



Top tips for planning a greener fieldtrip



Lee Wray-Davies

is Eco-Schools Manager at Keep Britain Tidy. Lee shares her tips for planning a more sustainable fieldtrip.

Before becoming the Eco-Schools Manager for England I was a Geography and Environmental Science teacher for 16 years, leading nearly 100 fieldtrips in the UK and overseas with countless GCSE and A level students. I always tried to ensure that the fieldtrips I ran were as environmentally friendly as I could make them. I'm happy to share with you a few of my favourite tried and tested ways to make your next fieldtrip a little bit greener... after all isn't every Geography teacher an eco-champion at heart!

Planning

Planning fieldwork maybe a new role for you, or maybe you have been running fieldtrips for years, either way there is no right or wrong way to make your trips kinder to the environment. Do what works best for you and your students. You might want to try just one of the suggestions I cover before committing to some of the bigger ideas. Remember, every little action you take is one more on the step to helping green our fieldwork curriculum, and if thousands of Geography teachers across the country do the same, then we are putting some great synoptic links into practice!

1. If like me your school or college is located in a heavily urbanised area, where many of your students have never seen a cow or sheep 'in person' before, then a trip to the countryside or tourist honeypot site (Malham Tarn shout out!) can have many advantages. However, residential and even day trips away can take a lot of time to organise, regardless of COVID restrictions and mean a much higher travel footprint. At primary or KS3 where there is more flexibility over the fieldwork environments consider the environmental benefits of carrying out fieldwork in your school grounds, local green spaces or town/city. There are sometimes the most amazing local sites that are within walking distance, such as allotments where fieldwork options are endless. With a little creative thinking you could set some exciting fieldwork tasks whilst helping your students value and become more involved in their local community.





Top tips for planning a greener fieldtrip

2. If you choose to travel, then consider the green credentials of the transport company your school uses and the accommodation where you will be staying.
3. If travelling by coach, minibus or public transport to your fieldwork location, consider calculating the carbon footprint of your travel and offset this by planting trees in your school grounds or local community when you return. As part of this activity you could research the best native tree species available and the distance that needs to be left between saplings when planting.



4. Consider carrying out a litter pick during your fieldwork. Tourists or local residents would be much happier to engage with a group of students armed with clipboards and questionnaires if they can see young people from your school helping to tidy the local area at the same time.

Equipment

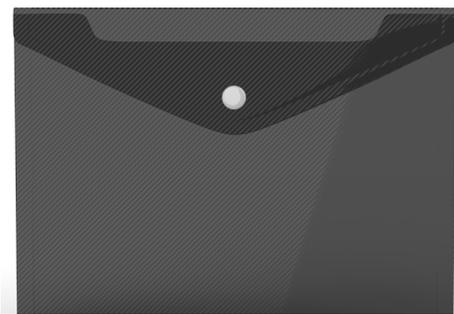
1. Good quality clothing can be very expensive and may only be used once on a fieldtrip by students. If staying at a residential centre it is worth checking before visiting if they have waterproof trousers and walking boots that students can hire. You will also need to consider having a conversation with students that they should not be ashamed or embarrassed to be borrowing outdoor wear, and that wearing walking boots that others have worn before them is fine... just bring lots of socks.

2. Also encourage students not to succumb to the allure of fast fashion and buy cheap wellington boots from chain stores that are not likely to survive river fieldwork! If students do purchase wellingtons that they don't want at the end of the fieldwork then many FSCs will happily accept them as donations so that others can wear them at a later date.



© LittleMiss/Shutterstock

3. Collecting and recording data is an important part of fieldwork. If you have access to technology such as tablets this is a great way to record your data and save paper at the same time. If you are using paper, and we do tend to use a lot of it during fieldwork, in the form of signed consent forms, fieldwork guides, field notes, write ups, past papers and mark schemes, consider how you



© GO DESIGN/Shutterstock

could make elements of your fieldwork paper free. I used to always make sure my students had a large plastic file that they could fit a clipboard inside so that fieldnotes didn't get wet and end up thrown away. I also collected in all fieldwork notes from every student once they were no longer needed, meaning that I now have some fantastic sets of fieldwork data going back years which make great comparative fieldwork evaluations (good for EPQ students).

4. If you are considering incorporating a litter pick into your fieldwork it is worth contacting your local council as many have litter picking kits that can be borrowed and would gladly let schools use to collect litter data



Top tips for planning a greener fieldtrip

as part of their fieldwork - this links very well to tourism and urban geography options.



© FANDESIGN/Shutterstock

Quick tip: If you need equipment such as quadrats, tape measures, stop watches etc. consider asking around other departments or even feeder schools first to see what they may already have that you could borrow or keep. No need to purchase new items if perfectly good fieldwork equipment is sat gathering dust in a store cupboard somewhere.



© FRDesign/Shutterstock

Food

After running fieldwork for many years with hungry teenagers I know first-hand how important mealtimes are to students! Therefore this section is possibly where you can have the most impact when making your fieldwork greener.

1. If asking students to pack their own lunch for a day trip or first day of a residential then run a zero waste lunch competition. Add the incentive that the winning group gets the back seats of the coach on the way home or the room with ensuite and I guarantee all will want to take part! I would always add lunch box, and water bottle to my kit list to parents/guardians.



© Kidsada Manchinda/Shutterstock / © graletta/Shutterstock

2. Many fieldwork residential centres use local and seasonal food, knowing several weeks in advance what will be on the menu at the time of your visit. I would suggest finding this out and letting your students know so they can prepare themselves for 'broccoli' and that there will be no alternatives! Heart-warmingly I found this resulted in less food waste at the end of every meal.



© Ana Blazic Pavlovic/Shutterstock

3. Use your fieldtrip as a way to help your students pilot becoming veggie or even vegan for one day or possibly the duration of the fieldwork. Some residential centres now have default vegetarian menus, i.e. if you want meat then you have to ask for it. I found it a great way to get students to go for the veggie options, and even the pickiest of eaters liked the vegetarian sausages for breakfast.

4. If trying out any of these green food options above make sure to let your student's parents/guardians know this will be happening. This allows them to raise any issues they may have beforehand with you, and I found when parents were on board with this, it was much easier to get students to reduce the amount of meat in their meals.

Quick tip: If your students insist on bringing snacks that are covered in plastic wrapping (you could be very bold and put a total ban on this) then make sure that you investigate if there are ways that this wrapping could be recycled.



© FRDesign/Shutterstock



Top tips for planning a greener fieldtrip

And finally two eco-tips that I have tried to encourage on every residential but wasn't quite sure which category to place them in... so let's say fieldwork outliers.

1. Ban or do whatever you can to discourage single use travel toiletries on fieldtrips! Miniature toothpastes and shampoo bottles that are left half empty and thrown away at the end of the trip are often forgotten about when it comes to planning fieldwork. Encourage students to bring refillable containers or all in one ecological soap/shampoo bars that can be taken back home. My all-time favourite idea, that a group of my resourceful A level environmental studies girls came up with a few years ago, was to decide between themselves who will bring a big bottle of shampoo, conditioner and toothpaste for them all to share in their room. At the end, whoever brought it takes what is left home with them and is usually paid in kind by their roommates by making their beds or carrying fieldwork equipment.



2. It used to stun me every year how many students brought hair straighteners with them on residential, especially when they would be wearing woolly hats most of the day. Therefore, I placed a ban on unnecessary electrical items and encouraged 'switch off time' especially during the evenings. Myself and my colleagues would sit with our students and play cards, giant Jenga or host (very competitive) pool and table tennis tournaments so students were not just sitting on their mobiles all evening in the breakroom. At first a little 'cringy' but students soon came round when they realised they could beat us on the pool table! During the last few fieldtrips I ran as a group, we

would also go outside in the evening and simply lie on the grass looking up at the night sky. Having lived in a city all their lives, due to light pollution, some students had never seen stars, let alone shooting stars.



For more inspiration on why Geography matters in the world, and our Real Geographers series, go to:
[Historians and Geographers of the future](#)