



ENGLISH HERITAGE

EDUCATION

OSBORNE HOUSE, ISLE OF WIGHT

Hazard information sheet for educational groups

It is the responsibility of teachers and group leaders to complete a risk assessment prior to any site visit being made. This is a requirement of most local education authorities. The following information is intended as a preparatory tool and does not replace a teacher's or group leader's own risk assessment. Please be aware that conditions at historic sites may change rapidly, and that you will need to remain alert at all times during your visit.

All the trees on our sites are inspected annually. However, storm damage can sometimes affect the stability of apparently healthy trees and branches. Group leaders should be particularly aware of this when undertaking their own risk assessments prior to a visit.

Entrance and grounds

There is a large car park and dedicated coach parking. Visitors enter the main site through the Visitor Reception Centre which also houses the gift shop and café, and a visitor exhibition. The public toilets are in an adjacent building. Visitors approach the house via a road. This road is used by traffic travelling in both directions. A frequent horse and carriage ride runs on the roads around the estate, and in particular between the House and Reception, and along Sovereigns Drive. As with all animals there may be a risk of zoonotic infection and visitors should be aware that animals may kick or bite.

The Great Avenue leads to the Royal Entrance. 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. Please note there is no life belt in place. 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 icehouse. The floor is uneven and the nature of the building means that the floor may be damp. Areas of the site may have restricted access at short notice for health and safety reasons due to wet or severe weather.

A frequent mini bus service runs along High Walk, taking visitors to Swiss Cottage. There is no pavement for pedestrians. The minibus is not generally available to groups, apart from those with mobility issues/special needs. At the end of High Walk, a gated footpath leads to Swiss Cottage avoiding the minibus turning area. A stile leads into dense woodland. Swiss Cottage is entered on the ground floor through the kitchen. A steep wooden exterior staircase leads to the second floor. As it is exposed to the elements, this staircase may become slippery in inclement weather. A narrow balcony with a low balustrade runs around the entire cottage, but is only partially accessible. Visitors descend via a steep wooden exterior staircase. Throughout Swiss Cottage, the major parts of rooms are roped off. There are toilets situated next to Swiss Cottage. Swiss Cottage Museum is entered and exited via a stone step. Light levels are necessarily 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 path leads from the museum and 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 there is strictly no access to this area. Some of the grass areas are edged with decorative low level metal arches.

The terraces at the rear of the house have some steep drops. 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.

There is a walled garden in front of the main house entrance. A glass house is located in the walled garden and may become hot and stuffy. 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.

The Beach

Accessed via the Valley Path, this area is a site of natural interest, with some protected species of marine flora. Please advise students not to pick flowers or plants and to disturb them as little as possible. The sandy beach does have some sharp or jagged rocks, so please exercise caution. Queen Victoria's Bathing Machine is displayed here and is fragile, so not accessible to the public. The Alchove is also here, with a floor surface which can get slippery when wet. There are warning signs regarding risks associated with deep water. There are two life rings positioned at either end of the beach. During opening hours April-October a Beach Ranger, with radio contact, patrols the beach daily monitoring visitor activity. Also, during opening hours April-October and winter weekends the café is open with one staff member inside. They also have phone/radio contact and the café has loud hailer equipment. Finally there is CCTV in operation on the beach monitored via security control.

The main house

The house is entered via a ramp. Groups leave bags in a designated area. Visitors must follow a particular route as indicated by ropes and signage. After leaving an exhibition room, visitors enter the Grand Corridor. Osborne House contains many valuable items and some of these are displayed in the corridors. The tiled floors are protected by carpet and some areas are roped off. Visitors now enter the Council Room and then the Audience Room. Again, there are valuable items on display 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. A corridor leads to a stone staircase descending down into the Served and Table Decker's room. Gaps between balusters are covered by perspex. These two rooms are small and could become congested. A carpeted stone staircase with a wooden handrail leads up to the Dining Room. Open double doors give a view in to the Drawing Room. Both the Drawing Room and Billiard Room can become congested as visitors must follow a particular route. Some areas of these rooms are roped off.

A steep stone staircase leads up to the second floor. The visitor route first enters the Nursery Sitting Room. This room contains many photographs of the Royal Family and can become congested. This room contains many photographs of the Royal Family and can become congested. Next is the Nursery Bedroom. The main part of this room is roped off. Visitors descend from the second floor to the first floor via a wide carpeted stone staircase with deep steps. The visitor route enters the Prince Consort's Bathroom and then into the Dressing and Writing Room. Next door is the Queen's Sitting Room and then the Queen's Dressing Room and Bedroom. These rooms are small with roped off areas and can become congested. They contain many valuable and fragile items.

The visitor must now descend the wide carpeted stone staircase back to the ground floor. Visitors now pass the Horn Room. Due to the fragile nature of this room, it is not open to visitors. Passing the Queen's Lift, visitors walk along the Durbar Corridor and enter the Durbar Room. This is a large, ornately decorated room containing an interactive exhibition.

The Osborne Estate contains many trees and shrubs. Some of these are particularly old and have historic significance. It is forbidden to climb any of the trees on the estate.

Toilets; All those mentioned above are public toilets, so children should be supervised when using them.

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