

Ashby De La Zouch Castle, Leicestershire

Hazard Information for Education Visits

It is the responsibility of teachers and group leaders to complete a risk assessment prior to the site visit. The following information is intended as an aid and does not replace the group leader's own risk assessment. We recommend coming to the site on a free planning visit, to help you with your risk assessment. Please note: where possible, English Heritage staff at the site will be happy to assist you with your queries, but cannot check or sign any section of your risk assessment.

Environmental conditions at historic sites may change rapidly and you will need to remain alert at all times during your visit. Most accidents are the result of slips and trips so please make sure you wear appropriate footwear and dress sensibly for the site and weather. Please be aware that the site may close at short notice due to adverse weather. Where applicable, stonework and trees at our sites are inspected regularly; however, extreme weather conditions can sometimes affect stonework and trees, so remain vigilant at all times. Please follow any staff instructions and be mindful of temporary barriers and signage. On-going conservation work may pose a temporary hazard; a member of staff will advise you of any works when you visit. Dogs on leashes may be present on site.

All learners who are 16 years or younger must be supervised by a responsible adult at all times whilst on site.

The car and minibus park (for disabled visitors only) is situated near the entrance to the site; coaches are not able to access the car park.

- The site car park should only be accessed by cars and minibuses dropping off disabled visitors; please use the town car parks, payable locally.
- Coach passengers are required to disembark at a safe point on South Street.
- The unpaved access track to the site is shared by both pedestrians and cars.
- There is no designated footpath through the car park, which can be muddy when wet.

The historic nature of the castle presents many potential hazards.

- There are many climbing hazards. Climbing on the walls is not permitted and poses a significant hazard.
- The walls are rough and may contain sharp stones.
- The site has very little indoor or sheltered space.
- There are several wells on site covered by metal grilles; these should not be stood upon.
- The two garden towers can be accessed. There is a small step at the entrance of each tower, and the western tower is accessed by a steep slope.
- Stone steps may be worn, narrow and uneven.
- Some rooms are accessed via small drops and uneven stone foundations.

There are large areas of uneven surfaces.

- Ground surfaces are uneven throughout the site and can be slippery when wet.
- There are remaining stone foundations in many parts of the castle.
- There may be concealed animal holes and dips in grassy areas.
- Single steps and raised stone foundations may pose a trip hazard.

There are sheer drops and steep banks around the site.

- There is a low stone barrier in the garderobe, which has a steep drop to the surface below.
- There are steep grassed banks throughout the site.
- There are sheer drops from Hastings' Tower which have barriers; visitors should not climb on or lean over the barriers.

There is an underground tunnel leading from Hastings' Tower to the kitchen.

- The tunnel is approximately 50 metres in length and lit by dim artificial light.
- The exit for the tunnel is not visible when at the opposite end. It is not possible to see if other visitors are further along in the tunnel. Caution is advised.
- The entrance at the Hastings' Tower end, and the kitchen end is accessed via steep stone steps.
- At the kitchen end there is an underground storage room which is poorly lit.
- There are low hanging stones at both tunnel entrances.
- The nature of the tunnel may cause the floors to be damp and potentially slippery underfoot.
- The floor of the tunnel is uneven brickwork with some downpipes and raised drains.

There is an historic staircase to the top of Hastings' Tower.

- The top of the tower is closed for the foreseeable future. Visitors can climb halfway, approximately 50 steps.
- The stone spiral staircase has worn and uneven steps, and there is no handrail.
- The light levels are poor in parts.
- Visitors are likely to encounter others descending the steps; it may be necessary to retreat to give way.

There maybe learning resources that can be used by groups on-site, including handling collections.

- The objects in the handling collection may have rough edges, points or protrusions.
- Learners must be supervised at all times by Leaders while using the resources.
- The objects may have been handled by multiple groups; always wash hands after use.

Ashby de la Zouch Castle is home to a wide variety of plant and animal wildlife.

- The droppings of animals and birds can present a zoonotic hazard; visitors should wash hands prior to eating.
- Plant material and thorns may be toxic or poisonous; always wash hands prior to eating meals.
- There are mature trees on site that may drop branches in rare circumstances; care should be taken when passing under or near large trees.