

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Where do people go to the toilet?*

We have two very clean and pleasant compost toilet blocks. One is near the campfire area, the other right next to the cabins. They have four sit down toilets and two urinals, so there's lots of space if everyone is desperate! Our compost toilets separate the urine from the solids, so they don't smell, and they produce great compost. The toilets are not only new and interesting but great education too.

*What food do people eat?*

We try to be as sustainable and ethical in our food purchasing as possible. This means that the majority of our food is organic, local, and most of the meat is raised at the Shielling Project. We cook most things from scratch, giving simple wholesome meals, and great learning. We almost always have a pizza night using our pizza oven, burgers and spaghetti bolognese are popular too. For breakfast we offer porridge, cereal, cornflakes or toast from bread we have made. For lunch we tend to make our own sandwiches from egg mayo, fish, cheese, humous, plus crisps, fruit and tray bakes. Healthy snacks are always available. We will discuss the full menu with you when you book.

Please don't send your child with lots of sweets, it goes against the message we are putting across about healthy eating, and also provides lots of energy for staying up all night and being grumpy the next day!

*Where do people sleep?*

We have six cabins on site, each holding six people, with one specially adapted for disabled access. We work with school groups to group pupils for each cabin. If it's a summer camp, we work out the best groupings for that camp. The cabins are warm, comfortable, have space for storage and contain three bunk beds. The beds have simple mattresses, but we recommend you bring a single bed sheet (for hygiene and comfort) and everyone needs to bring a sleeping bag and pillow.

*Is there any unsupervised time?*

For most groups of young people we will have 'free time' during the day, where adults are present but not hanging over the children, and they are left to find things to do, and games to play. The rest of the time we are doing structured and supervised activities. Older groups will have some unsupervised time.

*Are there male and female staff?*

There are always male and female staff present during a trip to the Shielling Project.

*Can I call my child when they are at the Shieling Project?*

We talk with the school for school trips, to see if they have a communication policy. During summer camps, if you would like to you can send a phone with your child which we will keep and hand out during the evening. However, in our experience, it is best not to phone too much, if at all – the young people are developing their resilience and independence during their visit, and this is sometimes helped by a supportive and trusting holding back on the phone calls!

*Is there provision for allergies and dietary needs?*

We make every effort to meet people's dietary needs, with non-milk alternatives, meat and dairy free options, and low or gluten free options. But we aren't able to provide a large range of choices, because we are focused on high quality (and higher cost) food. There is no pressure to eat the meat produced here at the Shieling Project, but everyone has the chance to look after the animals and participate in the debates about food and livestock.

*What are the staff ratios?*

As per recommended guidelines, we have at least 1 member of staff to 10 visitors, but most of the time the ratio is much higher around 1:5.

*Are there lots of ticks and midgies?*

We are in an average area for the Highlands. We have a fair number of midgies during the summer, but definitely not as bad as places like Skye! We have built two really great spaces (kitchen and hall) which are midge-proof where we can spend lots of time. We also supply extra midge nets if you don't have one.

There are ticks present here, just as there are all over the Highlands. We have been taking various measures to combat them, from putting on livestock which have been treated for ticks (which attract the ticks and kill them), to reducing the height of the foliage, to fencing out the deer. However, there will always be ticks, and we suggest that children don't roll on the ground, and to tuck trousers into socks. Shorts aren't a good idea. We also provide a space and guidance for removing ticks, with regular checks. You should check your child when they return home too. This is all part of enjoying our amazing landscape, and a small price to pay for health and well-being (imagine if we were in Australia and had to deal with sharks, crocodiles, snakes, and spiders!).

*Where can people clean themselves?*

We have sinks for hand-washing and teeth-cleaning all over the site. We spend a lot of time cleaning hands as we are mixing with livestock, mud and food! We have a wash tent, which provides cubicles with a simple camp shower for body washing. The best way to do this is a

'flannel wash' – a good skill to learn for wild camping and festivals, as well as saving huge amounts of water.

*Can I come and visit before a trip?*

You are very welcome to visit before booking, or booking your children on. We are happy to show you round and answer any questions you have. We can also discuss visits during your children's stay if appropriate.

*What safety procedures do you have in place?*

We are insured for all our activities, we have extensive risk assessment and policy and procedure documents which all staff follow, and review often. We complete updates in training and best practice and have external advisors to help us maintain high standards of care and safety. All of our documents can be viewed on request.

*What happens to photographs of my child?*

We take photographs during visits to the Shieling Project. They are mostly to document and illustrate learning. We also use these photos to share with our wider community the story of the Shieling Project. If you do not want your child to be in photographs, please let us know, and we can arrange that.

*How do you deal with risk at the Shieling Project?*

Being outside, around fires, making things with saws and hammers – these are things which carry small risks. At the project we aim to manage these risks as safely as we can, but also to help people who come here to judge the risks and benefits for themselves. This makes them safer people. This also means that there will be inevitable slips and falls and small cuts. We believe this is a part of learning, and to try to prevent them would be to stop the learning for the young person (and in fact make them less safe in the future). We hope you understand where we are coming from, but are happy to discuss this further with you.

*What happens if my child wants to come home?*

We will phone you immediately if we, or the child, feel that they need to come home. We will discuss the situation with you, try to take in everyone's opinions and needs and then make an action plan.

*What animals do you have at the Shieling Project?*

We have pigs, cattle, chickens and two dogs. There are also sheep and a lot of deer present too. If you or your child is allergic to any of these animals please let us know and we will minimise contact with them.