



## FAQs & USEFUL INFORMATION FOR GROUP VISITS

If you would like to book a group visit to the Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) please read the following FAQs that provide additional useful information before submitting the online enquiry form. If you have any questions please contact us at [merlevents@reading.ac.uk](mailto:merlevents@reading.ac.uk)

How much do you charge for group visits?

- Admission to the Museum is free. Our suggested donation for all visitors is £5. This also applies to groups on our **Standard Package**.
- Details of The Blackbird Package and additional costs are available on the website. We can take payment by credit card or invoice.
- To make a donation, you can write a cheque (payable to 'The University of Reading') donate at the shop till, or add cash to our collection boxes in the Welcome Area.

When can we visit?

- You can book a visit any time during normal opening times (Tuesday-Friday: 9am-5pm & Saturday & Sunday: 10am-5pm)
- Please be aware that we host a busy toddler group on Friday mornings until approximately 12pm. For details of our events programme visit <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/whats-on/>
- For full details of our opening times, please visit: <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/visit-us/opening-times/>
- Evening visits can be arranged at an additional cost. Please contact us for details.

Is the Museum fully accessible?

- The MERL is accessible to a wide range of visitors and we always strive to meet the access needs of everyone who visits us. Full information is available on our website <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/visit-us/accessibility/>

How long does a visit take?

- We suggest allowing a minimum of 2 hours for a visit but obviously some visitors will take less time and some much more. Allow longer if you require refreshments or an additional talk.

Can our group have a guided tour?

- We don't offer fully guided tours of the MERL but your Welcome Host will provide an introduction to the Museum and accompany you throughout your visit. This allows you to browse at your own pace.
- We now offer a special Themed Tour on the theme of **People Power and Protest**, which can be booked at an additional cost of £75 per 15 people.

What are the minimum/maximum group sizes?

- Bookings are essential for groups of 10+.
- The ideal maximum group size is 40. We are able to accommodate groups of 50 but this does make the gallery space more crowded.
- Additional Welcome Hosts are required for groups over 15 people. (£15 per each additional 15 people)

Where can we eat and drink?

- Details of refreshments options depend on the package you choose. If you wish to ensure you have a private room to eat and drink in, please book the **Blackbird Package**. Use of a room is otherwise subject to availability. Small groups are welcome to use the MERL café. You can also eat and drink in the garden where there are a number of picnic benches and a large lawn.
- Food and drink is not permitted in the galleries (the spaces beyond the Welcome space, café and shop).

Do you offer hot food?

- We do not offer hot food but 'The Dairy' a University-run student café/bar is right next door. They offer a range of hot food options. The Dairy is not suitable for large groups, and if you are planning to eat there, we suggest you contact them in advance to avoid disappointment. For details visit <https://www.hospitalityuor.co.uk/bars-and-late-night/the-dairy/>

Is there a cloakroom or meeting room that we can use?

- If you book the Blackbird Package you will have use of a private space
  - Coats and bags can be left there and the room can be locked during your visit
  - The room can be used as a meeting or discussion space (during your visit, up to 3 hours.) Ask about room hire charges if you want to extend your time in this, or another available space.
  - You are permitted to eat and drink in these rooms.

- We have lockers for individual use, subject to availability. This is only suitable for small groups to leave coats and day bags.

Can we wear backpacks or carry large bags in the museum?

- If your group plan to bring large bags, we recommend that you book a room to leave these in.

Do you have any information on the galleries at MERL?

- Please visit our website for further information on our galleries:  
<https://merl.reading.ac.uk/visit-us/interactive-maps-and-galleries/>

Can we take photographs in the galleries?

- Photography is permitted throughout the galleries unless there is signage to say otherwise. Some of our collections are subject to copyright legislation, and this is indicated clearly.

Can we draw in the galleries?

- Drawing is permitted in the galleries, using non-permanent materials (pencils) only. Please take care not to block walking routes for other visitors or leave bags and other items in the way. We have a small number of foldable stools for use in the galleries.