



National
Guidance

Visitor Attractions and Theme Parks

Rationale

Visitor Attractions are defined as:

"permanently established excursion destinations, a primary purpose of which is to allow public access for entertainment, interest or education..."

Principal categories include:

- theme and leisure parks and piers;
- zoo and animal attractions;
- historic transport;
- landmark attractions;
- parks and gardens;
- science and discovery centres;
- workplace attractions.

Most of these are potential learning resources and many are used to hosting groups of young people. The number and geographical spread of attractions makes it certain that a great variety of educational opportunity is available within easy reach of most schools and settings. Some attractions are intrinsic to local history, culture and social change, where a visit may add appreciation and depth to awareness of local and community heritage.

Information on local visitor attractions is available from Tourist Information Centres, Town Councils and Chambers of Commerce. On a wider scale, the most comprehensive, impartial and easiest way to identify potential visit locations is through the Attractions section of the www.visitbritain.co.uk or www.enjoyengland.com websites.

Range of provision

The scale of visitor attractions in terms of popularity and numbers of visits varies greatly. The majority of attractions are small enterprises. Ownership is split roughly equally between public (Government and local authority), charitable, and private sector. Just under half of attractions are free.

The number of visitors each day is highly variable. As a generalisation, they tend to be busy at weekends and school holidays and quieter mid-week, although some may be very busy during mid-week during the second half of the summer term. For this reason, Visit Leaders are advised to consult the attraction's staff before fixing the date and timing of a visit.

Quality Standards

A National Code of Practice for Visitor Attractions was introduced in 2007/8 in England and Wales. Attractions must comply with the Code, which is available on the Visit England website.

The Code covers many matters that are important to visit organisers. These include:

- a commitment to clarity over charges
- confirmation of bookings in writing
- provision of access statements
- availability of information, resources and assistance to help educational visitors gain full benefit from their visit
- a commitment to cover adequate public liability insurance or indemnity.

Whilst it is not a requirement of the Code, virtually all charged attractions provide free access for exploratory pre-visits.

Visitor attractions and theme parks are open to the public and so must meet legally required health and safety standards, and it is not necessary to seek assurances about these unless specific issues have been raised by a risk-benefit assessment.

Some visitor attractions may hold a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge, which gives assurance about learning quality as well as safety.

Particular Hazards to be Considered and Managed

In researching the suitability of a venue, the Visit Leader should identify significant potential hazards and ensure that they are risk-managed. These may include the following:

- Car parks and manoeuvring traffic
- Unclear site boundary
- Open water
- Exposure to height
- Members of the party getting lost or separated in an environment requiring remote supervision strategies
- Open access to points of danger e.g. narrow gauge railway lines

Learning support provision

With sufficient imagination, most attractions can be used as educational resources and one theme park claims to offer "*a unique and compelling environment to study national curriculum science topics by relating them to popular rides*". Another offers business studies projects, which relate to theme park planning.

The nature of educational provision varies greatly. Consequently, it is important that Visit Leaders check that the chosen venue can provide the range of services required to deliver the targeted learning outcomes.

Larger attractions are likely to employ staff who have been given special responsibility for education visits. These staff can provide a knowledgeable point of contact for planning and arranging visits. While many of these staff may not

have formal educational training, they are likely to have considerable experience of hosting school and college groups. At some attractions there are re-enactors, interpreters and demonstrators who can provide specific services as part of the visit.

Most attractions offer documentation such as illustrated guides, explanatory and orientation materials and other information as part of their offer to all visitors; these may be of use as educational resources. Some attractions have developed additional publications that provide further subject and topic depth, specifically relating aspects of the attraction to the national curriculum. Educational materials may also be available online.

Attractions usually recognise the value of young people preparing for the visit and may offer materials and artefacts for use in pre-visit exercises.

