

Walmer Castle and Gardens, Kent

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 as well as following any staff instructions and being mindful of temporary barriers and signage, please remain vigilant at all times. 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.

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

- There is parking on site for cars and minibuses during drier weather.
- There is a drop-off point on the road 50m away. It is necessary to walk along and cross a busy road to reach the site entrance; there is a pavement but no crossing.
- There is shared use of the access road by pedestrians and cars.

The walking surfaces may be uneven and change in level; please use designated walkways wherever possible.

- All surfaces may be slippery when wet.
- Steps may be worn and uneven; single steps may pose a trip hazard.
- Be aware of animal holes in grassed areas.
- Wooden ramps and bridges on site may be slippery.

The construction of the site provides numerous climbing hazards; climbing on walls or over/under barriers is not permitted.

- Walls are rough and may contain sharp stones.
- Guns on the bastions must not be climbed.
- Climbing any of the trees or banks on site is strictly forbidden.
- The summerhouse in the Queen Mother's Garden has stone pillars decorated with low-level stone ledges.

There are steep banks, high walls and sheer drops on site, some of which are unguarded.

- There is a low rail on the bridge across the dry moat.
- There are low hedges along the path with a sheer drop into the dry moat.
- The low walls on the bastions have a sheer drop into the dry moat.
- The Glen Garden has steep sides.

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

- Steps may be slippery when wet or icy.
- There are steps between levels and in doorways.
- Visitors descend and ascend on the same staircases.

Windows and display cabinets throughout the castle and in the glasshouses do not contain safety glass.

- Glass doors lead onto the north-east and south-east bastions.
- There are low-level, glass-topped, cold frames in the glasshouses.

There are areas of low lighting in the castle; please take care when moving around.

- Roped off areas have motion-sensitive alarms.

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

- The objects in the resources 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.

There is unguarded access to deep water on the site; there is a throw line available.

- There is an unfenced pond in the Queen Mother's Garden.
- There is a gate and warning sign in the south-west corner of the garden.

Walmer Castle and Gardens contains a large variety of flora and fauna.

- The site contains many trees and shrubs some of which are particularly old and have historic significance.
- Climbing on any of the trees on the site is not permitted.
- Many fungi, plants and berries are poisonous, and visitors should not eat any of these on site.
- Some plants may have thorns or sharp elements, and visitors should avoid touching plants on site.
- Ticks have been reported on site in the past.

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

- The area around the till point in the shop is narrow.

Covid-19 and flu.

- We follow government and NHS guidelines to reduce the risk of transmission. Please also follow their guidance and do not visit if you have flu or Covid-19 symptoms or have recently tested positive.