

Your visit

We hope you find the following guidelines useful. They are written with the intention of helping you and your pupils get the most out of your visit to a National Trust site.

The benefits

Taking pupils beyond the classroom will place demands on your time and energy. However, the benefits of learning outdoors and experiencing physical evidence first-hand are not to be underestimated. By taking your pupils to a National Trust property you will be creating a memorable and inspirational experience that will develop a love for learning and a lasting curiosity for the relationship between the past, present and future.

Using a National Trust site as a resource for teaching and learning can be done in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. You may want to use it for subject specific study, or you may be thinking of how it would serve as a focus for thematic work. There will certainly be opportunities to touch on many curriculum areas, using and developing many key skills.

Help is at hand! The diversity of National Trust properties is so great that answers to all your questions will not be found here. We strongly recommend browsing information given in Learning in your area and making contact with the property you plan to visit.

1- Your visit in context

- What is the purpose of the visit? What are the aims and objectives?
- Is the visit built into your planning?
- When should the visit be planned in and why? As an introduction to a topic to fire enthusiasm or later when they have more to bring to the experience?
- What can be done easily at school and what would lend itself better to the visit?
- How many curriculum areas and learning outcomes could be met by the visit?
- How will the visit relate to what you do back in the classroom?

This is where it really pays to contact the property to discuss the options available. Many of your decisions will depend on whether you choose a self-guided or staff-led visit – ask the property what is available. Either way, we strongly recommend visiting the property as part of your planning.

2- Planning your visit

Consider...

- Checking the website to see what information already exists;
- Talking to staff at the venue and arrange a visit. This will help you think about timings, staffing, resources and that risk assessment!
- What information already exists in paper form at venue?
- Activities that will empower pupils as investigators and not just receptors of facts and figures;

- How much information will you give pupils before visit? How much you want them to find out during visit?
- Leaving enough mystery for the pupils to reveal on the visit;
- How will your pupils record their experience; drawing, note-taking, digital technology?
- What can be achieved in one visit? Not everything!
- Prepare pupils for using floor plans and/or maps. Beforehand they could make a plan of their own school or classroom;
- Engage parent helpers at an early stage. This can help to make them feel more involved.

The practicalities

Have you thought about...

- Pupil/teacher ratio;
- Insurance;
- Risk assessment – ask the staff for key points to consider, but the writing of the assessment is to be done by you and is your responsibility.
- Access – take into account any special needs and possible access issues;
- Parking – safe set down points and consider time to walk from coach to site;
- Vantage points – which are the safest and most convenient?
- Education work room? Is there one? What's in it and how will you use it, if at all?
- Clothing – outdoor clothing and strong footwear. Also sensible shoes and clothing for inside (e.g. no pointy heels or long dresses);
- Lavatories – do they have any, where are they, when will your group use them?
- Lunch – When? Where? Weather can be unpredictable if planning a picnic outdoors;
- Shop – figure this time into your plan, if you are going to allow them in the shop.

3 - Working on site

Setting familiarisation tasks

- Give overview before launching into directed tasks i.e. key locations, meeting points, shelter;
- Devise an activity to whet their appetite, possibly in pairs or small groups.

Investigating the site

- Splitting the party into small groups with set tasks is a good idea and not all groups need to do the same activity. More can be covered this way and pupils can share findings with others afterwards;
- Encourage helpers to facilitate pupils' ideas and not to do the work for them;
- Help pupils draw conclusions from the evidence they find: observe, discover, hypothesise.

Using activity sheets

Think carefully about the use of activity sheets. Some people feel they take away from the experience of the property, others may feel they are needed as a focus.

- Activity sheets may be provided by the venue, so you could simply adapt these;
- Keep the focus tight with questions and activities relevant to the purpose of your visit;
- Make sure pupils know the purpose of the task;
- Lots of questions don't make a good activity sheet – carefully chosen, open-ended questions that make pupils think, investigate and problem-solve can be very effective;
- Ensure pupils have enough time to complete tasks properly, without rushing or racing;
- It's a good idea not to make all tasks dependent on pupils' reading ability; Differentiate as you would with any other activity;
- Review, adapt and improve for future visits.

Problem-solving

- Imaginary scenarios or problem-solving activities can enrich a visit;
- Problem-solving focuses pupils' attention on to a specific area and requires on-site research. They also lead well into post-visit activities.

4 – Back at school

Planning outcomes

It is good to plan concrete outcomes for the project rather than let it fade out. You can do this in a number of ways:

- A display of written work, maps, drawings and photographs;
- A classroom museum or exhibition;
- A video or Powerpoint slide show of the visit;
- A performance of a play, musical performance or re-enactment;
- An audience with: parents, governors, other school staff;
- Pupils suggest to property how they would interpret the property's theme.

Measuring success

- What went well? What were the highlights and why?
- What did not go to plan and why?
- What changes would you make in future?
- Did you try to do too much, or perhaps not enough?
- Obtain feedback from pupils, possibly through questioning or a questionnaire;
- How engaged have pupils become as active enquirers?
- Have pupils been able to interpret information and tell the story through their own eyes?
- Has the site visit and its impact filtered into different curriculum and skills areas?
- How great a range of resources has been used? How well have they been used?

Feedback

We are constantly seeking to improve the service we offer schools. We value your feedback, so please let us know if you feel there are areas for improvement.