

Wildwood Bushcraft Safety Briefing Document

This document gives you - the course participant – an advance briefing on some of the risks and safety issues connected with the course that you are booking. Please carefully read the general safety section and all the sections on activities relevant to your course (listed in the course description on our website). As part of the booking process you need to acknowledge that you understand these risks and agree to follow the safety advice given herein. This is necessary for your own safety and also for our insurance purposes.

Verbal briefings will also be given by the instructor on the day which will repeat, elaborate on, and could even over-ride some of these instructions. It is an essential requirement of the course that participants also follow the safety instructions given on the day. Thank you for your cooperation.

General safety instructions

- Please do not leave the group (i.e. go out of earshot) without first checking with the instructor and gaining his/her permission.
- Do not bring machetes or axes, except where they are explicitly required in the course description.
- Do not bring any alcohol or illegal substances on any course.
- Do not use any cutting tool (e.g. knife, saw), before receiving the tool safety briefing by the instructor.
- Do not use cutting tools once visibility is reduced after sunset.
- Please do not light any unauthorised fires (there will be the time and place for authorised ones!).
- Please bring suitable outdoor clothing, boots and sleeping systems as described in the Joining instructions.
- Be aware of trip hazards around the wood and camp, including tent pegs and guy lines.
- Always use a torch after dark to avoid eye damage from twigs and tripping over.
- Drinking water is always provided – do not get dehydrated – ask if you are not sure where to get water.
- Drinking water is usually stored in Jerry cans - please do not use it for washing – separate washing water is available.
- Please wash your hands after game preparation, visiting the toilet, or when your hands are otherwise dirty.
- A group First Aid kit should always be available at the camp - ask if you not sure where it is located.
- When pitching tents, tarps or shelters follow the instructor's advice on suitable areas and always check for yourself for deadfalls from dead trees and branches overhead. If in any doubt, seek the instructor's advice.
- Let us know if there are any issues which affect your safety or performance on the course (this includes health issues that have arisen since completing the booking form, if you are feeling ill, getting cold or wet etc.).
- Do not eat any wild plant/food unless advised by the instructor.
- If you have any problems while on the course please speak to the instructor, who is there for your welfare and safety.

Use of cutting tools

On many courses we use sheath knives and saws (bow and folding saws) mainly for cutting wood. We have three main safety rules:

- **Make the tool safe when it is not in use**

Put it back in the sheath, fold it away, hang it up – as appropriate. When in the middle of game preparation the knife should be laid down and washed before being replaced in the sheath. Importantly, you should never walk anywhere with an unsheathed knife.

- **Always cut away from yourself**

Never cut in the direction of any part of your own body. Importantly never cut in between your legs and avoid the femoral artery along the inner thigh and groin.

- **Make space around yourself and take care of others**

Where possible, use cutting tools more than two arms lengths away from anyone else. Where this is not practical make others aware of what you doing and cut away from them.

Other more specific safety instructions will be given on the course by the instructor.

Fire lighting

The following applies where fires have been authorised by the instructor:

- Clear the ground of combustible debris (about 50 cm radius).
- Make space around yourself when lighting with sparks or blowing a tinder bundle into flame.
- Never strike a firesteel directly towards yourself or towards anyone else at close range (<1m).
- Have water at hand for extinguishing unwanted or potentially dangerous fires.
- When lighting tinder, place yourself and any other people upwind of the tinder so that lit debris are not blown onto yourself or others.
- Avoid wearing flammable products like hairsprays or garments which overhang.
- Do not blow on embers or tinder from above, blow from the side.
- Do not remove any burning debris or embers from the fire.
- It is especially important to take care near to the fire and not to run around.
- When you have an ember and are about to light a tinder bundle, let the instructor know. He or she can advise you on how to blow it and handle it safely. Drop the bundle at any time you feel uncomfortable and definitely do not walk with it once it is lit.

- In the unlikely event of a burn, use cold water to cool the burn and let the instructor know.

Water preparation

- Water should only be collected from sources approved by the instructor,
- Water which is not clear must be filtered before being boiled or pump filtered.

Shelter building

- Always check for overhead or leaning deadfalls around a shelter site and discuss with the instructor if in any doubt.
- Ensure your main shelter supports are strong enough and securely constructed so that they will support your body weight before going underneath them.
- Take care when moving large pieces of wood around so as not to catch other participants.
- Avoid building shelters in areas susceptible to flooding.
- Ensure that you have some form of extra water-proofing if sleeping in the leaf shelter e.g. a bivvy bag or tarp. If you are still getting wet, move to the group tarp to avoid your sleeping bag getting soaked. If necessary seek advice/help from the instructor.
- If the instructor permits you to have a fire near your shelter the fire should be allowed to burn out before you go to sleep in the shelter. Water should be kept by the shelter in case of a shelter fire.

Foraging and food

- Only eat wild food which has been identified as safe by the instructor.
- Wash your hands before handling or preparing food.
- Keep raw and cooked meats separate.
- Use colour coded cutting boards for meat (red), fish (blue) and vegetables (green).
- Ensure meat is cooked through and placed on clean plates.

Latrine

On most courses we have a screened toilet with a seat. However on expeditions and some courses in wild locations, participants will dig individual latrine pits. These must be at least 30 m from any freshwater source (e.g. stream, river, lake).

Lyme disease

In some of our Scottish venues, ticks are quite common and their bites can occasionally cause Lyme Disease. To reduce the risk of being bitten, tuck in clothing and use repellents. Check at the end of the day for any attached ticks – remove them as soon as possible using a tick remover carried by the instructor. If any tick bites later become swollen or infected promptly seek medical advice to minimise health complications.

Fishing

Fishing takes place on most expeditions, also on Survival Weekends in Scotland, Coastal Survival Weekends and on the Survival Challenge.

- When casting you should protect your eyes using glasses or sunglasses – please bring these with you.
- Make sure you have a secure position on the bank before casting.
- Keep in sight at least one other person (where possible) so that if you fall in you can get help.

Natural hazards

Our expeditions and some of our courses in Scotland and overseas take place in wild, rugged terrain. This can include natural hazards such as mountains, waterfalls, fast flowing rivers, wild shorelines and sometimes small cliffs (e.g. Moidart, Trossachs, Glen Nevis). If you take extra care and follow the instructor's guidance these risks will be minimised, however you must accept the inherent additional risk in such environments (and in fact in any woodland environment). Please also be aware that mobile reception can be patchy in these areas, adding to the hazard.

Canoeing and kayaking

We use canoes and kayaks on most expeditions. You will be given instructions by the qualified guide on the course but the following rules should always be adhered to:

- Buoyancy aids should be worn and correctly fastened whenever you are on the water or setting up boats on the water's edge.
- In moderate to fast moving water (grade 2 or greater) you are advised to wear a helmet.
- You should stay within sight and communication distance of other group members.
- You should be able to swim at least 200 m