

# **Via Ferrata/ Nelson Rocks**

## **Operated by Horizons**

3586 Horizons Way  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
Phone: 540-896-7600 Fax: 540-896-5455

### Visitor Registration Packet

1. Pass Registration and Release of Liability
2. Warning and Disclaimer
3. Rules and Regulations
4. Via Ferrata - Frequently Asked Questions

### **Visitors & parent/guardian of visitor under age 18:**

*Please carefully read the Registration and Release document (# 1 above). This document must be properly filled out and executed for each visitor to Nelson Rocks Preserve. Visitors under age 18 must also have the Registration and Release signed in the space provided at the bottom of the page by the minor's custodial parent or legal guardian. Please use a separate form for each visitor.*

*Please also read and understand the disclosures contained in Items 2- 4 above (#4 for via Ferrata climbers only). If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact our office at 540-896-7600. For further information, announcements, price list, hours of operation etc. please call or visit our web site at [www.nelsonrocks.org](http://www.nelsonrocks.org).*

*The Registration and Release may be completed and signed in advance and brought with you to the site. Payment for your pass will be made upon arrival via Visa/MasterCard., personal checks and cash*

*Thank you for your cooperation.*

**Via Ferrata/Nelson Rocks – Operated by Horizons**

Pass no. \_\_\_\_\_

**NELSON ROCKS PRESERVE - PASS REGISTRATION AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY**

Please print: Name: ----- Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please check one:*

-----Address:

Via ferrate pass  Non - VF day pass

**RELEASE AND AGREEMENT**

**I, the undersigned, certify that I have read and fully understand the Warning provided to me with this form. I have read every word of this document. I understand and absolutely agree with everything it says. I have read the Rules and Regulations of HORIZONS and promise to abide by them.**

By signing this Release and entering Nelson Rocks Preserve in Circleville, West Virginia (the premises referred to in this document as the "Preserve", which includes the Nelson Rocks Via Ferrata if I am buying a via Ferrata pass), I agree that Nelson Rocks/Via Ferrata and its operator Horizons, and their respective owners, officers, operators, managers, directors, shareholders, agents, employees and contractors, anyone else connected in any way with the Preserve, and their respective heirs, successors and assigns (all of whom are collectively referred to in this document as "HORIZONS") owe me no duty of care or any other duty as a guest of the Preserve. I agree that HORIZONS is not responsible for keeping the Preserve safe for my use, and that the Preserve is a dangerous place. I do not expect HORIZONS to warn me about any dangerous condition, whether they know about it or not. I agree that HORIZONS is entitled to the full protection of the West Virginia Recreational Use Statute.

In return for being allowed to enter and use the Preserve, I give up the legal right to sue HORIZONS if I get injured or killed while I am there. HORIZONS will not be liable if I get hurt or killed or my property gets damaged, lost or stolen at the Preserve, regardless of how it happens. I personally assume all risks (foreseen or unforeseen) to me and my property while I am at the Preserve. I release HORIZONS from liability for any injury or damage to me or my property. I promise to indemnify, defend and hold harmless HORIZONS from any claim by me, my family, estate, heirs, or assigns, or any other person, arising out of my use of the Preserve. I know that HORIZONS is relying on these promises, and would not allow me to enter the Preserve otherwise. Should I decide to take legal action against HORIZONS and break the legal and binding nature of this contract, I agree to pay all of HORIZONS's attorneys' fees, I agree that the lawsuit may only be filed and litigated in the Courts of Pendleton County, West Virginia. and I waive the right to a jury trial.

I want this Release and Agreement to be interpreted as broadly as possible. If any court decides that any part of this release is not valid or enforceable, I still want the rest of it to be valid and enforceable. This Release and Agreement is binding not only on me, but on my family, and my heirs, estate, executors and personal representatives if I die. It is also binding on any persons or members of my family, including minors, who are accompanying me at the Preserve. I am over the age of eighteen, or if I'm not, my parent or legal guardian has read this document and signed below. I have signed this document of my own free will.

**I PROMISE I WON'T SUE HORIZONS OR EVERYONE CONNECTED WITH HORIZONS, AND I DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE SUING THEM, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.**

Signature: ----- Date of signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN**

(REQUIRED IF GUEST IS UNDER 18)

I AM THE PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE HORIZONS GUEST NAMED ABOVE. I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE AND AGREEMENT, UNDERSTAND IT AND AGREE WITH IT. BY SIGNING BELOW, I AGREE THAT IT IS BINDING ON BOTH ME AND THE MINOR.

Signature:

Date of signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the child:

## **Via Ferrata/ Nelson Rocks**

### **WARNING AND DISCLAIMER**

Nelson Rocks Preserve is covered in steep terrain with loose, slippery and unstable footing. The weather can make matters worse. Sheer drops are everywhere. You may fall, be injured or die. There are hidden holes. You could break your leg. There are wild animals, which may be vicious, poisonous or carriers of deadly diseases. These include poisonous snakes and insects. Plants can be poisonous as well.

Real dangers are present even on trails. Trails are not sidewalks. They can be, and are, steep, slippery and dangerous. Trail features made or enhanced by humans, such as steps, walls and railings (if any) can break, collapse, or otherwise fail catastrophically at any time.

Stay on the trails whenever possible. The terrain, in addition to being dangerous, is surprisingly complex. You may get lost. Carry food, water and first aid supplies at all times.

Rocks and other objects can fall from the cliffs. They can tumble down slopes. This can happen naturally, or be caused by people above you, such as climbers. Rocks of all sizes, including huge boulders, can shift, move or fall with no warning. Use of helmets is mandatory for everyone. They won't save you if you get hit by something big or on another part of your body.

Weather can be dangerous, regardless of the forecast. Be prepared with extra clothing, including rain gear.

Please know that scrambling in high places (scrambling is moving over terrain steep enough to use your hands) without proper experience, training and equipment, or allowing children to do so is dangerous.

The Preserve does not provide rangers or security personnel. The other people in the preserve, including other visitors, our employees, agents, and guests, and anyone else who might sneak in, may be stupid, reckless, or otherwise dangerous. They may be mentally ill, criminally insane, drunk, using illegal drugs and/or armed with deadly weapons and ready to use them. We aren't necessarily going to do anything about it. We refuse to take responsibility.

If you climb, you may die or be seriously injured. This is true whether you are experienced or not, trained or not, equipped or not, though training and equipment may help. It's a fact, climbing is extremely dangerous. If you don't like it, stay at home. You really shouldn't be doing it anyway. We do not provide supervision or instruction. We are not responsible for, and do not inspect or maintain, climbing anchors (including bolts, pitons, slings, trees, etc.) As far as we know, any of them can and will fail and send you plunging to your death. There are countless tons of loose rock ready to be dislodged and fall on you or someone else. There are any number of extremely and unusually dangerous conditions existing on and around the rocks, and elsewhere on the property. We may or may not know about any specific hazard, but even if we do, don't expect us to try to warn you. You're on your own.

Rescue services are not provided by the Preserve, and may not be available quickly or at all. Local rescue squads may not be equipped for or trained in mountain rescue. If you are lucky enough to have somebody try to rescue you or treat your injuries, they may be incompetent or worse. This includes doctors and hospitals. We assume no responsibility. Also, if you decide to participate in a rescue of some other unfortunate, that's your choice. Don't do it unless you are willing to assume all risks.

By entering the Preserve, you are agreeing that we owe you no duty of care or any other duty. We promise

you nothing. We do not and will not even try to keep the premises safe for any purpose. The premises are not safe for any purpose. This is no joke. We won't even try to warn you about any dangerous or hazardous condition, whether we know about it or not. If we do decide to warn you about something, that doesn't mean we will try to warn you about anything else. If we do make an effort to fix an unsafe condition, we may not try to correct any others, and we may make matters worse! We and our employees or agents may do things that are unwise and dangerous. Sorry, we're not responsible. We may give you bad advice. Don't listen to us. In short, ENTER AND USE THE PRESERVE AT YOUR OWN RISK. And have fun!

**Via Ferrata/Nelson Rocks – Operated by Horizons**

# Via Ferrata/ Nelson Rocks

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. Nelson Rocks is a high rockfall area!!! Use of climbing helmets is mandatory for persons under 18 while on the via ferrata. Avoid touching or disturbing loose rock. Remember that you are responsible for the safety of persons below you, who may be hidden from your view in the trees; once a rock falls, it can bounce and roll great distances, shatter into many dangerous projectiles, dislodge other rocks etc., endangering persons over a wide area. Trundling/throwing of rocks is grounds for ejection from the Preserve.
2. Please respect other visitors and wildlife by keeping noise levels down. No radios, boom boxes etc. which may be heard by other people are permitted. Remember, for safety reasons, climbing parties must be able to hear one another at a distance, so keep unnecessary noise to a minimum.
3. PLEASE, leave no trash of any kind, including tape, cigarette butts, powerbar wrappers etc. Consider using the latrine in the parking area before starting up the trail. If you MUST do a #2 in the preserve, please do so away from the trail. Preferably take your doings with you when you leave. Otherwise, it should be buried, along with any paper, and/or covered securely with a rock, well out of the way where it won't be discovered. Thanks!
4. Sorry, no dogs or other pets are allowed anywhere in the Preserve beyond the parking area. Dogs must be kept restrained, for the safety and comfort of other visitors, wildlife and the pets themselves. Please clean up all droppings. HORIZONS takes no responsibility for the safety of pets left alone anywhere on the premises.
5. Via Ferrata rules:
  - a. First time via climbers (unless guided) must attend an orientation by HORIZONS staff, by appointment or during posted walk-in hours.
  - b. Approved via ferrata lanyards with load-limiting devices must be used at all times. Ordinary climbing slings/runners are not suitable. The decision of HORIZONS staff as to use of a climber's personal equipment is final.
  - c. The via ferrata rungs are installed for your safety and must be used. Even short falls on the via can be dangerous, so increasing the difficulty of the climb by avoiding the rungs and using rock holds is unsafe and is not permitted.
  - d. No more than three (3) people at a time are allowed on the bridge. If someone is already on the bridge, ask to be sure they are comfortable before stepping out with them. No intentional bouncing or rocking of the bridge is allowed.
6. The Preserve's trails are delicate. Please try to tread lightly, don't meander off the trails or cut switchbacks. On the via ferrata, try to keep your feet on rock and not disturb delicate soils and vegetation.
7. Periodic area closures for resource conservation, maintenance, visitor programs etc. are possible - please observe posted notices.
8. The rocks south of Nelson Gap Road (on the right as you approach) are not part of the Preserve. Please do not trespass.
9. Old fixed anchors (pitons) are considered to be historical artifacts and are the property of HORIZONS. Do not damage or remove.
10. Commercial climbing instruction/guiding and all other commercial activities are prohibited except by express

permission of HORIZONS management.

11. Information on climbing (such as route information, maps, topos etc.) and other recreational activities in the Preserve are proprietary information and the property of HORIZONS. By visiting the Preserve, you are agreeing that all rights to publish or reproduce such information in any written, electronic or digital form are reserved exclusively by HORIZONS.

(Items 12 through 15 apply primarily to conventional (roped) climbing parties)

12. If you have not paid to use the via ferrata, please STAY OFF. If your climb has you belaying or topping out on the route of the via ferrata, please give via climbers an ample right of way. Anyone occupying a ledge anywhere along the via who is seen NOT CLIPPED IN will have their pass revoked and be asked to leave.

13. Leave no brightly colored webbing or other gear on the crag. Use established rappel and descent routes where practical.

14. NO BOLTING without the express permission of HORIZONS staff. Many climbs have been done which have not been documented. Assume any route has been done trad, and find out before acting. Cutting of trees/shrubs and major cleaning (lichen removal) should not be undertaken without permission.

15. RESCUE - Your party must be competent in self-rescue. In a serious technical/vertical rescue situation, waiting for capable outside rescue to arrive may not be a good plan.

## Via Ferrata at Nelson Rocks Preserve Operated by Endless Horizons

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **What does "Via Ferrata" mean?**

VIA stands for "very intense adventure". "Ferrata" is Italian for "like driving a Ferrari".

#### **Seriously?**

No, just kidding. It's Italian for "iron road" or "Iron way". A via Ferrata is basically a long climbing route with permanently fixed cables for protection. Steel rungs are used on steeper sections to keep the difficulty of the climbing moderate. Bridges, ladders, and other structures are often used.

#### **Where does the Idea come from?**

Vias have been used in Europe for a century or more. The first were probably built by alpine guides to allow their clients access to more challenging mountaineering routes. During the world wars, vias were used to move troops easily through high mountain terrain, and played an important part in some mountain battles. By making the excitement, exposure and scenic beauty enjoyed by climbers accessible to many more people (and relatively inexpensive), via climbing has become a very popular sport in Europe, with hundreds of routes in existence and more being built all the time. The Nelson Rocks Via Ferrata is the first and only American-designed and -built via Ferrata in the world. It includes a 200 long, 150' high swinging foot bridge, one of the longest such bridges in the country.

#### **Who can climb a via Ferrata?**

Anyone in good health, and fit enough to handle steep, rugged trail hiking, and at least 13 years old can climb the Via Ferrata.

#### **What equipment is used?**

A standard climbing harness and helmet, and a shock- absorbing lanyard specifically designed for via Ferrata climbing. These items are rented at the Via Ferrata.

#### **Can I bring my own gear / Can I get a discount for bringing my own gear?**

No. We appreciate and understand the desire and preference of using your own gear if you have it, but due to insurance regulations, we require everyone who comes to experience the Via Ferrata at NRP to use the gear that is supplied by staff.

#### **What is a via Ferrata lanyard and how Is It used?**

Attached to the harness, it is a double or "Y" -lanyard with two cords running to carabiners (snap links), which are used to anchor the climber to the safety cable and (sometimes) to rungs along the route. As the climber moves past an anchor point on the cable (one of the bolts which attach the cable to the rock), the two carabiners are unclipped and clipped on the other side of the anchor, one at a time in succession, so that the climber is attached with at least one side of the lanyard at all times. On bridge crossings, the lanyards are always clipped to a safety cable overhead. Because a fall down the safety cable to the nearest anchor point can generate dangerously high forces, the lanyard is equipped with a load- limiting (shock absorbing) device. Ordinary climbing slings *are* unsafe and may not *be* used on the via.

#### **Is the Via Ferrata safe?**

While we do our best to manage the risks around the Via Ferrata, it is impossible to entirely remove all risk from the activity. Via Ferrata climbing is not like an amusement park ride, where you're strapped in and your safety is guaranteed. It is potentially dangerous, not unlike skiing, boating, mountain biking and so on. It requires alertness and careful judgment. Dangers include rockfall, lightning, and a variety of other uncontrollable risks. You will receive an orientation when you arrive at the Via which will explain how to keep yourself safe while enjoying the Via Ferrata.

#### **"Real" climbers don't use the *via*, do they?**

Many experienced rock climbers have enjoyed climbing the via Ferrata. It is a nice change of pace, which gives climbers a chance to leave their rope and rack in the car, and climb nonstop for a

couple of hours without stopping to belay. It is also a great way for climbers to introduce non-climbing friends to the vertical world.

### **How scary is the via for non-climbers?**

The Via Ferrata has several spots that are very high and exposed; these places are intimidating to many visitors. Our guides will work with visitors on difficult sections. If a visitor decides that they would rather not continue, they may leave the Via Ferrata using one of several exits.

### **How should I dress, and what should I bring on the Via?**

You should dress for movement and according to the weather. The temperature tends to be about 10°F cooler in the mountains, and may be even cooler due to wind. You may wear shorts if conditions allow. You should wear **close-toed shoes** that you can move easily in (hiking boots, running shoes, etc.). Please do not wear sandals of any kind or crocs. Some people like to wear gloves when climbing (fingerless are preferred). For colder weather, we suggest a jacket, a hat to wear under your helmet, and full-fingered gloves.

When you arrive, you will need to sign **the Via Ferrata waiver**. If you have minors in the group who are traveling without their parents, the waiver will have to be signed by the parents in advance, and brought along.

We suggest that you bring a small daypack with you on the Via Ferrata – everyone will need their hands free to climb. We recommend the following items:

- Water (at least 2 quarts).
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Chapstick
- Personal medications (if they will be needed on the trip)
- Camera
- Extra clothing (light rain jacket, sweatshirt, long sleeve t-shirt, etc.).
- A snack or lunch to eat throughout the day.
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### **How long will the via Ferrata take?**

Check-in, gear rental and first-timer orientations take about 1/2 hour. For first-time climbers moving at a relaxed pace, allow 3-4 hours for the climb and descent, from the time you leave your car until you return. More time will be needed for larger groups (more than four) or if there is heavy climber traffic ahead of you. The total trip, from check in to hike down, may last 4.5 hours.

### **How much does the Via Ferrata cost?**

The cost of the Via Ferrata varies depending on how many people will be in your group and on what day you visit. The Via Ferrata is \$65 per person for a group of less than 10 and \$60 per person for a group of more than ten on a weekend. On weekdays, the cost is \$53 per person for a group of less than 10 and \$48 for a group of more than ten.

### **Do you offer an organizer's discount?**

No, we do not.

### **I have a very large group. Is this ok?**

Absolutely. We may split your group up into several smaller groups of about 10 each and send them at different times, but we will be able to accommodate your group.

### **Do you provide transportation to the Via from \_\_\_\_\_ (Horizons, my location, etc.)?**

Yes, by arrangement.

### **Is the 20% deposit refundable?**

Not usually. If you fail to show up on your trip date, the deposit is non-refundable. If weather keeps your trip from running, we will apply your deposit to a re-scheduled trip. Depending on the situation, we may sometimes refund deposits.

### **My 11 year old is \_\_\_\_\_ (very athletic, very adventurous, big for his/her age, etc.). Can s/he go?**

Sorry, but no. 13 years old is the minimum age we can take on the Via Ferrata. We can suggest several other adventures that your child might enjoy.

**Do I need a guide? Couldn't I just guide my own group or myself?**

Our Via Guides have training specifically tailored to the Via Ferrata, which allows them to safely lead trips. All trips must have a Via Ferrata Guide with them. You are welcome to remain the leader of your group, but you are not permitted to self-guide or guide your group.

**What if I start the Via, and decide I don't want to continue. Can I get off?**

Yes. There are two escape points on the Via Ferrata, should you decide you don't want to continue. Guests who cross the bridge are committed for the remainder of the trip as both escapes are before the bridge.

**Can you rock climb at Nelson?**

Yes, as long as you are guided. You should contact Lester Zook of Wild GUYde Adventures ([lester@wildguyde.com](mailto:lester@wildguyde.com); [www.wildguyde.com](http://www.wildguyde.com)) for booking and pricing information. Open climbing is not permitted at Nelson.

**Can we stay at the cabins?**

Yes. The price is \$10 per person, per night, with a minimum payment of \$30 per night. The cabins have bunk beds and do not have electricity, heat, running water, or bathrooms.

**Can we tent camp at Nelson?**

Yes. We do not have formal campgrounds, but we would be happy to prepare a space for you.

**What are some other activities in the area?**

There are a lot of hiking and mountain biking trails in the area. We also recommend Seneca Caverns, about 15 minutes away. We can certainly research more specific options for you, and recommend checking out our "Links" page on our website for more ideas and options.