pit site is on the side of a steep hill and on a number of different levels. Although there are ramps provided they are quite long and the climb can be arduous.

The walking surface both above and below ground is typical of an industrial site so sturdy shoes or boots are recommended. The floor can be uneven or slippery in places and there are numerous steps to negotiate. Underground, there are one or two places where you will need to bend to avoid bumping your head.

The Big Pit is an outdoor industrial site, so protective clothing is needed in case of bad weather

In summary, we are advised to:

- Wear warm roof clothing, waterproofs and sensible footwear.
- Allow approximately one hour for the underground tours
- Allow three to four hours for your visit.

Contraband

Although Big Pit no longer produces coal, it is still classed as a coal mine under the Coal Mines Act. As such it is against the law to take smoking materials or incendiary substances underground.

These include cigarettes, tobacco, matches and lighters, mobile phones, battery-operated watches and key fobs, calculators, radios, personal music players and all photographic equipment. **To repeat, it is an offence to take these items underground.**

This 'contraband' will be collected by our Guides before the underground tour and will be kept securely locked away on the surface and returned to you at the end of the tour.

In normal circumstances, although all battery-powered equipment such as watches, cameras etc must be left on the surface as 'contraband'. This requirement does not apply to certain battery-powered medical aids such as Hearing Aids and Blood-sugar Monitors. If you rely on such aids please notify the Deputy of such equipment.

Facilities

There are suitably equipped toilets on all three levels of the site. The disabled facilities in the Waiting Room and Pithead Baths are unisex. However, the disabled facilities in the toilets adjacent to the Winder are single-sex.

PLEASE NOTE the underground tour lasts about an hour and **there are no toilets underground.**

Lunch

The Miner's Canteen and the Coffee Shop, serve a range of hot and cold food, snacks, cakes, hot and cold drinks and treats.

Address

Big Pit National Coal Museum, Blaenafon, Torfaen, NP4 9XP

Phone: 0300 111 2 333; Email: bigpit@museumwales.ac.uk

Contact: Kathryn O'Dobhain Email: Kathryn.O'Dobhain@museumwales.ac.uk

Blaenavon Ironworks

After lunch at the Big Pit we will drive the short distance to the Blaenavon Ironworks site. The Ironworks were opened in 1789 and provide the best-preserved blast furnace complex of its period and type in the world. At its height it was one of the most important producers of iron globally.



The ironworks were a milestone in the history of the Industrial Revolution and at the time were at the cutting-edge of new technology. The power of steam was harnessed and a way of making steel using iron-ore was developed, which led to a worldwide boom in the steel industry, taking Wales' industrial might to new heights.

There's plenty to see including the extensive remains of the blast furnaces, the cast houses and the impressively restored Water Balance Tower.

Exhibitions allow you to see interpretations and reconstructions and provide a fascinating insight into the social history of industrial Britain. Admission is free.

Visitors to the site can see the refurbished Stack Square cottages and appreciate how the workers lived through the ages, and the re-created company truck shop.

New, cutting-edge audio-post technology helps bring the story of the Ironworks to life like never before.

The visit will not be guided and will last approximately an hour before the return to Malvern for 5.00 pm at the latest.

Location:

- **Address:** North Street, NP4 9RN
- **Telephone:** 01495 792615
- **Email:** blaenavonironworks@wales.gsi.gov.uk