



Access Guide for Visitors



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Welcome

DIG is a hands-on archaeological adventure giving kids the chance to become trainee archaeologists and discover the most exciting artefacts from 2000 years of York's history! Our four special indoor excavations pits are all based on real-life archaeological digs in the city. They are filled with replica Roman, Viking, Medieval and Victorian finds, children can grab a trowel and explore how people lived in these times.

The main component of a visit to DIG is a tour lasting 1 hour, which takes place in the 'Learn' and 'Uncover' areas of the building, but there are also exhibition displays which change regularly in the 'Explore' areas. At the time of writing, DIG has two exhibitions: one inspired by children's author, Cressida Cowell's new book, *How to Train Your Dragon School*, and the other is about the Roman archaeology of York.

This access guide explains what you can expect on a visit to DIG. The text with the pale brown background explains what happens at different points of your visit. The four icons highlight information related to what you might see, hear, smell or touch.



At a Glance

There is step-free access to the entrance and throughout the ground floor of the building. There is a lift between floors, should you need to go upstairs, and an accessible toilet.

DIG can have high noise levels. We have ear defenders, quiet spaces and sensory boxes if needed.

Seating isn't always available throughout the building, but we have fold-out chairs that can be provided at any time by speaking to a member of staff.

Carers go free alongside any paid ticket.

Outdoor garden space is available for visitors to access.

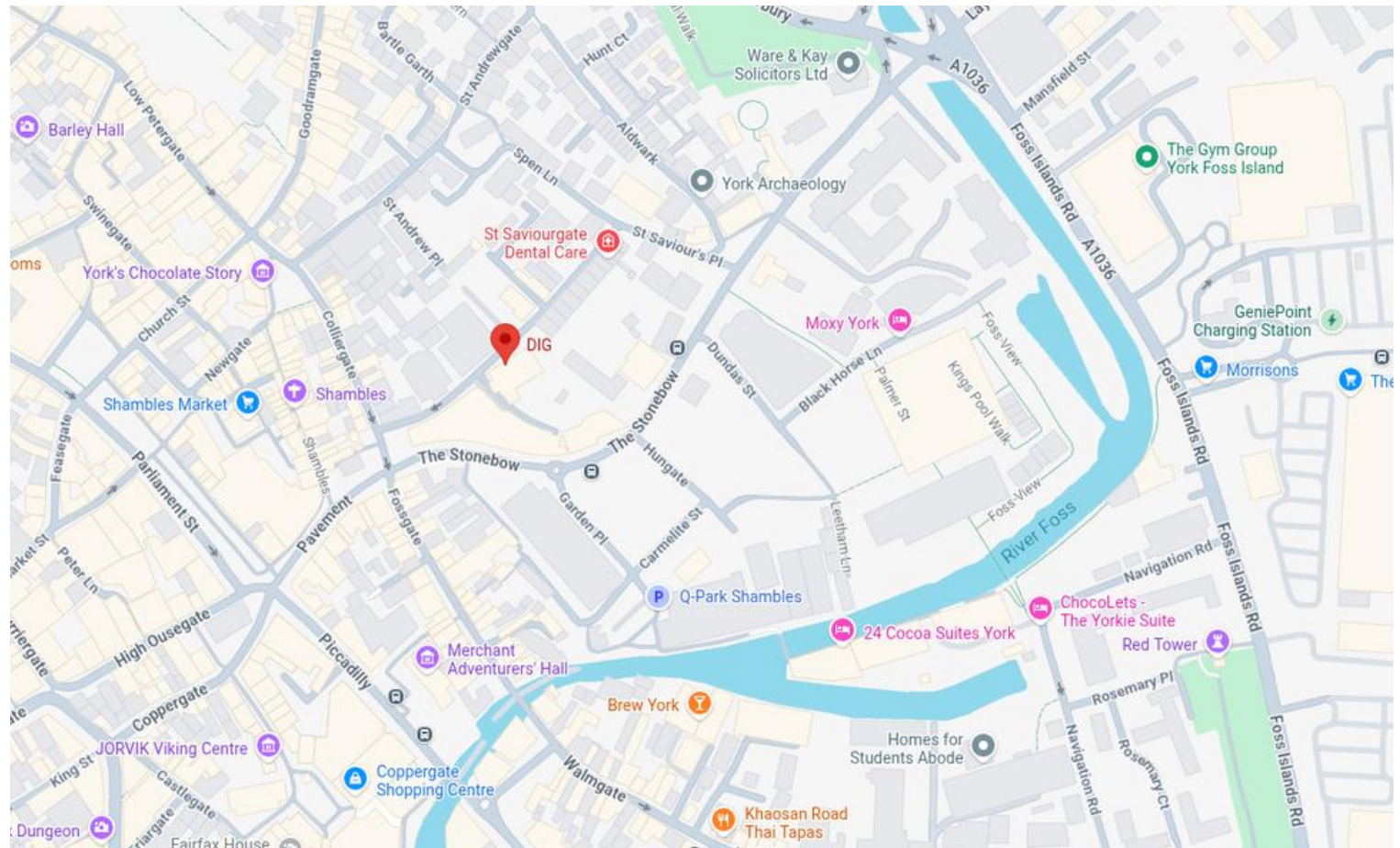
In one of our galleries there are some human remains on display, this room can be avoided if desired.

Getting Here

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/k7nsRLD92STgruobA>

DIG St Saviour Church,
St Saviourgate,
York
YO1 8NN

what3words:
tower.talent.branded



Travel by Public Transport and Parking

You can get to DIG by bus, train, or taxi.

Bus

There are several bus stops along Stonebow, servicing buses by various companies. Turn right into Whip-ma-whop-ma-gate and then the first right onto St. Saviourgate, you will see a medieval church with a tall bell tower where DIG is located. The bus stop is 0.1 mile / 0.2 km from DIG.

Train

The nearest train station is York Rail Station. The train station is 0.8 miles / 1.3 km from DIG. York is on the East Coast main line between London and Scotland, and can be reached easily from most major UK cities. Information on train times and prices is available by telephone within the UK on 08457 48 49 50.

Taxi

The nearest drop off point is right outside DIG on St Saviourgate. You can get a taxi with Streamline by calling 01904 656565. The taxi company has a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

Parking

There is no on-site parking available at DIG. The nearest car park is the Foss Bank Car Park, an approximate 7 minute (0.3 mile) walk away. York also has 6 Park & Ride sites, allowing you to travel to York by car, park for free and complete your journey via bus.

Arriving at DIG

When you arrive at DIG you will enter through two sets of double-doors. You will be greeted at our admissions desk by a member of our team who will take your booking reference or book you on to the next available tour. Tours can be pre-booked online and we recommend pre-booking during busy periods such as school holidays. We advise arriving 10 minutes prior to your tour.

There is step free level access from the street to the main entrance with a dropped curb right outside our door. The main entrance has two sets of double doors. The outer set is always open.

The second set of doors are glass with contrast markings on them. They are a combined 2140mm wide. These swing both inwards and outwards and are manual, however immediately inside the doors there is a permanently staffed admissions desk, and the staff member there can help you with the door.



Image: DIG from the outside.



The building of DIG is a converted medieval church. From the outside you will see light-coloured stone walls and a tall tower. Inside, there are high ceilings and large arched windows which let in lots of light.



Due to the nature of the building, DIG can get very loud. There is lots of open space and hard surfaces so sound travels and echoes a lot, especially if there are multiple school groups visiting. We have some ear defenders available to borrow (subject to availability), we also have a quiet space if you get overwhelmed. Our garden (see pages 37-39) is also available if you need a quieter space.

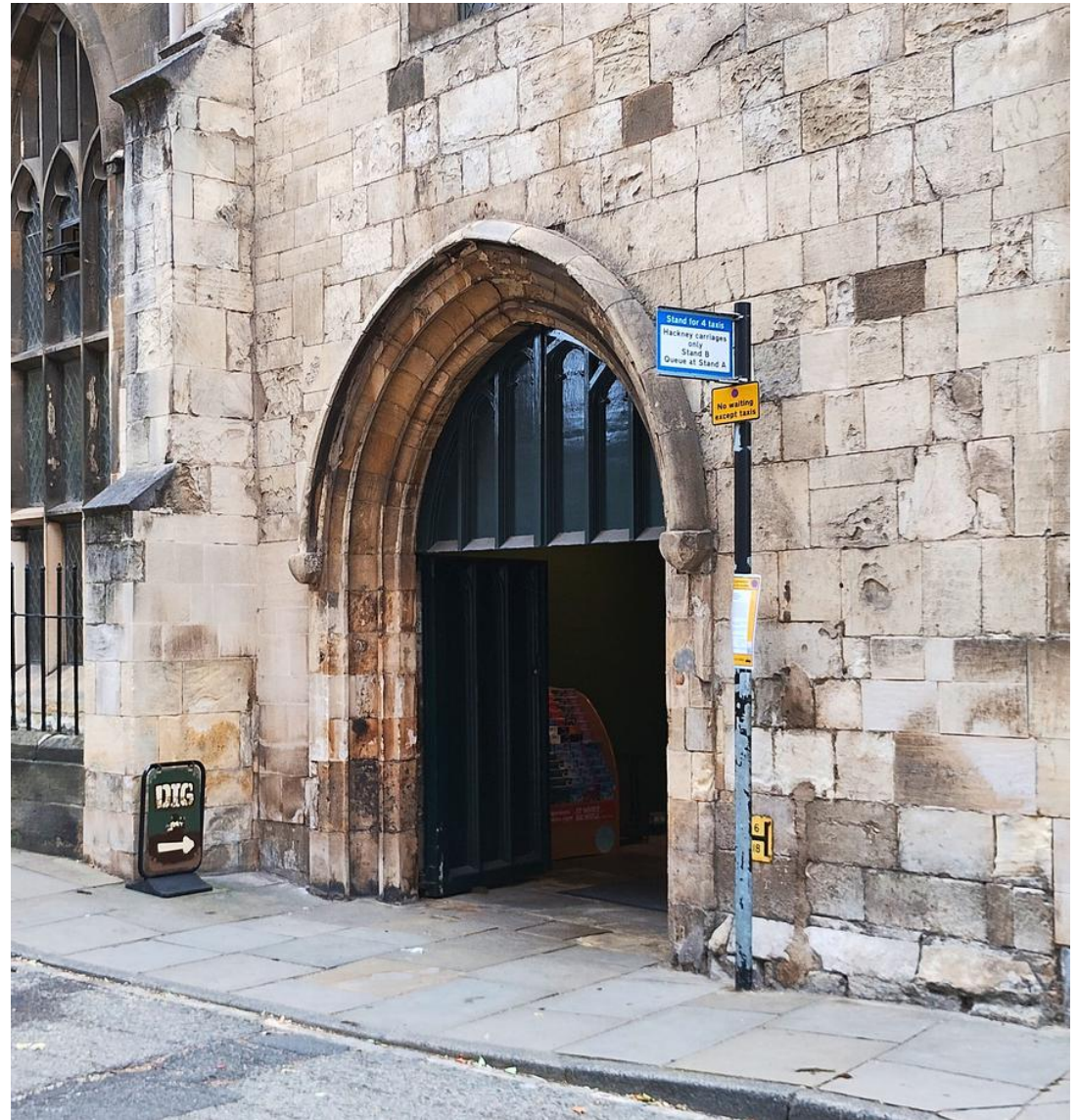


Image: the entrance to DIG



Inside DIG, you will be greeted at our admission desk by a member of our team. They will be wearing grey shirts or black jumpers and black trousers. On your left you might see a school group or families listening to a talk. On your right you will see our gift shop.



If anyone in your group experiences sensory processing difficulties on a trip to DIG, you can collect ear defenders and a range of sensory toys from the admissions desk to use during your visit. You are also welcome to bring your own additional resources.

Image: a member of the DIG team standing behind the desk at the entrance to DIG.

Your DIG Tour

Your DIG tour will last around 60 minutes and will take place in the main nave area of the building. There will be two parts to your DIG tour: a presentation in the 'Learn' area and then time digging in the 'Uncover' area. Your DIG tour will be lead by one member of staff, but there might be a volunteer assisting them.



Image: a view from above of DIG, where your tour will take place.

The DIG Tour: Learn Area

To begin your tour, a staff member will invite you to sit on the benches in the presentation area and introduce themselves. They will give you an introductory talk about archaeology. This section lasts about 30 minutes.



There is level access to this main area from the entrance. The narrowest section is over 1000mm wide.

The floor is vinyl and level throughout.

Everyone is seated on backless benches that are 470mm high. Fold-out chairs can be provided if required.



Image: the presentation area for your introductory talk.



Your DIG tour guide will sit or stand at the front of the presentation area. They will be wearing a grey shirt or black jumper and black trousers, and will also have a red lanyard.

Throughout the introductory talk, your guide will show you some real artefacts from our excavations. You will see a lot of unusual objects used by people used in the past. They will also show you some animal bones, but no real human bones.



Image: a DIG tour guide shows visitors the skull of an animal



Some of the objects your guide will show you are small and delicate so they are kept in boxes. Your guide will enlarge these on a screen behind them using a special camera. They might also show some images, such as maps and photographs on the screen.

Throughout your talk, you might see other visitors or school groups arriving at DIG and talking to the staff on the desk too.

On your left, you might see other visitors looking in the galleries (see pages 22-27).

On your right, you might see a school group or families digging in the dig sites, or families in the Little Diggers playroom nearby.

Image: a DIG tour guide points to an artefact on the screen.





Your guide will talk to you about what archaeology is and what archaeologists do. They might ask you questions and ask you to put your hands up if you have an answer. They might ask you to guess what the objects are and what they are made from.

You might also hear other visitors and school groups talking on the DIG sites, or in the galleries or admissions desk. You may also hear people playing in our Little Diggers playroom. If your tour is in the middle of the day, you might hear a school group in the Lunch Room upstairs. You might also hear music or audio from the nearby exhibition area (see pages 22-27).



Your guide might let you touch or hold artefacts or replica objects. These could be made from a range of materials such as stone, pottery, bone or antler. You will get to see the object before you hold it.

No strongly smelling objects are used during this talk, but you might faintly smell food if there is a school group eating in the lunch room. You may even smell some real dried fish that we have on our viking boat in the nave!



Image: a child touching an artefact being held by a member of staff.

At the end of the talk, your DIG tour guide will then tell you about the next part of your tour. You will be taken up a ramp to access the dig sites.



On your way to the DIG sites, you will collect a trowel. This is a handheld plastic tool that you will use for digging. It might feel slightly dusty from the soil in the dig sites. There is also hand sanitiser available if you would like to clean your hands before digging. You can also use this after digging.



You will see the trowels stored in boxes stacked by the wall in front of you. There are four colours of trowels: green, yellow, red and blue.



If you or anyone else in your group uses hand sanitiser, you will get a smell of chemicals.



Image: the boxes you will collect your trowel from for digging.

The DIG Tour: Uncover Area

For the second part of your DIG tour, you can dig around in our four replica dig sites. This part of the tour lasts for approximately 30 minutes.

Each dig site is filled with rubber soil covering a textured floor with real and replica artefacts embedded into it. Each site is modelled on a different excavation site in York and a different period of time: Roman, Viking Medieval, and Victorian.

There is a ramp leading to the dig sites. The narrowest section is 1080mm. This pathway continues along the dig sites, it is made of wood and has three level areas to rest wheelchairs in. There are low walls on three of the four digsites, ranging from 100mm to 450mm high.

Image: a view of all four DIG sites



Before you start digging, your guide will ask you to stand in a line and listen to some instructions. They will tell you some information about our four dig sites, and some rules you need to follow to stay safe. They will also tell you the best way to use your trowel before telling you to start digging.



Image: school pupils on the DIG sites practising how to hold their trowels, ready for digging.

You will then spend a few minutes in each site digging in your groups. Your tour guide will be nearby to answer your questions and help by giving you some clues.



The DIG sites are well lit, and there are also clouded windows along the wall.

Each of our four dig sites is covered with rubber soil. When you dig the soil away with your trowel you will see real or replica archaeological finds embedded in the ground. There are different things to find in each dig site.

Your tour guide or a volunteer might also show you some replicas of the objects you can dig up in the sites. You will also see printed panels with information about the real archaeological sites.

From the DIG sites, you might be able to see school groups or visitors looking around the galleries or having a talk.

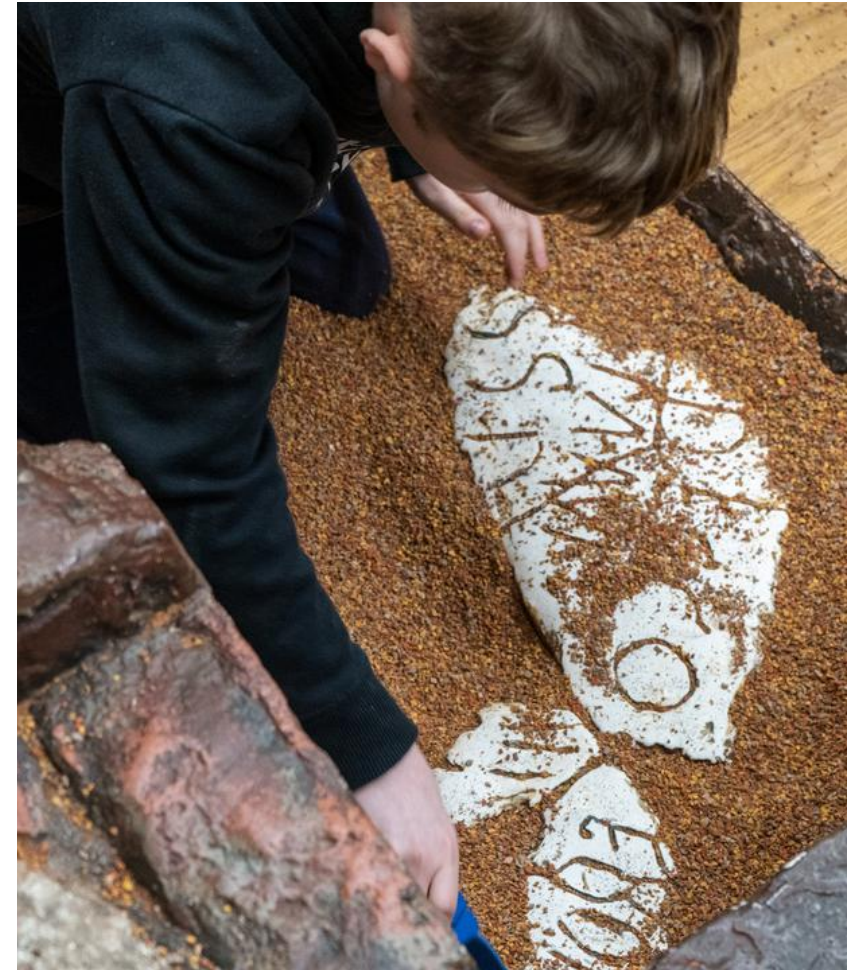


Image: a child scraping soil away with their trowel to reveal an artefact.



You will be sitting or kneeling in the dig sites as you dig. The surface beneath you will feel uneven because of all the objects beneath the soil.

As you dig, you will feel the small pieces of rubber soil. You can also touch and feel the artefacts embedded in the ground. There are lots of different textures to feel.

As you dig, some bits of soil might get into your shoes. At the end of the digging session, you can take your shoes off to empty them.



Image: school pupils moving soil with their hands and trowels to reveal artefacts.



In the DIG sites area, there are other things to touch. Your guide or volunteer might let you touch or hold some real or replica artefacts to help you learn more about what you are digging.

There are lots of artefacts stuck into the walls in the DIG sites area to show the layers that archaeologists find when digging. This is called the stratigraphy wall and the objects stuck into it have different shapes and textures.

There are also large grey sieves which you can fill with rubber soil then shake to reveal small objects stuck to the bottom that you can also touch.



Image: the stratigraphy wall near the DIG sites.



Image: one of the four sieves in the DIG sites area.



The DIG sites often become quite noisy when your group starts digging, as your group might talk excitedly about what they have found. Your tour guide will also tell you about what you are digging.

From the DIG sites, you might be able to hear another group having a talk in the Learn area you have just come from. You might also hear visitors talking in the galleries or the Little Diggers playroom. You might also hear music or audio from the exhibition areas. If your tour is in the middle of the day, you might hear a school group in the Lunch Room upstairs.



The DIG site area has a faint rubbery smell from the soil.

At the end, your guide will ask you to cover up the DIG sites for the next groups to explore and give you some time to empty your shoes of soil. They will then say goodbye and direct you to other parts of the museum.

The Galleries

At DIG there are some exhibition spaces. These are not part of the tour, and you can explore these at your own pace. Two side rooms contain an exhibition called 'Life and Death in Eboracum', which is about Roman York. In a third side room and in the nave (middle of the church) behind the tour presentation area there is another exhibition, 'Cressida Cowell's How to Train your Dragon School'.



Image: exhibition panels and installations in the nave of DIG.

The Galleries - How to Train Your Dragon School

This exhibition is inspired by the book, *How to Train Your Dragon School*, by Cressida Cowell and it is set in a fictional world of Vikings and dragons. You can help yourself to a trail sheet and pencil by the boat to see what dragons you can spot and what activities to complete.



Some of the activities include:

- A separate dig site to find some of Hiccup's lost treasures on the Isle of Berk. There is a 150mm wall around this dig site to prevent soil spilling out.
- A dress-up station within a tall open tent. This is situated on a slightly raised level of chipboard flooring. There are benches here if you would like to sit down and watch people dig. The benches are backless and 430mm high.
- An activity table with smells and sounds. This table is 700mm high and has space for wheelchair users to pull up to.



Image: HTTYDS Dig site



In the nave, you will see a large Viking ship, a digging pit and a tent. You will also see some printed exhibition panels and other interactive activities down the left-hand side. To the right, you will see some orange display cases containing artefacts. Some of these are the real versions of the artefacts you might have found in the DIG sites.

Also to the right, you will see a small gallery room containing two grey display cases, some framed art and a large television screen playing a video featuring Cressida Cowell.



The video features talking. There is also a table that has an audio listening point where you can press a button to hear different dragon sounds.



Image: a view of the artefact display cases in the side exhibition room.



The activity table in the side room also has 8 'smell boxes' - these are wooden boxes with leather flaps you can lift to reveal different smells, all inspired by different dragons from the books. You will only experience these smells if you smell the box up-close.



The other hands-on activities around the exhibition include: a dragon image that you can touch and watch it change colour; a spinning wheel that looks like a Viking shield and is spun to tell fortunes; and a board on the wall with magnetic words, so you can build a Viking nickname.

Image: The magnetic name board and fortune-telling wheel.



The Galleries - Life and Death in Eboracum

The 'Life and Death in Eborcum' exhibitions spans the two side galleries on the right hand side of the nave as you enter from admissions. Here you can explore a collection of Roman-era finds from excavations across the city.

There is level access to these rooms, however there is a slight lip as the flooring changes. The first room is carpeted, while the second is a textured metal floor. The narrowest part of the route is 580mm.

Please note there are human remains on display in the gallery closest to the main entrance. This gallery can be avoided if desired.



Image: one of the two Roman galleries



Here you will see display cases containing artefacts from the Roman period. There is a real human skeleton on display in the gallery room close to the admissions area and gift shop. There are also 2 screens which play short videos (without sound) about archaeology on-loop.



There are some things in the galleries that you can touch such as two replica Roman pots. In the one of the Roman galleries, the display cases and floor are made from textured metal and other room has cloth on the walls.



You might be able to hear sounds from the other exhibition next door.

You will also be able to hear other visitors and groups having tours.



Image: one of the two Roman galleries

Little Diggers

This is a playroom for children under-5's but can also be used as a quiet sensory space for those who need it.



In this room there are lots of colourful toys and cushions, and the walls have been decorated with colourful images.



The toys in this room have a range of different textures. There is a soft playmat on the floor and some cushions in the corner that you can sit on.



In this room you might still be able to faintly hear sounds from DIG tours.



Image: the Little Diggers playroom.

The Gift Shop



Alongside the admissions area is our gift shop. We sell a variety of items for you to purchase, from books to soft toys to gemstones. Prices are clearly labeled on small signs and there are also stickers on the majority of items. If you are unsure about something, staff members are always at the desk and are happy to help.

There is level access from the main entrance and from our museum galleries to the shop. The narrowest section is 700mm. The shop has a flagstone floor, so it is not perfectly smooth but it is level. Additionally metal pillars which support the floor overhead are located within the shop and therefore reduce clearance around the shop.



Image: the gift shop area.



The gift shop is an area close to the main entrance. You will see lots of toys and gifts for sale. The gift shop is a small space and often gets quite crowded.



You can pick up items to help you decide what to buy. The gifts and toys for sale will have a range of different textures.



You might hear people talking and buying items from the shop. You might hear the tills printing receipts.

If there are lots of school groups and visitors at DIG you might also hear staff and visitors talking during tours. You might also hear school pupils in the lunch room upstairs.



Image: the gift shop area.

Toilets

We have three sets of toilets at DIG. A ladies toilet with two stalls, a gentlemen's toilet with two urinals and one stall, and a single accessible toilet. All toilets are checked by the duty manager every hour.



Ladies Toilet:

The ladies toilets are located on the left hand side.

There are two cubicles.

The outer door is 750mm wide and swings inwards. The cubicle doors are 650mm wide and swing inwards.

There are two sinks and paper hand towels. There are sanitary waste bins in both cubicles.

Gentlemen's Toilet:

The gentlemen's toilets are located on the right hand side. There are two urinals inside and one cubicle.

There are two sinks and paper hand towels. There is a sanitary waste bin in the cubicle.



Image: DIG toilets

Accessible toilet:

Our accessible toilet requires a RADAR key to be opened. Please request one at our admissions desk if you need to use it.

The narrowest part of the route is the toilet door, which is 930mm wide. There is a permanent grab rail on the right hand side of the toilet, and a moveable grab rail on the left hand side. The toilet is 500mm high. There is a sink and paper hand towels. There is a sanitary waste bin and an incontinence/nappy waste bin. There is a red cord to pull in case of emergency which will alert a member of staff. The floor is tiled and level throughout.

Based on size this toilet does not meet the standardised requirements to be classified as a fully accessible toilet.

The nearest Changing Places toilet is at:

Explore York Library

Museum Street

York

YO1 7DS



Image: DIG accessible toilet

First floor

Our first floor contains mostly offices and includes a classroom and lunch room used by schools. It is unlikely that you will need to visit these areas. However we occasionally run activities in the lunchroom during school holidays, particularly during our annual Viking Festival.

To access the first floor we have a lift (for details please see page 42) or stairs

There are 19 stairs, with two landings. The stairs are 810mm wide and 180mm high. There is a handrail on the right hand side as you are going up.

At the top of the stairs/lift there is a door leading to the lunch room and classroom. The door is 850mm wide and swings inwards.



Image: stairs to first floor

The DIG Lunch Room

The lunch room is a wide open mezzanine with tables and stools. The tables are 480mm high and the stools are 430mm high.

There is a balcony which overlooks the museum space below. The balcony guardrail is 1100mm high. For safety we ask visitors not to lean across the balcony.

From the lift to the lunch room there is level access with a very small lip as the carpet changes to linoleum.



Image: example of an activity in the lunch room



Our lunch room is a wide open mezzanine with tables and stools. There is a balcony, over which you can see DIG tours happening on the ground floor. From the lunch room you can also see into the Classroom and some of the offices.



From the lunch room you will be able to hear the sounds of DIG tours downstairs. You might hear children chatting excitedly and our staffing talking to them loudly.



Depending on what activity is taking place you may be able to smell some of the materials being used.



Image: the DIG lunch room

The DIG Classroom

Sometimes activities may be held in the DIG classroom. This is located along the landing of the mezzanine. There is a door to the classroom that swings inward and is 830mm wide. The floor is level and carpeted.



In the DIG classroom you will see some colourful wall hangings and some Viking-themed props such as shields and a chain-mail shirt.



This is typically the quietest space at DIG, however you may hear different sounds from the activities taking place, including children excitedly making things and staff giving instructions.



Depending on what activity is taking place you may be able to smell some of the materials being used.

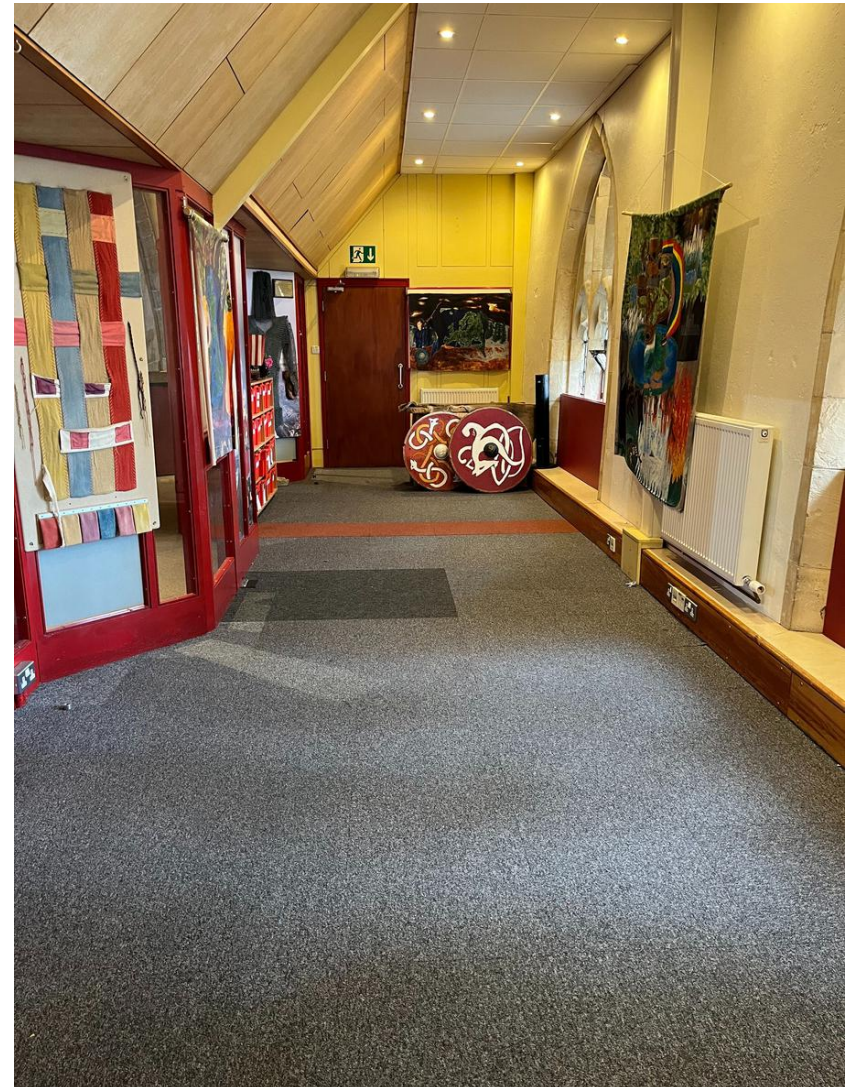


Image: the DIG classroom

The DIG Garden

You can access our garden by the rear exit of DIG near the toilets. We have four picnic tables in our garden that you are welcome to use, you are welcome to bring your own food to the picnic area. There are rubbish and recycling bins provided. There is a sensory trail you can follow by reading the tall garden panels.



Image: the back door to the garden.



Image: part of the DIG garden.



Image: garden gate

The door to the garden is wooden and can be quite heavy - please let a member of staff know if you would like some assistance. There is a level path from the door through the garden to the gated exit which opens inwards and is 1400mm wide. This gate leads to St Saviourgate. It is also a fire exit and is kept unlocked at all times when DIG is open.

Please note that the re-used gravestones can be very slippery when it is wet outside. These gravestones were from the graveyard when the building was still an active church. There are no human burials within the area anymore- they were removed when the building was converted and reburied elsewhere.



In the garden you will see a stone path made from old grave stones and bricks. There are lots of bushes, plants and two large trees. You will also see some old pieces of stone from the medieval church.



You might hear birds and the trees rustling. You might also hear cars passing on the road or people talking as they walk along the street.



There are lots of scented plants in the garden, such as rosemary, lavender, sage and thyme.



You can touch some of the plants, but watch out for stinging nettles and insects!

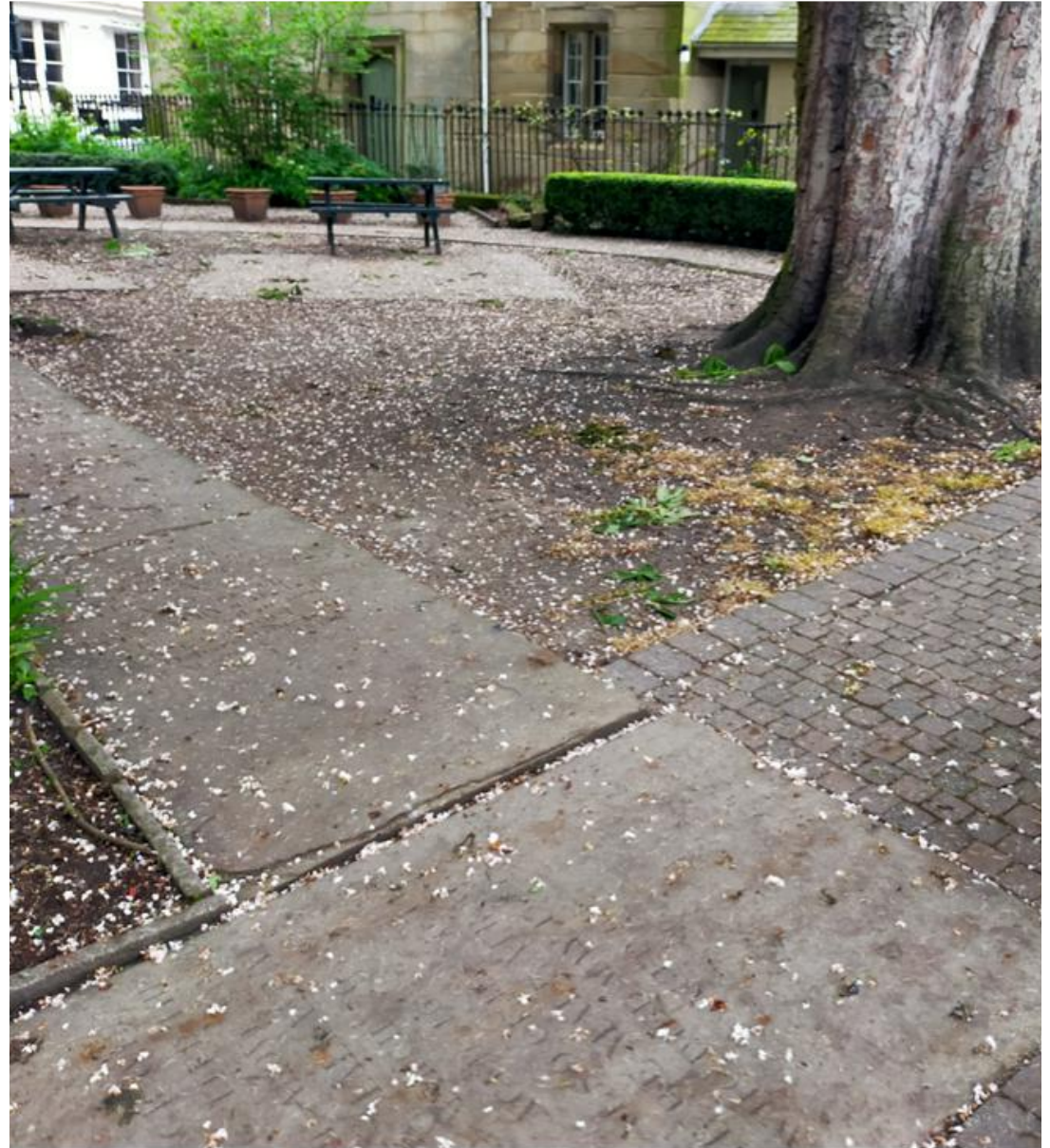


Image: the DIG garden

Visiting as a Wheelchair User

There is full wheelchair access throughout DIG, but due to number restrictions and space limitations on tours, we may have to limit the number of wheelchair users per tour slot (tours run every 30 minutes).

We offer complimentary tickets for carers and personal assistants with any paid ticket. We also have a manual wheelchair if it is needed during your visit.

The ground floor is all level, though with slight lips as flooring changes throughout the museum, and there is a gently sloping ramp up to the dig sites.

If you have any questions about your visit please speak to someone on our reservations team on 01904 615 550, or speak to someone on our admissions desk. We try to be as flexible as possible on our tours so please speak to your tour guide if there is anything we can do to assist your visit.

Accessibility on our Dig Sites



If you want to dig, you will be provided with a small plastic trowel.

If this is not appropriate we have four accessible trays which can be brought out and work as 'mini digsites'. Usually these are placed within the sieves each site which are 890mm tall. These can also be placed on the lap of a person in a wheelchair, however, please beware they can be quite heavy. Each tray contains a range of real and replica artefacts linking to the four dig sites. They will be hidden in rubber soil, and you can use a plastic trowel or brush to discover them.



Image: accessibility trays in action

Lift

It is unlikely that you will need to access the first floor at DIG, as it is mostly our offices and school spaces. However we sometimes run events and activities on the first floor during the school holidays.

We have one lift to go between the floors of our building. It is a platform lift with a door that is 900mm wide and swings outward. There is a ramp on the ground level to get into the lift and there is level access on the first floor. The inside of the lift is 1100mm wide and 1370mm long. The lift can only carry two adults or, an adult and a wheelchair user or pushchair at a time. The maximum load for the lift is 400kg.

To call the lift you will need to hold down the button on the outside, then once inside hold down the button for the floor that you want. The controls are 870mm off the ground. Please ask a member of staff if you require any assistance.



Image: lift at DIG

Sensory Information

DIG is a very hands-on experience with an emphasis on tactile learning.

Due to the nature of the building, the sensory environment of DIG can vary widely depending on how busy we are. We are in a converted medieval church with lots of open space and hard surfaces, so noise travels and echoes a lot. If we have multiple school groups in or lots of families during the school holidays, the building can get very loud. If you are struggling with the noise levels, you can use the 'Little Diggers' play room as a quiet space and we have a small number of ear defenders. Our garden is always available for you to use too.

Our quietest times are Sundays, especially during the morning, and most afternoons during the week after 3pm. You can contact our reservations team on [01904 615 505](tel:01904615505) to determine the best time for your visit.

All tickets are valid for 12 months, so you can also leave and return at another time if you want to.

Additional Resources

We offer a range of additional resources that can be requested from our admissions desk. These include:

- Ear defenders
- A traffic light system sticker
- Sensory boxes
- Fold-out chairs
- Large print guides

Traffic Light System

- A red sticker suggests you would not like to be spoken to directly or asked questions by one of our tour guides
- A yellow sticker suggests you are happy to interact with our tour guides and would like to have your questions answered but would like to be the one to approach us first
- A green sticker indicates that you are happy for tour guides to speak to you and ask questions

You can pick up a sticker of your choice at the admissions desk



Image: our traffic light stickers

Sensory Boxes

Our sensory boxes contain various tactile and visual items, including fidget objects that can help with focus or regulating anxiety.

Please request one of these boxes when you arrive at the admissions desk.

Each box contains these or similar items: soft toy, light up ball, stretchy noodle and a liquid timer.



Image: one of our sensory boxes

Assistance Animals

York Archeology welcomes service, assistant and emotional support animals, including assistant dogs in training, to access all of the York Archeology Attractions and sites. We have a water bowl at our admissions desk if required.

For more information you can find our Service Animal Guidelines on the 'Access' page of our website, or email access@yorkat.co.uk to ask for a copy.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is welcome at all of our attractions. If you require a seat for this, please speak to a member of staff. You are welcome to use our 'Little Diggers' playroom for a more private space to breastfeed.

Accreditations

We have been recognised for our work in accessibility and won the following awards:

- Autism Friendly Award (National Autistic Society) - 2019, 2021
- Bronze for Accessibility and Inclusive Tourism (White Rose Awards) - 2019
- Accessible and Inclusive Tourism (Visit York Awards) - 2020
- Silver for Accessible and Inclusive Tourism (White Rose Awards) - 2020

We have also been shortlisted for other awards:

- Accessible and Inclusive Tourism (Yorkshire Tourism Awards) - 2020, 2021, 2022

Get in Touch

If you would like to provide any feedback on your experience or find out more information about visiting, please contact us at dig@yorkat.co.uk or call 01904 615 505



Image: Visitors being greeted at our front desk