

Field Trip Planning Guide



Duke Farms



Frequently Asked Questions

Plan your visit

What's the first step to planning a field trip to Duke Farms?

School groups planning a trip to Duke Farms should submit a registration request at least two weeks in advance of the desired date. Early registration is preferred.

When is Duke Farms open? When can school groups visit?

Registered school groups are welcome at Duke Farms on Thursdays and Fridays during our normal operating hours, provided that date is open.

Once your request is approved, you'll be

able to select a date from our calendar.

[Request here.](#) 



Get ready

What should students bring on a field trip to Duke Farms?

It's always a good idea to bring a water bottle, sun protection (e.g. glasses, sunscreen, hats, sun shirts) and a snack for the trails.

Beyond that, take into consideration the

season, the weather forecast, what you plan to do and of course, students' individual needs. Below are some ideas that may apply to your group.

(Please note, we are unable to provide bug spray or sunscreen for visitors.)



Water, snacks, lunch



Bug spray, sunscreen



Notebook or sketchbooks for observations



Appropriate clothes
(i.e. long pants and sleeves to protect against sun or ticks; umbrella, rain jacket, boots; winter coat, gloves, scarf, hat; comfortable shoes for the trails)



Binoculars, field guides, magnifying glasses, or other items for exploration



Mobile phones for nature photography or apps like Merlin, iNaturalist, Duke Farms' app, etc.



Duke Farms



Get ready

Can school groups bring food to Duke Farms or buy food there?

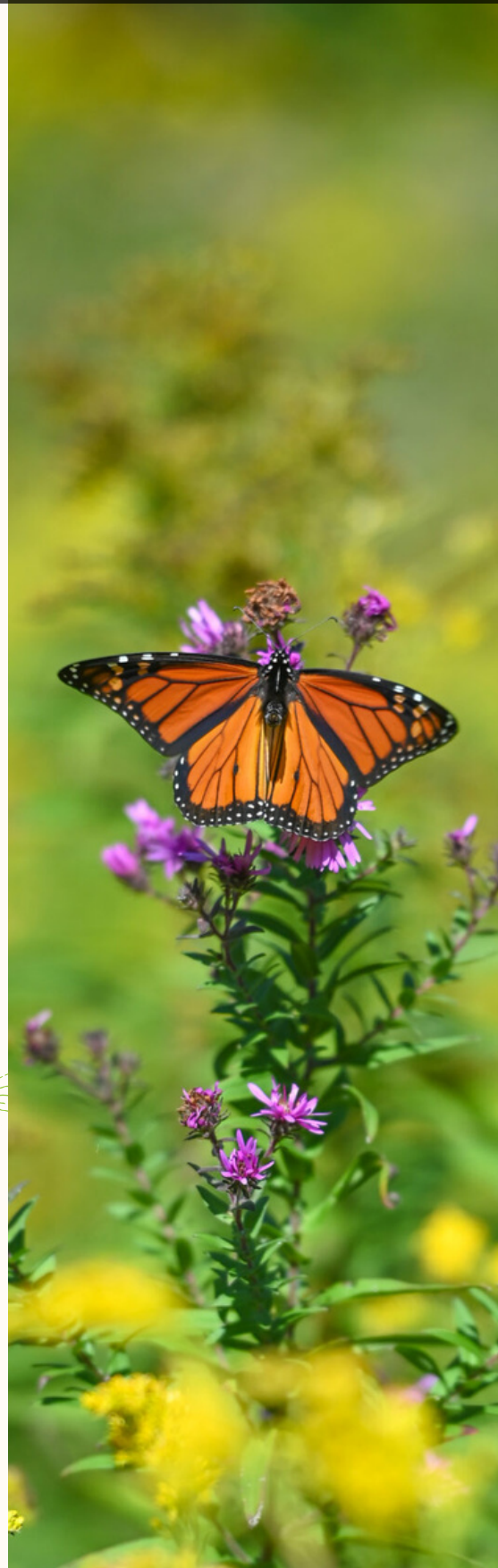
Our café cannot accommodate school groups and is unavailable for drop-in snacks and drinks.

The majority of groups bring lunches with them, and students are welcome to eat anywhere off the trails.

There is no shortage of shady spots, along with a few picnic tables outside of the Orchid Range and on Hay Barn Way that are suitable for very small groups.

We are unable to store lunches or coolers on behalf of school groups.

Please note that Duke Farms is a carry-in, carry-out natural area, and all visitors must take with them anything (including trash or recyclables) that they bring. We do not have trash or recycling receptacles on the property.



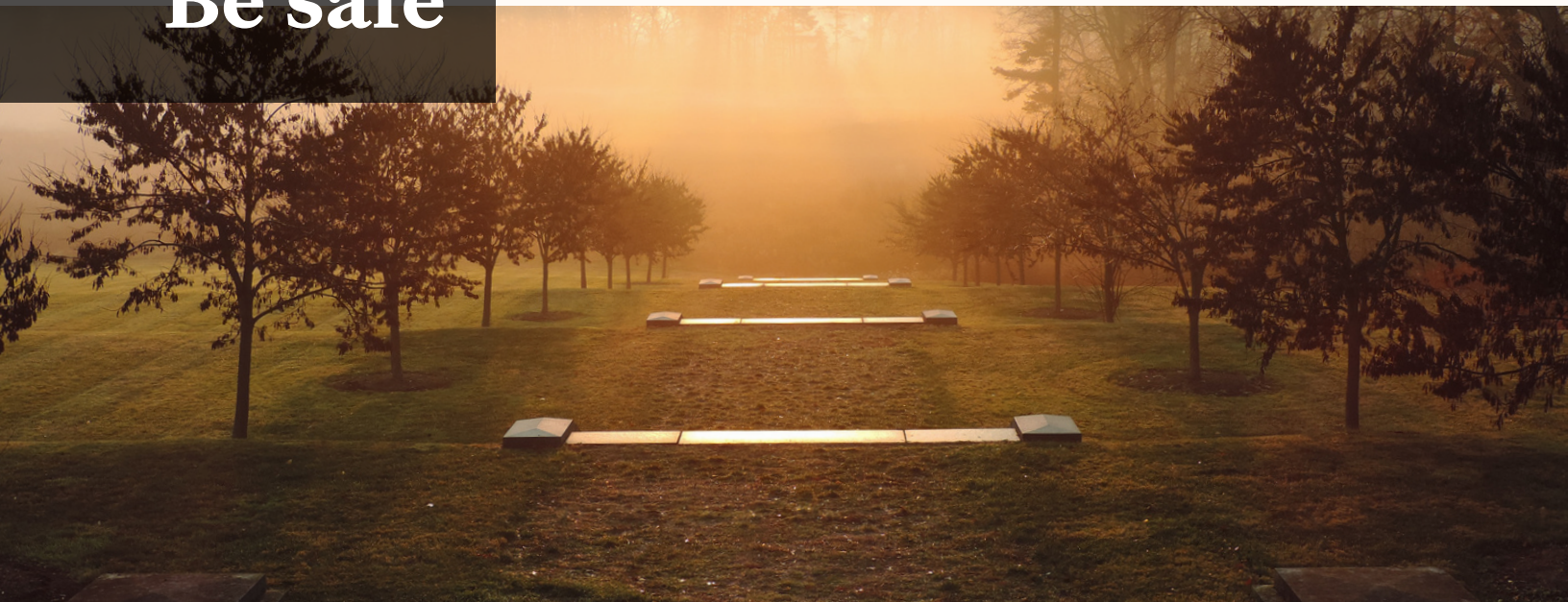
What precautions should school groups take to safely spend time outdoors?

Safe, positive nature experiences are for everyone.

As educators, we believe knowledge and preparation can turn that virtue into a reality for students. Anyone can learn to enjoy nature safely and comfortably, and we are here to help

your group do just that. Here's a list of some safety considerations before you explore our grounds. If you want to know more, get in touch with us.

Be safe



Sun

Even in winter, sun burn is a (preventable) possibility. Protective clothing that offers good coverage, [environmentally friendly sun screen](#) and sunglasses are all good ways to mitigate the risk.

Air temp & quality

Temperature extremes or poor air quality can make the outdoors unsafe for certain populations of people, but in other cases it's just a matter of choosing a good time of day or suitable clothing for the visit.

Water

Dehydration is a special concern on very hot days or after lots of activity. School groups are highly encouraged to bring enough water for the day.



Poison Ivy, stinging nettle, etc.

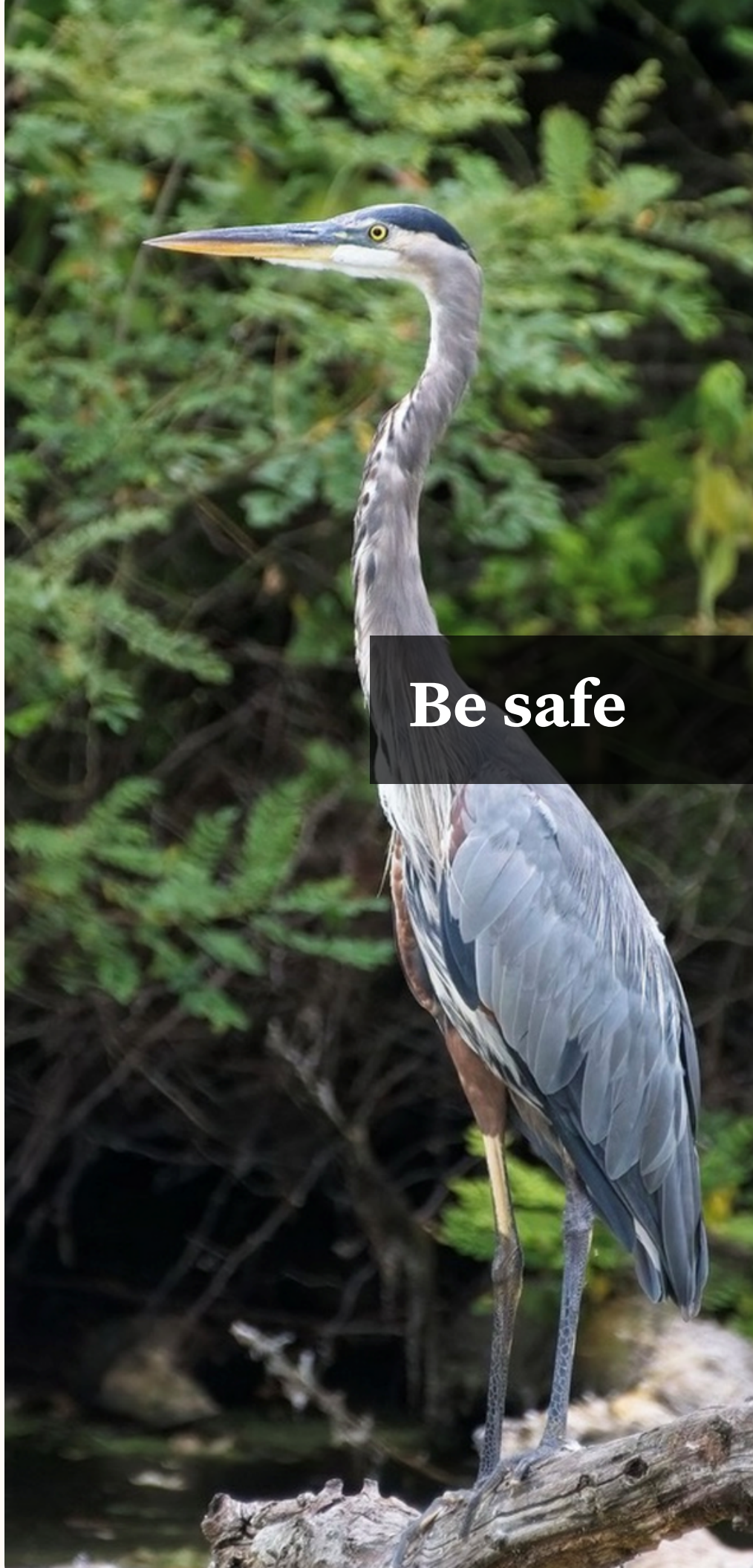
There are many plants on the property that can cause skin irritation and allergic reactions. It's good to familiarize yourself and students with poisonous plants, but either way, touching any part of a plant is ill-advised.

Ticks

Most areas in the northeast have high tick populations, and Duke Farms is no exception. Prevention methods may include insect repellent and clothing (long sleeves, pants legs tucked into socks), but always check for ticks after spending time outside.

Other wildlife

Wildlife is best observed from afar (and quietly). Be mindful of the animals that share Duke Farms with you, keep a respectful distance and never approach wildlife.



Be safe



What if there is a medical or other emergency during a field trip?

For a true medical emergency, dial our Safety & Security staff at (908) 243-3600 or dial 911 and tell them you are at Duke Farms.

For a less urgent matter, call Safety & Security at (908) 243-3600.

We have trained public safety and security staff who take their job of keeping everyone safe very seriously. They have a close working relationship with local emergency personnel and are contacted to assist if there is a medical emergency on-site.

What if there is inclement weather during the field trip?

Duke Farms will close in instances of severe

weather, such as extreme heat or a thunderstorm. Please note that we have very limited capacity in our indoor or sheltered areas, so we cannot accommodate school groups in such cases. We strongly encourage you to consider the weather carefully as the date of your visit approaches. Contact us if you decide not to visit.



Be safe

Get here



Where can buses drop school groups off? Where do buses park?

Buses drop off registered school groups in front of the Farm Barn Orientation Center, then immediately make their way to the designated Bus Parking Lot if they'll be remaining here for the duration of the visit. Buses cannot idle at the Farm Barn Orientation Center or anywhere on the property.

path from the Farm Barn Orientation Center to the designated street crossing at Dukes Parkway West. There is always a crossing guard ready to help things go smoothly and safely. School groups must cross with the guard all together or in chaperoned groups. This is a busy street; groups should remain orderly and alert while approaching the crossing area.

How do groups get into the preserve?

Getting to our 20 miles of paved trails and the majority of property highlights means following the



Duke Farms



Explore

How are the trails?

The majority of our trails—20 miles, in fact—are paved and wide. Some of our unpaved paths are gravel, and others that cut through woods and meadows are compact dirt or mown grass. Nearly all of our trails have no significant elevation gain.

The property map indicates whether a trail is paved (solid line) or unpaved (dotted line).

What accommodations are in place for diverse learners and visitors?

The Education Team is committed to doing away with barriers that inhibit visitors from accessing,

enjoying and learning at Duke Farms. To find out some of the ways we accomplish this, please explore the [Accessibility section of our general FAQ](#). For circumstances that are not addressed there, please contact the Education Team.

Are there bathrooms in the preserve?

You can find public bathrooms at the Farm Barn Orientation Center, near the Bike Tent, at the Orchid Range and on our trails on Oak Way and West Way. Check out the map on our app for wayfinding help.

Where should we go, and how do we get there?

Whether your group is visiting for the first time or the fifth, it can be difficult to decide which portion of our 20 miles of trails and 2,700 acres best serves your students and your unique objectives for them.

There is no part of the property that won't offer some splendid views of architecture, wildlife or landscapes. That said, we've listed some highlights of particular interest to groups of all kinds.

[Our app](#), [digital map](#), and [this chart](#) will also help you to estimate walking times and plan a route that works for your group.

What is an environmental center? What can you do here?

Our name attests to an agricultural legacy that lives on in our agroecology research and community garden programs, but the Duke Farms that visitors know is not a farm. We are an environmental center and a leader in sustainability and conservation, with over 1,000 acres of the land we steward open to the public for inclusive engagement with nature.

Schools visit us to:

- take advantage of accessible trails through diverse, healthy habitats and observe the wild flora and fauna that inhabit them
- take inspiration from our sustainable infrastructure and demonstration gardens
- learn about ongoing conservation and restoration work
- explore historical features like the Old Foundation and Orchid Range

Past field trips have seen students on a scavenger hunt for native species; applying trigonometry to estimate carbon capture in trees; sketching landscapes or statues en plein air; recording observations in nature journals, on data sheets, or in iNaturalist; playing backyard bird bingo; geocaching; and engaging with the property in many other ways, all of which strengthen students' relationship to the land.

Explore

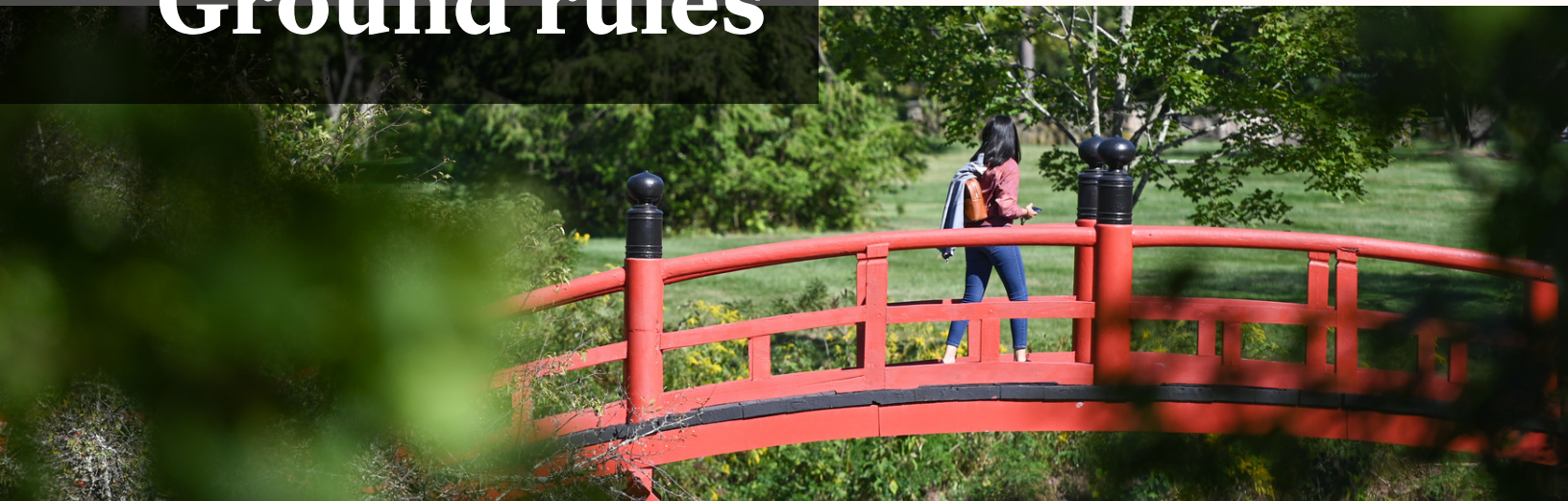


What is Duke Farms' Code of Conduct for school groups? What rules should educators, students, and chaperones know before the visit?

As a center of the Doris Duke Foundation, Duke Farms works to support the wellbeing of people and the planet. When we engage with nature

respectfully and reciprocally, these become unified, not competing, aims. Visitors help us put these values into practice and join us in stewarding this place by keeping some guidelines in mind:

Ground rules



Plan for students of any age, even those 18 or older, to be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Make an effort to limit the use of paper (i.e. handouts or maps). We've found this helps reduce littering and adhere to Leave No Trace principles.

Follow the property's code of conduct, which prohibits:

- climbing on natural or human-made structures (i.e. trees, statues)
- disruptive behavior towards wildlife or other visitors
- playing with sports equipment

- entering water bodies or features; students' safety and protecting important aquatic habitat go hand in hand, in this case
- picking or collecting plants and fungi (see the section on safety)

Refer to our General FAQ for more guidance.



Don't see your question?

Want more guidance?

Reach out to us!

Lisa Davies

School Education Coordinator

✉ ldavies@dorisduke.org

☎ 908-243-3626

Jeff Geist

Manager, Community and
Professional Education

✉ jgeist@dorisduke.org

☎ 908-243-3620



Duke Farms

Learn more

