

ORFORD CASTLE, SUFFOLK

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'll need to remain alert at all times during your visit. Make sure you wear sensible footwear and dress appropriately 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, storm damage can sometimes affect the stability of stonework and branches of apparently healthy trees. 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.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

We want to reassure you that we're following government guidance to make your trip as safe and enjoyable as possible.

We've introduced a range of new hygiene standards and social distancing measures. Our staff and facilitators have received guidance to help them safely run education visits at this time, and we've also created a general risk assessment for education visitors to help you with your individual risk assessments. You can find this and other information about what to expect on your visit at: english-heritage.org.uk/schools-what-to-expect

We've also detailed key changes on the individual site schools pages of our website, so please check before you visit. Once your booking is confirmed, we recommend booking a free planning visit to help you prepare for your trip and familiarise yourself with the site.

There is a one way system operating at Orford Castle.

- Please be aware of the one way system operating on site and stick to this route to avoid congestion and to maintain social distancing with other visitors.

Moving vehicles may pose a hazard upon arrival and while on the site.

- The car park has a loose gravelled surface. Coaches may drop off here; be aware that this car park is used by all visitors and there is an access track running through it to residential properties. Please see site information for coach parking.

In the event of a fire, the fire alarm will sound.

- The fire alarm is fitted with bells sounding on each floor level.
- If you are further than half way up the castle then please continue up to the roof, where help will come to you.
- If you are more than half way down the castle and below then please exit via the entrance. On hearing the alarm walk calmly down the main spiral stairs.
- The assembly point is on the grass adjacent to the car park in front of the shed.

The historic nature of Orford Castle presents various hazards, including rough ground and spiral staircases.

- There are a number of steep slopes and banks outside the keep. The ground is generally rough and overgrown. It is possible to access a disused quarry site (not English Heritage property) adjacent to the Orford Castle site. The quarry site has numerous hazards.
- The base of the keep is fenced off as there is a possibility of falling masonry.
- The entrance steps to the keep are steep and uneven. The stairs and floors throughout the keep are uneven and can be slippery. Some risers are different heights giving unexpected short drops. The narrow spiral stairs that lead to the constable's chamber in the lower hall are unlit and have no hand rail.
- The door to the keep is a heavily sprung glass door. There are also two heavily sprung glass doors from the shop leading into the lower hall. There is a risk of catching fingers inside these heavy doors.
- Lighting levels are low inside parts of the keep.
- The walls inside the keep are rough and there are projecting stones at various levels.
- There are a number of narrow passageways with low headroom, rough walls and uneven floors.

Features in the upper hall present various hazards, including loose masonry.

- The masonry on chimney leading to the fire place in the upper hall may be loose in places.
- Window sills in the upper hall and lower hall are low and the glass in the window is not safety glass.
- Garderobe shafts in the chapel corridor, lower chamber and upper hall are covered with Perspex sheets. These must not be stood on as they will not withstand a person's weight.

Features on the roof of the castle present various hazards, including exposure to high winds and a steep drop.

- The door leading to the roof is hard to open when it is windy and can slam easily.
- The disused stone oven in the bakery is unsafe to stand in and has a low stone opening.
- The roof of the Castle is exposed to high winds.
- The roof is fenced off by railings but has a steep drop.

Staircase treads may be worn and uneven; always use the handrail where provided.

- There are 9 long steps leading to the Castle, 21 to the shop entrance, 27 to the basement and 91 to the roof. It is therefore advisable to wear appropriate footwear.

The site can be very busy and some areas may become congested.

- Groups should assemble outside the ticket office

There are no toilets on site.

- There are free public toilets close to the castle, located on Market Hill. If you require any assistance from site staff, please speak to them on your arrival.

Dogs and wildlife may be present on site.

- Dogs may be present on site but should be kept on a lead at all times.
- Bats are present in the upper hall and there are often bat droppings from May to September. This may present a risk of zoonotic infection.
- Pigeons often nest on the roof in the drain. There are pigeon droppings around the roof area and sometimes in other parts of the castle. This may present a risk of zoonotic infection.