

COVID-19 related measures for Outdoor Activities with TrekCo

TrekCo an outdoor activity provider licensed by the Health and Safety Executive under the Adventurous Activity Licensing Act (Registration number R0043) and it is our aim that all participants are as safe as they can be when taking part in our activities. These measures are also balanced with outdoor safety management to produce the measures outlined below.

These risk assessments were created by Steve Ranger, MA (Ed), who is a holder of the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor Award, European Mountain Leader Award and National Technical Advisor for Girlguiding UK for climbing and high ropes activities.

These measures are informed by:

- Government guidance (general): <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Department for Education Guidance on school visits <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#educational-visits>
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award guidance to AAPs
- National Youth Agency's 'Managing youth sector activities and spaces during COVID-19'
- Public Health England advice (we are licensed by the Health & Safety Executive)
- Sport London <https://londonsport.org/covid-19/return-to-sport-and-physical-activity-guidance/>
- Sport England <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/return-play/frequently-asked-questions-return-sport-and-activity>
- Outdoor Education Advisors' Panel National Guidance <https://oeapng.info/download/4835/>
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award 'Running expeditions during the Covid crisis' <https://www.dofe.org/thelatest/running-expeditions-july2020/>

Pre-activity and arrival

Participants should monitor their health in the lead up to their expedition, and should not take part if they have any symptoms related to COVID-19. You should notify TrekCo by calling us on 01273 487509 or emailing info@trekco.com as soon as you know you will not be coming and we will make other arrangements for your trip, or discuss refunds and postponements as appropriate.

The organiser of the group will need to confirm to us that:

- no participants or accompanying staff have had any symptoms of COVID-19 in the previous 14 days before taking part in any activities;
- no participants or accompanying staff have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for Covid within the last 14 days.

In the case of minibus travel, where TrekCo staff are driving participants or working in proximity to participants, they will undergo a 'lateral flow' test at the start of the day and will not commence work until a negative result has been received.

- Students being transported will have received two lateral flow tests which will need to be negative.
- Transport by minibus will comply with Brighton & Hove guidelines. Windows must be open and masks worn by all occupants.

At this time clinically vulnerable individuals must consider whether they should be taking part in such activities, and must inform us beforehand – the NYA recommends that companies provide access to activities with extra measures where possible, but you should seek medical advice if you are in this category.

Should anyone develop symptoms during the activity period, they must notify the company. The activity/day will be cancelled, and everyone advised to follow the government advice pertaining at the time of the incident regarding isolation. Everyone will be advised to contact the NHS [Test and Trace system](#). The symptomatic individual should be isolated from the rest of the bubble until collection if possible, with appropriate supervision in place where required.

The group leader should arrange for collection by or via a member of their household (you may wish to get confirmation from parents that they are prepared to do this).

In normal times, using public transport for a visit has many educational, environmental and social benefits. However, the government currently advises that public transport should be avoided if possible. Any visiting groups must weigh up these factors and apply their own solution.

Participants should travel to the activity ideally by car as a preference; or if using public transport please follow government advice about using public transport and face coverings. This period of your trip must be organised by yourselves according to [Government guidelines on the use of public transport](#) if you are unable to come by car.

Activity days and sessions

General

A 2m distance should be maintained wherever possible from other participants and staff. Where this is not possible the 1m+ rule should be observed. Participants are requested to see Government advice regarding distancing [here](#)

Each activity will clearly have different requirements. Where possible we will not select activities requiring participants to have prolonged contact; please see individual activity risk assessments below. The activities selected for your visit will be discussed in advance to take the proximity of participants into account.

Consideration will be given when selecting activities to excluding those activities which give rise to a greater number of minor injuries which would require first aid, if applicable.

Antiseptic hand gel usually contains a high proportion of alcohol, and could therefore be a temptation for abuse by some young people. It should be used under close staff supervision.

During some activities, it may be possible to designate or mark out 'zones' within which individual participants work, to avoid contact between them.

Equipment

We will have multiple hand sanitiser stations; there will be hand sanitiser at each activity. Please use the sanitiser as frequently as possible. You may of course wish to bring your own. Participants will be advised whether, and at which point in an activity, it is necessary to sanitise their hands – in general this will be at maximum 30 minute intervals.

Plentiful stocks of hand sanitiser and refills will be available at all times, and as a matter of course participants and staff will be regularly reminded of the vital use of hand sanitiser. This should be at any change of activity or location, any transfer of an item from one person to another, and following touching any equipment, door, railing, handle etc.

We will also issue face masks where participants don't have their own; it is expected that many participants will have face masks but we also have a stock of these so that everyone can definitely have one available at all times.

All activity equipment will be sanitised following use including all points of contact, as detailed in the individual activity assessments.

First Aid – Where possible group leaders will carry out first aid on members of their own group. Practising Covid-safe First Aid will be emphasised. Please see also the advice from St John's Ambulance: <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-advice/covid-19-advice-for-first-aiders/> Where more advanced first aid knowledge is needed, TrekCo instructors (who are all first aid qualified) will perform first aid as necessary.

You will be issued with a mask and gloves for emergency use should you need to perform First Aid on someone else.

Quarantine of group equipment – All personal equipment provided by TrekCo will be quarantined for 72 hours between activity days – helmets and harnesses are the primary items.

Notes regarding COVID-19 measures

It is incumbent on all organisers of activities for youth groups to make the decision as to whether activities can be offered safely. There is no such thing as 100% safe, and 'Organisations have a duty to reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures' (National Youth Agency).

It is our opinion, and that of the Government and agencies listed above, that activities can be made sufficiently safe – not least because these take place entirely out of doors which is the safest environment for preventing transmission of a virus.

Given the benefits of outdoor activity overall to young people's health and physical and mental wellbeing, it is considered that the risk level is far outweighed by the benefits of proceeding with outdoor activities.

Overall principles involve:

- Delivering everything outdoors
- Reducing contact between people and practising social distancing wherever possible
- Stressing frequent hand washing and use of sanitiser
- Reducing or eliminating the need to share any equipment
- Isolation and cleaning of equipment between users

Individual activity assessments

These notes are produced on the assumption that they will sit alongside the full Risk Assessment document for activities.

Abseiling and Tree Abseil

This will take place on one of the abseil towers.

Participants will be briefed in one of the seating areas, and harnesses and helmets issued. These will only be used by the same participant; no exchanging of personal equipment is permitted. After the session these will be collected and cleaned; unless the participant is continuing to another session requiring the same equipment in which case they will keep those items.

Participants, as always, will be called forward one at a time to walk up the stairs. The stair railings will be disinfected between sessions and during sessions as frequently as is feasible by the assistant instructor.

The only need for proximity of 1m or less is the brief point at which the instructor needs to clip the participant in to their harness with their karabiner and attach the descender. During this period the instructor will wear a face mask.

It is considered that once the participant is 2m from the instructor, i.e. leaning back and ready to descend, that the instructor will consider whether it is beneficial to lower the mask in order that the participant, who may be nervous, may see the instructor's facial expressions for reassurance and better communication. If no reassurance is needed the instructor may keep the face mask in place. This decision will rest with the instructor.

At the bottom of the abseil the abseiler must be disconnected and the assistant/competent adult doing this must wear a face mask.

The descender and accompanying karabiner will be returned to the top on the end of the rope, and disinfected before use by another participant. In reality there will be several sets of these and they will be rotated, being disinfected in the period between uses.

High Ropes Activities

These vary but can be grouped according to operational methods.

Unsuitable

All Aboard – due to the unavoidable proximity required at the top of the all aboard, this activity will not be used at the time of writing.

Individual high ropes activities grouped by operational method

The Perch, The Tree Climb, Ball Jump

Single traversing elements – Indy Crossing, Postman's Walk, Log Walk, Tarzan Viine

Participants will be briefed in the seating area, and harnesses and helmets issued. These will only be used by the same participant; no exchanging of personal equipment is permitted. After the session these will be collected and cleaned; unless the participant is continuing to another session requiring the same equipment in which case they will keep those items.

The participant will be called forward and clipped in to the rope by the instructors, who will wear a mask.

Two other participants are required, to operate the rope under the supervision of the instructor. Whilst this is not actually an essential function and could be performed by the instructor themselves, it is important that young people are occupied and it is thought that the benefits of this should prevail.

These participants are not within 2 m of each other or anyone else unless instructor needs to step in to help. The instructor will therefore put on a face mask if this is necessary. There is no need for very close proximity.

The instructor will lower the participant from the top of the challenge once completed. This necessitates the instructor being within 2 m of one of the assistant participants and therefore the instructor will wear a mask.

Participants are tied in directly to the rope and therefore there is no common piece of equipment (such as a karabiner) for them to use, nor to be disinfected. None of the participants assisting participants need to have any contact with any pieces of equipment which will be passed one person to another. However the instructor will have sanitiser on hand in case a student picks up or passes it.

Jacob's Ladder, Ninja Climb, Crate Challenge

Participants will be briefed in the seating area, and harnesses and helmets issued. These will only be used by the same participant; no exchanging of personal equipment is permitted. After the session these will be collected and cleaned; unless the participant is continuing to another session requiring the same equipment in which case they will keep those items.

The participant will be called forward and clipped into the rope by the instructor, who will wear a mask.

Two other participants are required, to operate the rope under the supervision of the instructor. Whilst this is not actually an essential function and could be performed by the instructor themselves, it is important that young people are occupied and it is thought that the benefits of this should prevail. These participants are not within 2 m of each other or anyone else unless instructor needs to step in to help. The instructor will therefore put on a face mask if this is necessary. There is no need for very close proximity.

This task requires three sets of three participants to work together in the groupings as described. These participants are less than 2m apart but do not need to be in close contact.

The exception is the Crate Challenge, which requires two participants to support each other – face masks are required. All other factors remain the same for this activity.

Participants on the challenge itself (as opposed to belayers) will sometimes need to help each other, but do not need to be in close proximity.

The instructor will lower the participant from the top of the challenge once completed. This necessitates the instructor being within 2 m of one of the assistant participants and therefore the instructor will wear a mask.

Participants are tied in directly to the rope and therefore there is no common piece of equipment (such as a karabiner) for them to use, nor to be disinfected. None of the participants assisting participants need to have any contact with any pieces of equipment which will be passed one person to another. However the instructor will have sanitiser on hand in case a student picks up or passes it.

The Zip Wire

Participants will be briefed in one of the seating areas, and harnesses and helmets issued. These will only be used by the same participant; no exchanging of personal equipment is permitted. After the session these will be collected and cleaned; unless the participant is continuing to another session requiring the same equipment in which case they will keep those items.

Participants, as always, will be called forward one at a time to climb the ladder (belayed). The ladder will be disinfected between sessions and during sessions as frequently as is feasible by the assistant instructor.

The only need for proximity of 1m or less is the brief point at which the instructor needs to clip the participant in to their harness with their karabiner and attach the descender. During this period the instructor will wear a face mask.

It is considered that once the participant is 2m from the instructor, i.e. leaning back and ready to go, that the instructor will consider whether it is beneficial to lower the mask in order that the participant, who may be nervous, may see the instructor's facial expressions for reassurance and better communication. If no reassurance is needed the instructor may keep the face mask in place. This decision will rest with the instructor.

At the bottom of the zipwire the participant must be disconnected and the assistant/competent adult doing this must wear a face mask.

The trolley and accompanying karabiner will be returned to the top on the end of the rope, and the karabiner will be disinfected before use by another participant.

Problem Solving Activities

Minefield

This task involves participants going from one point to another by passing a plank along the group, on which they stand to reach the next point. In a large group this can result in students being very close to each other; however restricting numbers in the group indicates this issue. Therefore a maximum of six participants per group will be imposed. Larger groups may complete the challenge in two separate halves.

The planks will be disinfected between groups and students will be required to sanitise hands between task attempts.

Bomb Task, Gutterball, similar tasks

This task requires four or five participants to use a set of equipment to extract a 'bomb' from a tube. Whilst it does require coordination, it does not require excessive proximity. Equipment must be sanitised between groups.

Titanic Task

This task requires participants to hug each other for stability and therefore will not be used under current circumstances.

Spider's Web, Rope Triangle

These tasks require participants to pick each other up and pass people from one side of a rope/obstacle to another, and therefore will not be used under current circumstances.

Other Activities

Climbing – Indoors

Participants will be invited into the climbing wall and the briefing will be done while they sit on the benches at the side. Harnesses will be issued. These will only be used by the same participant; no exchanging of personal equipment is permitted. After the session these will be collected and cleaned; unless the participant is continuing to another session requiring the same equipment in which case they will keep those items.

The participant will be called forward and clipped in to the rope by the instructors, who will wear a mask.

Two other participants are required, to operate the rope under the supervision of the instructor. Whilst this is not actually an essential function and could be performed by the instructor themselves, it is important that young people are occupied and it is thought that the benefits of this should prevail. These participants are not within 2 m of each other or anyone else unless instructor needs to step in to help. The instructor will therefore put on a face mask if this is necessary. There is no need for very close proximity.

For younger groups the instructor will carry out belaying duties themselves and will therefore keep all items of equipment on their person, not transferring it to anyone else.

Climbing at Withead Climbing Wall (High Sports) – in addition to any other TrekCo measures, the group must comply with High Sports' procedures which are to be found at: <https://www.high-sports.co.uk/covid-19>

These include for participants the need to wear face coverings at all times except when climbing. In the case of courses with repeat sessions with the same participants e.g. NICAS courses, participants will be issued with equipment of their own which they will keep, avoiding the need for quarantine. Hand sanitiser must be used at every exchange of any equipment, and in any event should be used every 30 minutes.

Climbing – Outdoors

The mechanics of the actual climbing will be almost identical to that for indoor climbing above. In addition:

The approach to the rocks involves walking across the fields and climbing two stiles – care should be taken that participants don't 'bunch up' at the stiles.

Equipment must be carried to the rocks by rucksack (even if transported by car to the layby). Therefore all equipment must be sanitised before being returned to the rucksack.

Helmets will be used for outdoor climbing and care must be taken that participants don't put these down and get confused as to ownership, mixing helmets. These will be sanitised.

Rock Scrambling

The approach to the rocks involves walking across the fields and climbing two stiles – care should be taken that participants don't 'bunch up' at the stiles.

The group should be briefed carefully with regard to distancing; however there is no need for participants to be close to one another.

Any assistant (usually a capable adult accompanying the group) asked to 'spot' will be made aware of the need to be aware of close proximity if necessary, and to use hands sparingly. Frequent hand sanitisation will be employed.

Helmets will be used for scrambling and care must be taken that participants don't put these down and get confused as to ownership, mixing helmets. These will be sanitised.

Orienteering

Orienteering equipment will be disinfected in between uses. Maps are laminated and can therefore be cleaned; we do not issue compasses for orienteering. Pencils and paper are sometimes issued; if this is the case then the paper may be cleaned in between uses.

Participants have no need to be extremely close to each other. Maps may be issued individually so as to avoid standing closely to look at one map as a group.

Canoeing and Kayaking

This will take place on Weirwood Reservoir.

Paddlers must practice social distancing at all times and maintain a distance apart of at least 2m between people.

All equipment will be disinfected before and after sessions.

Hand washing/sanitisation will take place at the start and end of every session.

Minimal contact must be made when putting on safety equipment.

Sessions will take place in shallow water whenever possible to minimize the need for instructors to carry out deep water rescues and therefore be in close proximity of the paddler.

Where a deep water rescue has to be carried out the instructor will put a mask on before approaching the paddler, unless there is entrapment or immediate danger to life. Communication will be made upon approach and the rescue carried out with minimal physical contact.

Launching and landing will be done with maximum distance between paddlers, staggered launching and landing if the group is too large for the launching/landing area.

Any water based activity will be conducted in a way to make the implementation of social distancing easier to manage. i.e. no side by side rafting, games involving boat to boat contact, etc.

Shelter Building

This activity does not utilise any equipment needing sanitisation; any string given out may be discarded and plastic sheeting (if used) will be quarantined for 72 hours.

The principal measure to be used in this activity is group management and reminders of social distancing.

Archery

Archers will be walked to the activity and asked to wait behind the shooting line as normal, and the session will proceed as normal with the exception that:

1. In order to halve the amount of times equipment is passed between people and yet not have children waiting excessively, the normal three arrows before changing shooters is extended to six.
2. Bows and arrows will be wiped and disinfected whenever passed between participants.
3. Wherever possible, each participant will have their own bow and arrows which they will keep for the session. This does however require greater supervision – the bows and arrows must be placed in a holding area to prevent misuse.

Bridge 75 Abseiling, Peak District

Risk: Transmission of COVID-19 person to person

Instructors are assigned to a specific activity group for the duration of their stay. They must socially distance from all other staff and participants outside of the activity group. Groups must be briefed that there may be other groups present on the bridge and that they must under no circumstances mix. This will also require lead instructors to talk to the lead instructors of the other groups and co-ordinate movements, sanitise abseil stations in between groups etc. It is in no-one's interests to have groups, staff or equipment mixing, and close co-ordination and co-operation is vital. If another group is not forthcoming with this co-operation, wait until they leave and disinfect the railings before use. This co-ordination applies from the car park, throughout the activity, and back to the car park including toilet use, waiting time and location etc.

Social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable is acceptable) should be followed wherever possible.

Where participants are asked to don harnesses and helmets, they will be shown by demonstrating and as far as possible not manually helped – if this is needed then ask an accompanying teacher to do this wherever possible.

Each participant shall be issued their own harness and helmet which they will keep with them for the duration of the session and therefore instructors must ensure that there are more than enough for 1 item per person when preparing for the session.

All items issued to participants will be quarantined for 72 hours after use in accordance with the equipment quarantine and recording measures in place for all activities.

Other equipment used will be quarantined; the only equipment which would be used in between participants and effectively passed from person to person would be metalwork such as descenders and karabiners. These should be rotated and sanitised between uses. It is prudent to bring more sets of metalwork than usual for each session to allow for efficiency and for drying and rinsing. The effects of

alcohol sanitising fluid on the performance of ropes are not fully known but cannot be positive and this must be taken into account. Items must be sanitised then rinsed in water in the buckets provided.

Where instructors carry out a task which requires close contact (within 1m – including physical contact) additional risk mitigation must be implemented:

- a) Keeping close contact time as short as possible.
- b) Instructor to wear face covering.
- c) Asking participants to wear face coverings.
- d) If the individual is exempt from wearing a face covering, to face away from the instructor.
- e) Where instructors carry out a close contact task, wash hands/use sanitiser immediately.
- f) Instructors must be trained in the putting on and removal of PPE and the safe disposal of PPE and potentially infectious material.
- g) In the event that instructors are required to be in close contact to prevent harm or manage an incident/perform a rescue and the instructors dynamic risk assessment led them to not don the specified PPE, this must be reported up the chain as soon as possible.
- h) All equipment used must be taken away with the group. Under no circumstances are set ups to be left in place for subsequent groups to use.

Further notes

1. These risk assessments don't include Mountain biking – this activity is held at Deers Leap Bikes adjacent to Blackland Farm and is covered by Deers leap risk assessments (Deers Leap biking instruction is delivered by The Trekking Company).
Other Blackland Farm facilities – it is not our intention to offer swimming, low ropes or tunnelling as groups are able to lead these activities themselves if Blackland Farm are opening them.
2. Canoeing and Kayaking notes were produced by Bruce Lee, senior instructor at The Trekking Company.

Date revised: 7th January 2021

Compiled by: Steve Ranger

Written by: Steve Ranger, Des Barlow, Bruce Lee