

How to make your outdoor learning, educational visits and school trips **more affordable**



NAHT and Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) member **JO BARNETT** shares her top tips.

1 Stay focused on the true value of the learning experience.

When planning, focus on your educational aims and learning outcomes. By doing this, you'll maximise the educational value of the school's resources, staff members' time and parents' money.

2 Speak to your provider.

Ask if they have a lower tariff at certain times of the year. Find out about any costs associated with number thresholds, which may affect your course fees, and ask to see if a slight change may bring down the per-head cost.

3 Look at the small print.

Ensure you fully understand the terms and conditions and when the provider will require you to confirm the final numbers and pay. Also, know ahead of time what your insurance policy includes and how to claim.

4 Give notice and plan sympathetically.

Allow parents to budget with as much notice as possible and pay in ways that work for them. Avoid asking for payments approaching Christmas and the new year. The first part of the autumn term is a great time for a residential, but think ahead so that it's a manageable period for payment.

5 Understand who you're targeting.

Is it possible to offer parallel experiences at different price points so that there's something affordable for everyone? For example, offer both local day adventure activities at lower costs and a more expensive residential adventure visit at the same time.



Try 'swapsies' with other schools. If you've exhausted all the opportunities at your school, what about any nearby schools you could access? Could you make it an overnight expedition?

6 Pick cheaper travel times.

Transport is a significant expense, so try booking more affordable times to travel (such as tying into coach companies' school runs), developing relationships with the providers to secure better deals or capitalising on repeat and regular guaranteed custom.

7 Get to know and use your school's site and local area.

Teachers don't often live near their schools, so they might not be familiar with the biodiversity and history of the area. A walk around the site is a good start. For example, I started teaching in a school with a real-life Roman road as its boundary – easy to miss but a readily accessible archaeological site. Also, find out about the living resources you have locally (eg groups and individuals that can help bring the curriculum to life) – they may even be parents already within your school community.

9 Learn the ropes.

Do you have any untapped resources among your staff willing to upskill? You'll not only grow and develop your team but also avoid buying in someone to lead the activities and experiences. There are supportive networks easily accessible online, free resource websites and social media sites. See some below to get you started.

i The Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) provides guidance, activities, training and support for outdoor learning and educational visits. Visit: www.oeapng.info

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) provides support on the ground, facilitates the sharing of best practices and promotes the benefits of learning outside the classroom. Visit: www.lotc.org.uk

The Institute for Outdoor Learning provides access to the latest outdoor news, research, current initiatives and professional development. Visit: www.outdoor-learning.org