

Birr Outdoor Education & Training Centre



Leaders Information

Welcome to Birr OETC

This guide aims to provide all the information required for your visit to Birr OETC ensuring a successful stay in our centre.

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 grown to an all year round residential centre.

We are situated in the Georgian town of Birr and have a four acre site on the outskirts of the town. We have three main facility locations Birr, Banagher and Cadamstown. We offer outdoor education courses to groups of people from all ages and sectors of the community. We provide

Outdoor Education Aims

We are committed to keep the sense of adventure and excitement in outdoor and adventurous 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 team 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 opinions and often discover new choices and possibilities for themselves.

activities, ecology course, accommodation, meals, transport, 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. Should you have specific aims for your trip, please advise us as early as possible



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. All staff hold relevant outdoor

instructor certifications gained through long experience and rigorous assessment by National Governing Bodies, and key 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. It is mandatory for all our staff to be fully qualified and certified by the relevant governing bodies, be Garda vetted and complete on going training courses.

ESTABLISHED
1989

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 .

Facilities and Accommodation

Based in Birr our main building is open all year round and can accommodate unto 74 persons in dormitory style hostel accommodation. We have 3 separate dormitories, two upstairs (22+18 beds) and one downstairs (28 beds). Dormitories are simply furnished with bunk beds and under-bed storage, a sheet and a covered pillow. Participants must bring a sleeping bag/duvet. Group leader accommodation is in two rooms with three beds in each. The rooms are close to the main dormitories.

We have two main meeting halls with projector & multi media displays, Wi-Fi, Whiteboards, Flip Charts etc.

Our main dining room can accommodate 48 person at one time. We also have a leaders meeting room with free tea & coffee making facilities.

We have a four acres site that accommodate 100 plus for camping with electricity and water facilities.



Safety & Risk Assessments

Consideration for health and safety runs through everything we do. Everyone, from our ETB head office, board of management and centre staff , is involved on a daily basis in making sure all aspects of our centres meet and often exceed health and safety legislation and beyond. All of our activity and learning programmes are operated in accordance with strict standards.

We operate comprehensive risk assessments for all of our operations - including all 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 to conditions.

As we are a state facility our 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.

Leader Responsibilities

The group leader is responsible for ensuring all parents are notified in advance of the activities that any under 18's will participate in, including the associated risks. Group leaders will also be responsible for informing parents of any incidents, injury or unacceptable behaviour which may occur during the visit. There are regular opportunities for leaders to liaise with centre staff during your stay to discuss and review requirements and check progress against the objectives of your visit.



You are welcome to join us on the outdoor activities and we would encourage your participation. If you would prefer not to join in you can avail of a free session in the County Arms Hotel Leisure Centre.

Leaders are only expected to take on a supervisory role from 9pm until 8am the next day. During this time it is your responsibility to maintain control and discipline. The DI will be on call in the centre during the night in case of an emergency. You may also be asked to help with any group issues that arise during your stay. Your help with all aspects of the centre experience is greatly appreciated, as you will be more familiar with group members. Residential leaders are responsible for any trips to the shop and Birr town centre.



Informing parents/guardians

Once you have booked your place, this is the perfect time to let parents know about the upcoming trip to give them plenty of time to prepare.

We have prepared a Parent/Guardian Info Pack for you to forward to parent. This includes information about Birr OETC, what to pack, discipline expectations and terms and conditions and a consent form. For your convenience we have created a template letter for you to use to inform parents/guardian.

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 at any time.

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 outdoor 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 - FITNESS & MEDICAL:

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 involves strenuous physical exercise and is of an adventurous nature that 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 leader booking on behalf of any child confirms that they have the consent of the Parent/ Guardian of the child to participate in activities at Birr OETC and that the parent/guardian have agreed to the terms and conditions.

I confirm I have received full Parental/ Guardian Permission for all members of the group under 18 years to participate in the range of activities at Birr Outdoor Education & Training Centre.

I confirm I have sought all relevant information in relation to medical issues & fitness to participate for each member of the group and that I will pass on any relevant information to Birr OETC.

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.

Birr OETC regularly take photos of participants on activities. We upload them on our Facebook Page for parents and participants to view. If your group do not wish photos to be taken or do not have parental/ guardian consent please inform the centre on arrival.

Confirmation of booking is deemed to be acceptance of these Booking Terms and Conditions for all participants

Booking & Payment Process

You can call or email our office to make your booking. Once dates and details are finalised we will book your group in. An email confirming the booking will be sent to you including a booking form, leaders pack and a parent/guardian guide.

Please complete the booking form and return to Birr OETC with the correct deposit. €30 per person residential and €10 per person day trip. Please note that this deposit is non-refundable. The booking is only confirmed once we receive the deposit.

If you decide to cancel your booking now you will need to contact us immediately.

Final payment: This invoice will be based on numbers finalised 10 days in advance of arrival. The balance for all trips is due to be paid 30 days from the final invoice.

Cancellation Charges: A cancellation fee will apply to groups canceling less than 30 days in advance. Deposits are non refundable. Transfer of booking is possible if the dates are available and transferred 30 days in advance of original booking.

[The Payment Process](#)

Payment may be made by Electronic Transfer or by cheque.

Account Name: Laois & Offaly ETB

Bank: A.I.B., Portlaoise, Co Laois. **IBAN:** IE 05A IBK 93327911558067

Please reference 'Birr OETC'.

Cheques to be made payable to **Laois & Offaly E.T.B.** only



TICK LIST PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

1. Return completed booking form with appropriate deposit.
2. Inform parents and obtain consent to participate & ensure they have a list of what to pack.
3. Brief group before departure regarding activities, aims of the trip, personal equipment required, standards of behaviour etc..
4. Ensure any medical ailments are identified and that the student has an ample supply of medication for the duration of their trip to Birr.
5. Please identify any special needs/requirements of your group and inform us in advance.
6. Please contact Birr O.E.T.C. at least 10 days prior to arrival in order to finalise details, i.e. group numbers and dietary requirements, final numbers and gender mix..
7. Ensure all participants have returned consent forms.
8. Invoices will be based on numbers confirmed 10 days in advance of trip.

We are a self financing Outdoor Education Centre for Laois and Offaly ETB. Recourses 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.

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

Don't Forget Extra Shoes to Wear in the Water

- ▶ 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

Our Activities

Water Based

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



Land Based

- Rock Climbing
- Abseiling
- Archery
- Orienteering
- Hillwalking
- Caving
- Night Line
- Initiative Games
- Indoor Rock Climbing
- Climbing Tower

Residential Trip

- ▶ 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
- ▶ Sleeping bag
- ▶ 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