

CLOtC accredited forests for self-led learning visits

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom ([CLOtC](#)) is the national voice for learning outside the classroom. The Forestry Commission is proud to be working with the CLOtC to create and improve opportunities for self-led learning on the public forest estate.

We are working towards [CLOtC Site Provider Awards](#) for Forestry Commission sites across England. This award recognises organisations which actively welcome schools onto their site/s for self-led visits and ensure that the sites and any other services provided meet the needs of schools.

CLOtC accredited site: Dalby, the Great Yorkshire Forest, near Pickering

With miles of trails, several car parks, a fantastic play area, and endless variety of habitats, trees and wildlife, Dalby Forest, in the North York Moors National Park, is a great place for a school visit at any time of the year.

Dalby is part of the public forest estate, which is made up of more than 1500 woods and forests in England that are cared for by the Forestry Commission. We practise multi-purpose sustainable forestry: multi-purpose means that our forests are managed, not just to supply timber, but also as valuable wildlife habitats and places for visitors to enjoy; sustainable means that we follow long term forest design plans, so that the public forest estate continues to provide timber, and benefits for people and wildlife into the future.

Dalby Forest attracts about 400,000 visitors per year, and the main visitor centre car park can get very busy in the summer months. The beauty of this forest though, is that you can drive or walk a little further and be away from the crowds in minutes. There are two main hubs to the site, the Visitor Centre area and Adderstone Field, and these, along with several other stops along the forest drive, provide plenty of opportunities for groups to explore and discover the forest.

Example school visits

- **EYFS** – Understanding the world – exploring different habitats to look for minibeasts, discussing where they live and why.
- **Primary school** – PE, geography and maths – orienteering challenge – explore the forest using the maps and packs available from the visitor centre.
- **Secondary school** – Year 7 settling in, getting to know each other – working in teams to build structures such as bridges, shelters and towers.
- **GCSE / A-level** – Geography – adjoining the Forestry Commission land of Dalby Forest is the National Trust's Bridestones site; compare two contrasting habitats (commercial forest and open moorland); investigate the visitor pressures on both sites; and examine the ways that the sites are managed by two different organisations; sustainable tourism – explore the design and construction of the Forestry Commission's visitor centre and look at visitor management and zoning

Site [webpage](#)

- has information to help you plan your visit including details on trails, site facilities, opening times, parking charges, directions and events

On-site facilities

- Café, information centre, play areas, ample parking for cars and coaches (charges apply) in several car parks along the 7-mile forest drive, toilets, indoor space for hire, picnic tables, cycle hire
- Mobile phone reception is limited throughout the forest; a payphone (which takes cards) is available in low Dalby village

Surrounding woodland

- The visitor centre and main car park are situated right in the middle of the forest – within five minutes walk is a variety of mixed woodland made up of different species and ages of trees; further up the forest drive is even more variety – broadleaf and conifer plantation, open spaces, heathland, lakes and streams.
- More than ten waymarked walking trails range from short easy access trails around the lake, to strenuous hilly walks with fantastic views.
- Cycle trails include everything from easy child-friendly cycling to extreme mountain biking.

Self-led learning opportunities

- Woodland activities – trees, minibeast, habitats, shelter-building (see FC [downloads](#) and [lesson plans](#)).
- Active / sporting – walking, orienteering, [cycling](#)
- Hire a 'Ranger in a Bag' at Dalby
 - Ranger in a Bag (RIAB) is the Forestry Commission's bookable self-led activity pack for school groups.
 - RIAB contains all the equipment and instructions needed to lead learning activities in the forest (no experience necessary!), as well as introductory and plenary activities.
 - RIAB is suitable for a group of up to 35 children aged 4-11.
 - RIAB topics available at Dalby are Amazing Animals, Fantastic Forests and Sensory Explorers.
- Other self-led activity packs available to hire are:
 - The Habitat trail – a 1½ mile trail with activity stops along the way to explore the forest's varied habitats
 - Stream studies
 - Orienteering – a choice of junior orienteering packs, or more advanced courses
 - Shelterbuilding

For more information on any of the packs call the Pickering Office on 0300 067 4300.

Learning opportunities from partner organisations

- Other site activities (archery, low ropes and team tasks) offered by www.dalbyactivitycentre.co.uk

Local Forestry Commission contacts

- The local FC office is in Pickering; reception is staffed 9am-4pm Monday to Friday – [email](#) or telephone 0300 067 4300.
- The Dalby Forest Visitor Centre contact number is 01751 460295.

Planning your visit

- **Contact the local FC office in Pickering** – we'd like to know you are coming and, depending on your plans, there may be a booking form to complete.
- **Pre-visit** – we strongly recommend that you make a pre-visit to the site before bringing your group – you'll need to know where to park, where the toilets are, where and how you will carry out your activities; you'll need to be able to write your risk assessment and will also be able to purchase trail leaflets and maps if needed.
- **Health and safety** – we carry out regular safety checks of the area around the visitor centre and car park and of the waymarked trails; we do not however, check every path and every part of the forest; if you are bringing a group to the forest, it is your responsibility to carry out a pre-visit and write your own risk assessment; we cannot provide you with a site risk assessment because the forest is a variable environment, which changes as a result of weather conditions, time of year, forest operations etc; we do offer a [sample risk assessment](#), which may be of use, when you are writing your own, and a [guide to group leader responsibilities](#); if a member of your group has an accident while visiting Dalby, please let the learning team know as soon as possible;

Accessibility

- The car parks are relatively flat, with dedicated parking for disabled visitors close to the visitor centre. Some of the trails into the woods are quite steep, but there are more easily accessible options.
- Accessible toilets are available and clearly marked.
- The café and visitor centre are at ground floor level with no steps.
- The education room (bookable area) is above the café and can be accessed by a lift.
- Information about accessibility of trails is available in leaflets and from site staff. Each trail has a header board with information about its length and accessibility.

After your visit

- **Feedback** – we'd like to know how you get on with your self-led visit to Dalby and have provided a short [online survey](#).
- **Further opportunities** – if you would like to find out more about learning opportunities on the public forest estate, please [email](#) and ask to be put onto our mailing list.