



National  
Guidance

<http://oeapng.info>

## Heritage visits

### Rationale

For the purpose of this guidance, Heritage Visits are about visiting sites of historical interest such as castles, historic or architecturally interesting buildings, monuments, canals, old industrial sites, sacred spaces, battle sites and concentration camps. They can help participants to understand their own heritage or the heritage of others, and to learn about and from history. They may also include re-enactments that bring historical events to life in a unique and memorable way.

### Special Features and Learning Outcomes

Heritage Visits can provide many learning opportunities:

- Access to guides who can provide added value to the visit.
- Curiosity and creativity – by seeing, touching, hearing or feeling, visiting a heritage site can provide real world learning, which may raise questions, stimulate thought and bring study to life.
- A new and possibly very different study environment, which can stimulate learners to question their preconceptions and think in new ways.
- Exploring culture and identity – heritage sites tell us about our past and provide a valuable route for exploring cultural diversity and understanding our own place in the world.
- Access to other experiential learning opportunities – heritage sites often provide other learning facilities such as museums and galleries.

### Range of Provision

Visit Leaders may choose to run the learning activity without reference to guides, or by using the site's guides, or a combination of the two. Whatever the choice, it is important that there is clear, shared understanding of how the duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of the participants is to be exercised at any given time.

Some heritage sites are run by local authorities and deliver learning programmes as part of their heritage services.

Some heritage organisations run learning projects, often focusing on the local environment. These projects partner schools and other establishments with specific sites for the development of progressive learning programmes.

There are also short programmes and one-off events that enable free or unrestricted access to some sites, such as Heritage Open Days.

## Safety Considerations

Some heritage sites have hazards that require careful risk management, taking into account the nature of the participants. In particular, medieval castles often have features such as open (and sometimes broken) embrasures overlooking long drops, unguarded access to open and deep-water moats and steep but relatively unprotected staircases, which, in other settings, would put leaders on a higher level of alert and vigilance. These features also heighten the curiosity level of young people and are what make such places interesting and exciting.

Sites may provide their own generic risk assessments. While Visit Leaders may find these helpful, they must **not** be seen as a suitable risk-benefit assessment. For example, the site does not know the visiting group and its specific needs or the competence and experience of the leaders. The visit leadership team should use the material provided as prompts on which to base its own plan.

## Quality Standards

Sites open to the public must meet legally required health and safety standards, and it is not necessary to seek assurances about these unless there are specific issues highlighted through the planning process. Where a site is not open to the public (e.g. where special arrangements have been made to visit a closed site), assurances about health and safety should be obtained.

Where a site holds a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge, this is assurance that it meets safety as well as educational quality standards. There are other quality accreditation schemes in place, such as the Sandford Awards that accredit heritage sites for excellence in education provision. Large heritage bodies such as English Heritage and the National Trust also monitor standards in their education provision.

## Learning Support Provision

Many heritage sites provide support to make a visit more useful:

- Specialist staff – heritage sites often have dedicated learning and education officers who are trained to deliver activities and programmes to meet specific subjects and skills.
- Interactive materials – some heritage sites can provide interactive materials e.g. allowing young people to dress in period costumes.
- Web-based materials – many heritage sites have developed resources such as lesson plans, worksheets and activity ideas that are downloadable from their website. These websites often have interactive capacity and provide a stimulating way of accessing information about the site. They may also have follow-up materials to use after the visit.
- Pre-visit tours – these are often provided free of charge to potential Visit Leaders. They offer opportunities for Visit Leaders to become familiar with the

site, to clarify risk-benefit assessment issues and provide material that can be used to prepare learners for their visit.

- Evaluation and planning – heritage site staff are often experienced in providing planning support for a visit. They may be able to offer help with the evaluation of learners' experiences after the visit.
- Outreach – some heritage sites develop long-term relationships with establishments and learners and provide support by visiting learners in their own setting.

