



Leeds YHA Walking Group

“Leading the way.....”

How to organise a hostel weekend for the weekend organiser

What should I do if I want to organise a weekend away?

- Each month the group organises at least one weekend away, normally at a YHA hostel. The programme is planned in January (summer programme) and July (winter programme) and includes weekends that run through into the following programme.
- Please bear in mind where the group has been in the recent past, to avoid repeating destinations.
- Check whether the hostel is only self-catering or whether it can provide breakfasts, packed lunches and evening meals. The catering facilities will have a bearing on the interest shown in the weekend.

When do I book the hostel?

- Book as soon as you can after agreeing the date with the committee, especially for Bank Holidays.
- Based on past experience you are advised to book 20 beds initially (10 male, 10 female).
- Book and check availability by phone, and follow up with a Group Booking Form. As a local group we have a special booking form and terms of payment. The hostel does not provide our forms. The weekend coordinator will provide these to you. A deposit of £25 will normally be required with the Booking Form. Request as many small dorms as possible as these are preferable to one or two large dorms. The group has currently appointed Janice Bairstow as its weekend coordinator.
- You may be asked if you wish to book meals, but there is no need to book and pay for meals in advance. These can be paid for at the hostel on the night. The full booking instructions, and terms of payment, can be found on the reverse of the Group Booking Form.
- The weekend coordinator will provide a cheque on your request. You should send it to the hostel, and you should ask for a receipt. Give any receipts for deposits and further payments to the Treasurer.

What should I do after booking the hostel?

- Try and assess interest for your weekend well in advance, because if you leave it too late to cancel the weekend, the group may be unable to obtain a full refund. Try and be aware of any local and national problems that may mean the weekend may not take place and jeopardise the money already paid.

How do I collect money from people wishing to go on the weekend?

- Three months before the weekend, start to advertise the weekend, e.g. by use of emails and flyers and also at group events. Prepare and send an email addressed to members of the group to Michael Daly (yorksmdaly@outdoorlife.org.uk). He will forward the email, on your behalf, to all people on the group's email database. Provide as much information as possible about the weekend, including the hostel's location and any special points of interest. This will help to increase take-up on the weekend.
- You should find out the number of people attending, on what nights, their phone number and/or email details, if they are willing to give lifts to others or whether they require a lift themselves.
- Some people tend to pay for some or all of their meals at the time of booking and in this case you should take payment and note which meals are required. Some members of the group tend to eat out at a local pub on Saturday night. The weekend organiser may suggest in advance that we have a hostel group evening meal on Saturday. On these occasions you should therefore collect money in advance.
- You also need to ascertain whether the people attending are paid-up members of National YHA. If they are, make a note of their membership number. Alternatively, contact the Treasurer who holds this information about all our members. If they are not a member of either National YHA or Leeds YHA Local group, an additional £1 per person per weekend should be collected. The £1 is to help cover the group's own YHA membership card and to encourage people to join the group. If a person has been on a number of events, you may wish to suggest to them that they pay their subscription to the Treasurer at this stage. The Treasurer will tell you who current members of the group are.

How to organise a hostel weekend for the weekend organiser (continued)

- Collect full payment as soon as possible to confirm members' bookings. Make cheques payable to 'Leeds YHA Local Group'. Keep a record of cheques and cash received and pass the monies to the weekend coordinator. Please do not hold monies received until the last minute, as the weekend coordinator needs to bank them and let cheques clear before the final cheque can be sent to the hostel.
- You should be aware that the group is affiliated to National YHA. The group currently receives a discount of 10% on our group booking, including meals that are booked and paid for in advance. The discount will be kept by the group in order to finance a free night for weekend organisers and to reward other members of the group each year. For various reasons, including our annual affiliation to National YHA, the weekend coordinator needs to record the names of all people attending on each weekend and the number of nights they stay.
- Problems can arise when people book late because of a lack of communication between the organiser, the hostel and/or late bookers. People should therefore strongly be encouraged to book the weekend through the organiser at an early stage and not personally. Early booking facilitates organisation. It is recommended that you collect full payment from everyone at least two months before the weekend.
- You should contact the weekend coordinator or a committee member if you have any doubts about any person who wants to put their name down for a weekend, for example, if you have concerns about their ability to look after themselves or how they would integrate with the group. The committee will offer guidance on how to deal with the situation.

How do I make the full payment to the hostel?

- National YHA stipulate on our special Group Booking Form that our deposit is brought up to 50% of the weekend's cost one month before the weekend away. You should request a cheque from the weekend coordinator.
- One month in advance, confirm in writing, the actual number of beds required for the weekend. Provide the hostel with a list of names of people attending. This makes it clear to the hostel if late bookers contacting the hostel directly are extra to those already paid for and booked by the group.
- People who have shown an interest but have not paid in full by this stage should be told that a place will not be reserved for them at the hostel. This is a measure that we have introduced to ensure that the group does not pay for people who later pull out; leaving the group to bear the cost.
- It is not your responsibility to book places after the one month cut-off date. Should anyone else wish to attend the weekend they should be told to contact the hostel direct, arrange their own payment and to advise the hostel that they represent an extra person over and above those places reserved by the group. It is not the organiser's responsibility to resolve problems that arise for these people.
- Pay the remaining 50% balance outstanding on arrival at the hostel. Request a cheque in advance from the weekend coordinator and arrange collection. The weekend coordinator must be able to check monies received, collect details of people attending, confirm our 10% discount and issue a cheque. Do not leave this to the week before.
- If a member of the group pays and subsequently cannot go on the weekend, they should be told that they will not receive their money back, unless their place can be sold to someone else.
- The group has produced an Excel template, which is embedded into this help-sheet that summarises the required information that should be taken on the night and given to the hostel manager. It is your responsibility, not the weekend coordinator's, to complete this form or an appropriate substitute, calculate our 10% discount and arrange payments with the hostel. It is suggested that this information is forwarded to the hostel manager one month before the weekend.

What do I do if someone decides not to go after they have paid?

- If you have already paid and sent details of numbers to the hostel, normally one month before the weekend, it is always up to the person who has cancelled to find a solution, and not the weekend organiser.
- You should tell the person to phone the hostel immediately to cancel their reservation with Leeds YHA. Our group will not give a refund once the one-month deadline has passed. However, the hostel, via central head office, may arrange a refund. If the person cancelling can find a replacement for their place, then the replacement should reimburse the person who has dropped out.

How to organise a hostel weekend for the weekend organiser (continued)

How do I organise transport?

- Two weeks before the weekend, contact all the attendees and possible drivers. Discuss with them who they would be able to take. Bear in mind where people live and the time they expect to leave. Try to encourage car sharing. Ask each driver to make contact with his or her passengers to arrange pick-up times.
- It is up to individual drivers and their passengers to make arrangements regarding payment for petrol.

What other points should I bear in mind?

- Request from the weekend coordinator the group's YHA membership card and the group's (10%) group affiliation card and show them to the hostel manager on arrival. The group's YHA membership card permits members of our group to attend a Youth Hostel without being individual members of National YHA. The group's affiliation card demonstrates our eligibility to receive the 10% discount.
- If anyone is expected to arrive late, please tell the hostel manager when you arrive.
- You do not have to lead walks over the weekend, but it would be appreciated if you could consider suitable routes or ensure that other people attending the weekend will arrange appropriate walks.
- Try to ensure that at least two maps of the area will be available on the weekend, as there may be more than one walk each day. The weekend organiser may purchase a laminated map for a new area, if the group does not have this map or one cannot be made available. Gaynor holds and manages the group's map library. The map must be placed into the group's map library after the weekend. Seek authorisation from Gaynor or any other committee member before purchasing.
- You will be issued with a free 'bed night' voucher, after the group's November AGM. This is to cover all your incidental costs and as a thank you for organising the weekend for the group. This voucher is an internal promotion and should not be sent to the hostel. The group redeemed the voucher for a free overnight at a Youth Hostel.
- Consider the hostel's alcohol policy. New licensing laws mean that hostel managers (as licensees) are liable for any problems that arise where they have not controlled the consumption of alcohol. Some hostels have a full licence, which means that we cannot consume our own on the premises. With all other hostels, the drinking of alcohol on the premises is at the manager's discretion. Please check with the hostel manager beforehand and inform the attendees of the weekend of the hostel's alcohol policy.

