

Barnard Castle, County Durham

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.

- Depending on where your group are dropped off, this may require you to cross a busy road and negotiate parked vehicles. The nearest parking (not managed by English Heritage) is located in the town itself.
- Access into the castle is via a block paved roadway, shared by local residents and used occasionally by vehicles coming to the castle on business.

The ruinous nature of the medieval remains may present many potential hazards.

- There is no prescribed route or set pathways from the admission point. The ground within the castle is grassed and can be slippery during and after rainfall. Where worn, these patches can be muddy.
- Walls are rough and contain uneven and sharp stones.
- Ground surfaces inside ruined spaces are either paved or gravelled, and where exposed to elements can be wet and slippery.
- The ground floor keep is damp and ground can be slippery. There are narrow stone steps to first floor of keep.
- The castle ditches have deep and steep-sided drops; some onto masonry. You can enter via steps and a gravelled path.
- Wooden bridges cross over the moats, one of which is close to a short, low stretch of curtain wall overlooking the river.

Barnard Castle is home to a wide variety of plant and animal wildlife.

- There are animals and birds on site, and their droppings can present a zoonotic hazard. Visitors should wash their hands prior to eating.
- There are occasional animal burrows underfoot.
- There is a section of the grounds with a collection of fruit trees and a wildflower meadow which attract bees and other insects in spring and summer.
- There may be nettles and thistles concealed in grassy areas.
- There are mature trees on site that may drop branches in rare circumstances; care should be taken when passing under or near large trees.