

OSBORNE, ISLE OF WIGHT

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'll need to remain alert at all times during your visit. Make sure you wear sensible footwear and dress appropriately 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, storm damage can sometimes affect the stability of stonework and branches of apparently healthy trees. 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.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

We want to reassure you that we're following government guidance to make your trip as safe and enjoyable as possible.

We've introduced a range of new hygiene standards and social distancing measures. Our staff and facilitators have received guidance to help them safely run education visits at this time, and we've also created a general risk assessment for education visitors to help you with your individual risk assessments. You can find this and other information about what to expect on your visit at: english-heritage.org.uk/schools-what-to-expect

We've also detailed key changes on the individual site schools pages of our website, so please check before you visit. Once your booking is confirmed, we recommend booking a free planning visit to help you prepare for your trip and familiarise yourself with the site.

Visitors approach the house via a road which is used by traffic travelling in both directions.

- There is a large car park and dedicated coach parking.
- There is a pavement running from the car park and coach parking to the Visitor Reception Centre where groups can access the site. At busier times, groups will be met in the car park by a member of the education team. Permit details will be checked prior to site entry and the education team member will direct the group to the most appropriate entry point to avoid delays and over-crowding.

Features of the grounds and pathways can present a hazard.

- Visitors can access The Mount and the Ring Walk, however the major part of the Great Avenue is a private access road.
- There is a fenced reservoir at the top of The Mount surrounded by several steep paths leading through wooded areas.
- From The Mount, visitors can descend down on to the Ring Walk surrounding the Mount Lawn. This is a raised walk-way with occasional stone steps down to the lawn.
- Paths throughout the site have uneven surfaces and may become muddy in wet weather. Sensible footwear is recommended.
- The Ring Walk passes an unfenced body of water. There is a hazard sign in place, but no life belt.
- The path leads steeply uphill and visitors may access the ice house. The floor is uneven in the ice house entrance and the nature of the building means that the floor may be damp. It is a small space so can only accommodate a few people at a time.

The terraces at the rear of the house feature some steep drops and an unfenced fountain.

- There is a low stone balustrade along the outer edge of the upper terrace.
- There is a fountain centred in an uncovered pool with low walls.
- A stone horseshoe staircase leads down to the lower terrace and restaurant. The staircase may become slippery in wet weather.
- Some parts of the lower terrace are not open to visitors.
- A fountain located at the top of the Broad Walk is centred in an uncovered pool with a very low stone edge.

The walled garden in front of the main house entrance poses a number of hazards.

- A glass house is located in the walled garden which may become hot and humid inside.
- There is an uncovered central water trough with no water hazard sign.
- The path leading out of the walled garden leads on to an access road.
- Areas of the site may have restricted access at short notice for health and safety reasons due to wet or severe weather.

A frequent minibus service to the Swiss Cottage runs along High Walk and to the Beach along Pier Road.

- The minibus is not available to education groups, apart from those with mobility/special needs. Numbers are very restricted so the bus can only be used by the person with mobility/special needs and their carer. The minibus only runs in the summer season.
- There is no separate pavement for pedestrians to walk to the Swiss Cottage but there is a woodland path at the beginning and a wide grass verge for the majority of the walk.
- At the end of High Walk, a gated footpath leads to Swiss Cottage, avoiding the minibus turning area. A stile leads into woodland.
- The beach can be accessed via Valley Walk from the terraces at the rear of the House or via Rhododendron Walk from Swiss Cottage. Both paths can become wet and muddy and are uneven in places.

The Swiss Cottage building presents a number of potential hazards.

- Swiss Cottage cannot be entered by education groups on free self-led visits due to capacity and organisational difficulties. It can only be entered as part of the Victorian Explorer Discovery Visit workshop.
- A steep wooden exterior staircase leads to the second floor. This is exposed to the elements and may become slippery in inclement weather.
- A narrow balcony with a low balustrade runs around the entire building, but is only partially accessible.
- Visitors descend via a steep wooden exterior staircase. Throughout the first floor of Swiss Cottage, the major parts of rooms are roped off.
- There are toilets situated next to Swiss Cottage.

The Swiss Cottage Museum building and exhibits present a potential hazard.

- Education groups can access the Museum when it is open if capacity on the day allows but in high season this may not be possible due to the small space and high numbers of visitors.
- The Museum is entered and exited via a stone step.
- Light levels are kept low for conservation reasons.
- Although most exhibits are housed in glass-fronted cabinets, visitors must observe 'Do Not Touch' signs, especially on free-standing exhibits.

A protected meadow area is located adjacent to the Swiss Cottage Museum entrance.

- The meadow has a locked gated entrance and there is no access for the general public.

A path leads from the Swiss Cottage Museum around the Albert Barracks and play area.

- The barracks and fragile grass areas are roped off.
- There is a small sewage works beside the path and access to this area is strictly prohibited.

- Some of the grass areas are edged with decorative low level metal arches.

The beach is a site of natural interest, with some protected species of marine flora, as well as being home to some historic features.

- Visitors are asked not to pick flowers or plants and to disturb them as little as possible.
- The sandy beach does have some sharp or jagged rocks.
- Queen Victoria's bathing machine is displayed near to the beach but is fragile and not accessible to the public.
- The floor surface in the Alcove can become slippery when wet.
- There are warning signs at the beach regarding risks associated with deep water.
- There are two life rings positioned at either end of the beach.
- During opening hours between April and October a beach ranger, with radio contact, patrols the beach daily monitoring visitor activity.
- During opening hours between April and October, and during winter weekends, the cafe is open with one staff member inside. They also have phone/radio contact and the café has loud hailer equipment.
- There is CCTV in operation on the beach monitored via security control.
- There are public toilets at the back of the café which are open between April and October.

The main house entrance and exhibits in the first rooms on the house tour route can pose a hazard.

- The main house is entered via a ramp.
- Any bags must be carried or worn on the front to avoid accidental damage inside the House.
- Visitors must follow a particular route around the house as indicated by ropes and signage and must be in supervised groups of 10 students or less to ensure there is no over-crowding at pinch points.
- Osborne House contains many valuable items and some of these are on open display in the corridors. Items should not be touched.
- The tiled floors are protected by carpet and some areas are roped off.
- There are valuable items on display in the Exhibition Room and the Audience Room and visitors must observe the 'Please do not sit' signs on chairs.
- The Audience Room is small and the main part of the room is roped off.

The range of staircases at Osborne can pose a number of hazards.

- It is important to note that in the winter months only the ground floor of the House is open to the public.
- The Servery and Table Decker's Room are reached by descending a stone staircase. Gaps between balusters on this staircase are covered by Perspex.
- A carpeted stone staircase with a wooden handrail leads up to the Dining Room.
- A steep stone staircase leads up to the second floor nursery suite.
- Visitors descend from the second floor to the first floor via a wide carpeted stone staircase with deep steps.
- To reach the ground floor at the end of the house tour route, visitors must descend a wide carpeted stone staircase.

Areas of the house can become particularly congested.

- The Servery and Table Decker's Room are small service areas.
- Both the Drawing Room and Billiard Room can become crowded as visitors must follow a particular route around the house.
- The Nursery Sitting Room contains many photographs of the Royal Family and can become congested with visitors stopping to view them.

The Osborne Estate contains a large variety of flora and fauna.

- The estate contains many trees and shrubs some of which are particularly old and have historic significance. Climbing on any of the trees on the estate is not permitted.
- Many fungi, plants and berries are poisonous and visitors should not eat any of these whilst visiting Osborne.

All toilets at Osborne are shared between visitors and education groups.

- There are no toilets reserved for education groups at Osborne. Children should be supervised when using the toilets provided.
- There are no toilets inside the house including in the education spaces.

There is no indoor or covered lunch space available on the estate.

- Groups can picnic in any public area within the grounds ensuring they respect other visitors and remove any rubbish.