

Birr Outdoor Education & Training Centre



Parents/Guardian Information

We are delighted your child will be visiting us in Birr OETC and look forward to assisting them on their journey of adventure. We aim to offer new experiences, instill self belief, encourage teamwork and have a life long positive experience with us.

We are aware that this maybe the first time your child is taking part in an adventure trip or even the first time away from home, so we have prepared this guide to show you everything you need to know before your child's trip.

ESTABLISHED
1989

Birr OETC

Birr OETC is a non profit making centre affiliated to the Department of Education and Science and under the auspices of Laois & Offaly ETB. The centre was set up in 1989 by Co Offaly VEC and has developed into an all year round residential centre.

We are situated on the outskirts of Birr town on a four acre site. We have three main facilities located in Birr, Banagher and Cadamstown. We offer outdoor education courses to groups of people of all ages and sectors of the community. We provide activities, ecology courses, accommodation, meals, transport and specialist equipment.

Courses are flexible and programmed to meet the needs of each individual group. All

programmes are designed and tailored with your group in mind and where possible we will always adapt our sessions and teaching style to suit the needs of your group.

Outdoor Education Aims

We are committed to delivering the sense of adventure and excitement in our activities. This ensures participants get the enjoyment, fantastic moments and personal gain from experiencing the real activity in its true environment. This is made possible by effective risk-assessment, a wealth of experience and a highly qualified, experienced team of staff.

As well as the opportunity to enjoy and experience new activities our staff understand the personal and social educational learning opportunities that can be gained through the outdoors. They have the skills to create meaningful learning experiences in a positive learning environment.

We engage participants in fun and active reviews where they reflect and think about what they have learned about themselves and others from the experience and how they could benefit from these insights both back at school and in other areas of their life.

Participants are encouraged to express and share their opinions and often discover alternatives choices and possibilities for themselves.



At Birr OETC we understand that it is the quality, professionalism and enthusiasm of our staff that make your visit to us so successful. Our staff are some of the most qualified and experienced instructors in the country. They are all employed through Laois and Offaly ETB and must adhere to strict standards, be Garda vetted and complete on going training courses. All staff hold relevant outdoor instructor certifications gained through long experience and rigorous assessment by National Governing Bodies. Our core staff have further qualifications making them technical experts in their specialist field.



Additionally, all our staff receive a comprehensive induction programme and in-house training which includes Policy Procedures, Health and Safety Training, PPE and Legislation, Child Protection, Manual Handling, Risk Management as well as the practical elements of coaching young people. Staff are observed in the delivery of sessions on a regular basis to ensure they continue to coach to a high standard.



Security

A Duty Instructor (DI) remains on-site and on call throughout the night period. Their duties are to ensure the centre is secure and aid in the groups needs during the night. The centre gates and all external doors are locked at the end of the day. Monitored CCTV cameras are in operation on the exterior of the centre .



loetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Laoise agus Uibh Fháilí
*Laois and Offaly
Education and Training Board*

Leaders

On residential trips, Leaders are only expected to take on a supervisory role from 9pm until 8am the next day. During this time it is their responsibility to maintain control and discipline. The DI will be on call in the centre during the night in case of an issues. Leaders may also be asked to help with any group problems that arise during their stay. Residential leaders are responsible for their group on any trips to the shop and Birr town centre.



74 Hostel Style
Accommodation
Beds

Facilities and Accommodation

Our main building in Birr is open all year round and can accommodate up to 74 guests in dormitory style hostel accommodation. We have three separate dormitories, two upstairs (22+18 beds) and one downstairs (28 beds) plus two leaders rooms with 6 beds. Dormitories are simply furnished with bunk beds, a sheet and a covered pillow. Participants must bring a sleeping bag/duvet

We have two meeting halls fully equipped with projector, multi media board, Wi-Fi, White boards, Flip Charts etc.

Our main dining room can accommodate 48 guests at one sitting. There is a separate a leaders meeting room with free tea & coffee making facilities.

There is a four acres camping site on the main site in Birr that accommodate 100 plus individuals for camping with electricity and water facilities.

Safety & Risk Assessments

Health and safety is paramount in Birr OETC. Our ETB Head Office, Board of Management and centre staff are all involved on a daily basis in making sure all aspects of our centre meet and often exceed health and safety legislation. All of our activities and learning programmes are operated in accordance with strict standards.

We use comprehensive risk assessments for all of our operations - including activities, learning programmes, fire safety, accommodation areas and all our facilities. Dynamic risk assessments are carried out on an on-going basis by instructors leading each activity, to reflect on-going changes in the environment.

As we are a state facility our Outdoor Education Centre undergoes rigorous Health and Safety assessments including our staff, building, facilities, equipment and activities. Our Policy Statements and Risk Assessments are available from our office to view. We leave nothing to chance. Safety through careful risk management allows us to provide thrilling adventures without undue risk.



Discipline/Behaviour & Group Responsibilities:

We aim to have a positive impact on all participants. Our expectations are made clear at the initial briefing and during the activities with every group. On activities, the instructors are in charge and if for any reason safety is being compromised they have the right to cancel or stop the activity.

We encourage ownership and shared responsibility in helping to keep the centre clean, tidy and litter free at all times. The

centre operates on a self-help basis so groups must clean up after themselves. When meals are provided, the group will be divided into smaller groups for their share of kitchen duties. During activities, we will also expect help with maintaining good care of the equipment and general tasks associated with the activities. These are all part of the outdoor education learning process. The group is responsible for any damage caused to the centre and/or property during their visit.



PARTICIPATION TERMS & CONDITIONS

Participants are responsible for ensuring they have appropriate fitness and good health to participate in their chosen course. The courses undertaken at Birr OETC often involve strenuous physical exercise and is of an adventurous nature and contains elements of risk.

Participants can be exposed to cold & wet conditions. Anyone suffering from, or ever having suffered from, any medical condition, illness or injury should make their condition known to the centre staff in confidence via their booking form and should verbally advise each Instructor working with them.

Parents/ Guardians booking on behalf of children are responsible for ensuring they have appropriate fitness and good health to participate and that they inform us of any issues that may affect their child's participation.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE:

By agreeing to these terms and conditions any adult booking on behalf of any child confirms that they understand and give consent for their child to participate in activities at Birr OETC.

I confirm I have given all relevant information regarding medical issues and fitness to participate for my child.

I understand that participants with current or recent injuries or medical conditions may not be able to participate in activities. Doctor clearance should be sought where appropriate.

I agree with the discipline and behaviour expectations as described above.

Birr OETC regularly take photos of participants on activities. We upload them on our Facebook Page for parents and participants to view. If you do not wish photos to be taken please inform the group leader.

Please complete the application form on the back and sign in order to give consent for your child to participate in all Birr OETC activities.

Consent Application Form

Please complete this form and return it to the group leader in advance of arrival.

Name of Group/School			
Trip Details	DEPART Location Pick up	Arrive Back Location Drop Off	
Dates / Times	Date/Time	Date/Time	
Name of Participant			
Address			
Date of Birth			
Email address			
Emergency Contact			
Medical Ailments that we need to know.			
Special needs or requirements we may need to know			
Circle level of swimming ability.	Afraid of water	Learner	Competent
Any Allergies			
Any Dietary requirements			
Other info we need to know			
<p>We regularly take photos and videos of participants during activities for Facebook and marketing literature. If you do not consent please tick here <input type="checkbox"/> and please inform the group leader prior to departure.</p>			
<p>I confirm i have read and understand all the terms and conditions within the Parent/Guardian information Package and ensure my son/daughter also understands them.</p>			
Signed			
Date			

What to Pack

What to pack when coming to Birr OETC

All of our activities take place come rain or shine, so please come prepared for weather changes. Birr OETC will provide any specialist equipment required for activities but in order to make sure your group is able to fully enjoy their visit, please ensure suitable clothes and footwear are worn.

Day Trip

- ▶ Wear old warm clothes
- ▶ No Denims
- ▶ Spare pair of old trainers to get wet
- ▶ Swim wear or shorts & t-shirt
- ▶ Packed lunch if required
- ▶ Towel
- ▶ Rain jacket & hat
- ▶ Personal medication (inhaler etc)
- ▶ Spending money
- ▶ Plastic bag for wet gear

Don't forget extra shoes to wear in the water

Our Activities

Water Based

- Canoeing
- Kayaking
- Gorge Walking
- Raft Building
- Body Surfing
- Pier Jumping
- Coasteering



Land Based

- Rock Climbing
- Abseiling
- Archery
- Orienteering
- Hillwalking
- Caving Maze
- Night Line
- Team Bonding Games
- Indoor Rock Climbing
- Climbing Tower
- Zip-Line

Residential Trip

- ▶ Sleeping bag
- ▶ Change of old clothes per day
- ▶ No denims
- ▶ Spare pair of old trainers to get wet
- ▶ Swim wear or shorts & T-shirt
- ▶ Towels & toiletries
- ▶ Rain jacket & hat
- ▶ Personal medication (inhaler)
- ▶ Spending money
- ▶ Plastic bags for wet gear
- ▶ Mobile phones are only allowed between 8.30pm and 10.30 pm

Birr Outdoor Education & Training Centre

Phone 057 9120029 Email: info@birroec.ie

www.birroec.ie



PARENTS TICK LIST PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- Read the Parent/Guardian information package with your son/daughter in order to understand the guidelines and get them familiar with Birr OETC.
- Ensure any medical ailments are identified and that the student has an ample supply of medication for the duration of their trip to Birr.
- Return completed consent form with appropriate payment to the group leader.
- Inform group leader of any information relevant to your child's participation not covered in the consent form.
- Please ensure you have packed according to the What to Pack sheet.
- Please do not buy any new clothing etc. If you need a sleeping bag we have a supply here in the centre.



We are a self financing outdoor centre for Laois and Offaly ETB. Resources such as staff, transport and meals must be allocated in advance to deliver a quality service to the group size. Increases and or decreases in group numbers must be updated at least 10 days in advance of arrival.

The group leader must have the final details of the group by this time so please ensure you have given all the information by then.