

# Coronavirus – guidance on accessing green spaces safely

This guidance sets out the key principles of enjoying the benefits of being outside, while protecting yourself and others from coronavirus.

The risk of the coronavirus being passed on to others outdoors is considered to be low as long as [people maintain social distancing](#).

In England you can leave your home to exercise and spend time outdoors for recreation with your household or in groups of up to six people from outside your household.

When travelling to outdoor spaces, it is important that people respect the rules in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and Northern Ireland. Do not travel to different parts of the UK where it would be inconsistent with guidance or regulations issued by the relevant devolved administration.

In England, you can now:

- spend time outdoors, including exercise, as long as you continue to adhere to strict social distancing guidelines with people from outside your household
- take part in other outdoor sports and activities, including fishing, in groups of up to six people, or household groups, provided you adhere to strict social distancing guidelines
- drive to outdoor open spaces, including beaches and beauty spots, irrespective of distance – you should travel in a private vehicle, alone or with members of your own household. You should avoid public transport other than for essential journeys.
- visit gardens, nature reserves and parkland to spend time outdoors, although access may be limited to members or those with tickets to ensure social distancing and buildings and amenities such as cafes will remain closed. You should check ahead and follow social distancing guidelines.
- go swimming in either lakes or the sea for exercise or recreation provided that social distancing guidelines are observed – you cannot use public indoor and outdoor swimming pools
- take part in all forms of water sports practised on open waterways, including sailing, windsurfing, canoeing, rowing, kayaking, surfing, paddle-boarding and the use of privately-owned motorised craft (in line with the guidance issued by the relevant navigation authority)
- you can continue to use towpaths for walking, running and cycling, being mindful of other users and people living in boats along the water

There are no restrictions on how far you can travel to get to the countryside. However you can not stay overnight. Campsites and caravan parks are closed and you cannot stay in a holiday or second home.

To stay safe, you must:

- take hygiene precautions when you are outside
- wash your hands as soon as you are back indoors
- keep at least two metres apart from anyone outside your household at all times
- take hand sanitiser with you when you set off in case there are no handwashing facilities

## **Respect other people and protect the natural environment**

Remember your actions can affect people's lives and livelihoods. Take the time to read signage. Respect the measures that local authorities and site management have put in place to help ensure social distancing.

Before travelling, you should check if facilities, such as car parks, are open to visitors. Do not park on verges or block gates. This restricts access for other vehicles.

When in the countryside, follow the [Countryside Code](#). You can do this by:

- leaving no trace of your visit and taking all of your litter home
- not using barbecues as they risk causing wildfires
- keeping dogs under effective control and on a lead when you are around farm animals – read further [guidance for pet owners](#)
- leaving gates as you find them and following instructions on signs
- keeping to footpaths and following signs where they suggest alternative routes

Wildlife may have moved into areas where it hasn't previously been found, including nesting birds. Land managers may have taken action to provide extra protection of wildlife. Be vigilant and comply with these protective measures to ensure you do not disrupt the local wildlife.

## **Advice to land managers and landowners**

You will need to take account of [Working safely during COVID-19 in construction and other outdoor work](#).

You can also draw on the government's guidance for [Safer Public Places during Coronavirus](#). We recognise however that some of it is more relevant for urban areas and that different approaches may sometimes be required when managing access to land in the countryside.

It may not be practical to clean regularly all gates and stiles. You can display signs at access points reminding the public of the need to take hygiene precautions and wash hands regularly. Land managers may also wish to consider tying gates open if it is safe to do so, so that walkers do not need to touch the gate.

Landowners do not have the legal right to block or obstruct public rights of way or open access land. However, in circumstances where large numbers of people are using such routes, landowners may consider the following measures:

- temporarily displaying polite notices that encourage users to respect local residents and workers by following social distancing guidelines and consider using alternative routes that do not pass through gardens, farmyards or schools
- offering an alternative route around gardens and farmyards where it is safe to do so (you must gain permission from relevant landowners and make sure the route is safe for users and livestock) provided that the original right of way is maintained
- where footpaths are narrow and it is difficult as a result to abide by social distancing guidelines you may wish to consider putting up signage warning people