



Self-Guided Visit Pre-visit Information



We are looking forward to your visit to Circle B Bar Reserve and Polk's Nature Discovery Center. This information is to help prepare teachers and chaperones for your self-guided trip in order to have a positive and memorable experience. The information includes rules and expectations of teachers/chaperones & students. Please share this information with all of your teachers/chaperones & students **before** your visit. We hope you enjoy your nature experience!

Contact Info

Polk's Nature Discovery Center is located on Circle B Bar Reserve; Phone contact information is 863-668-4673, Fax is 863-668-4677 and the email is nreducator@polk-county.net.

Directions: Polk's Nature Discovery Center at Circle B Bar Reserve is located at: 4399 Winter Lake Road, Lakeland, FL 33803. The entrance to Circle B is on the south side of Winter Lake Road between Highway 98 and the Polk Parkway. The entrance drive is paved and there is a large tan and green sign that says Circle B Bar Reserve. Polk's Nature Discovery Center is at the end of the paved driveway.

Hours of Operation

Circle B Bar Reserve is open everyday during daylight hours. Polk's Nature Discovery Center is open Tuesday-Saturday 9:00am-4:00pm and Sunday noon-4:00pm.

What to Expect

- Your visit will primarily be an outdoor field experience. The majority of the visit will likely be spent on a hike through various habitats. In addition, students may do hands on activities or participate in one of the provided self-guided activities.
- Teachers/chaperones must be able to handle outdoor elements such as heat, cold, rain, and insects and be able to hike over 2 miles (depending on your selected route).

Cost

There is no cost to the groups/school or students.

Parent Letter

A sample letter to the parents is included; you may use this one or adapt it as necessary. Please send this home with the students before their visit, so that they will come dressed appropriately for the activity.

Instructors / Teachers and Chaperones Roles

- To closely supervise students and correct any inappropriate behaviors
- To make sure no wildlife or plants are harassed or harmed
- To maintain contact with the school group coordinator on site
- To ensure the rules are followed and everyone respects the wildlife that lives here
- To carry with them a first aid kit
- To carry with them emergency contact information
- To handle any and all medical emergencies
- To ensure students have water if needed during the hike
- Due to the nature of this trip a minimum of 15:1 student to chaperone ratio is expected. Notify chaperones of the exact nature of this field experience including activities, lunch information and appropriate clothing.

What to Wear

- Clothing should be appropriate for outdoor activities and be able to get muddy, dirty or wet.
- During the warmer months they may wear hats and sunglasses outdoors.
- During the cooler months encourage them to dress in layers appropriate for being outside.
- **Closed-toed shoes such as tennis shoes suitable for walking long distances are required.** Open-toed, open-backed shoes and flats are not permitted for any participant.

What to Bring

- Sunscreen and Mosquito repellent - Please apply **BEFORE** coming.
- Water bottle - bring a refillable bottle to carry on hike.
- Cameras –the students will see a lot of wilderness and wildlife that they will have the opportunity to photograph so they may want to bring a camera, not just their cell phone. Cell phones are allowed, but no texting or talking on phone, only use the camera portion.

Note: Polk's Nature Discovery Center staff will not be responsible for any personal items.

What NOT to bring

Do NOT bring the following items: electronic listening devices, gum, candy, knives or other weapons.

Lunch

- If planning on having lunch on site, all participants will need to bring a snack or sack lunch. ***There is nothing to purchase on site.***
- Picnic Shelters are available on a ***first come first serve basis***, so send someone early to reserve the shelters and upon arrival setup coolers and lunch items on the picnic shelter of your choice.
- Teachers/students will be responsible for removing lunches, coolers, etc. from the bus (or other transportation vehicle), carrying them down the service road and placing them in the screened porch area. (A dolly will be available for heavy coolers – please request from the visitors desk in the Nature Center.)
- Teachers/students will be responsible for removing lunches, coolers, etc. from the lunch area and returning them to their bus. Do not overfill trash cans as there are additional trash bags available at the Nature Center visitor's desk. This can be a teachable moment, make sure there is no food or trash left behind as this is a good sign of stewardship for nature.

Restroom Facilities

- There are restrooms at the buildings and portable restrooms near the parking area. There are no restrooms on the trail during the hiking.
- It is teachers/chaperones responsibility to monitor your students while they are in the restroom.

Inclement Weather:

If the forecast indicates that the weather will be inclement or too severe for the field experience, please make preparations to cancel your visit and contact the Center at 863-668-4673 ext. 205. In addition, Polk County Environmental Lands program reserves the right to cancel the trip for any reason. If possible, a make up day will be scheduled.

Dividing Groups

- Groups should be divided into groups of 15 students or less.
- No more than 15 students and their adult chaperones may visit the Nature Center at one time.
- Chaperones or teachers are responsible for ensuring their students are not rude or act inappropriately to the other visitors on site.

Bus Drivers / Arrival:

- Buses may be driven all the way to the Nature Center and unload at the entrance to Polk's Nature Discovery Center (where the boardwalk meets the concrete).

- The bus will unload at the drop off point and then park in the general parking lot (bus spaces are pull offs around the round about) or drivers may opt to park in the grass parking lot named Otter Parking (across from the old cattle pens as you exit.)
- Teachers/students will be responsible for removing lunches, coolers, etc. from the bus, carrying them to the determined lunch area. (A dolly will be available for heavy coolers- please request this from the Visitors desk in the Nature Center.)

Health Considerations

Teachers should be very aware of any students, ahead of time, of any health or physical conditions that you or your students have which may inhibit full participation.

- This should include allergic reactions to insect bites, asthma, allergies to pollen and other conditions which may inhibit hiking in the field.

Emergencies

- If the school/group needs to contact PNDC staff, teachers or chaperones and are unable to reach them on their cell phone, please have the school call the reception desk at the Center – 863-668-4673 ext. 205.
- Teachers should have emergency contact information for their students, on hand during their visit. Teachers will be responsible to handle any emergencies that arise during the visit to Circle B Bar Reserve
- Polk's Nature Discovery Center cannot administer first aid
- If an emergency arises on the trail the teachers should contact 911 and then call Polk's Nature Discovery Center 863-668-4673 x 205 and notify the Center that emergency medical vehicles will be arriving, staff at the Center will assist the emergency medical vehicles in locating and accessing the medical emergency

Visiting the Exhibit Hall at Polk's Nature Discovery Center

- No more than 15 students at a time
- Adult chaperones and teachers should take an active role in patrolling the following:
 - No Loud or High pitched screaming
 - No Running
 - No jumping on the tree's metal grate
 - No jumping off of the ladder
 - No open food or drink in the fox hole
 - No more than five in the fox hole at one time
- To remind students of these rules please stop at the visitor's desk as you enter the Exhibit Hall Area, the volunteer or staff person will give the group a reminder of these rules and point out some parts of the exhibits that the students will not want to miss
- If groups need to access the restroom, please enter on the side door to gain access to the restrooms. This will prevent interference with others using the Exhibit Hall.

We hope you have a great time discovering Polk's Water, Wildlife and Wilderness.

Thank you &

We look forward to seeing you again soon!

Polk County Environmental Lands Program
Polk's Nature Discovery Center



Polk's Nature Discovery Center Field Experience

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child will be attending a field trip to Polk's Nature Discovery Center (PNDC) at Circle B Bar Reserve at 4399 Winter Lake Rd, Lakeland, FL 33803 in Lakeland on _____.

This field experience is being led by your school teachers and adult chaperones. Through this exploration students will be exposed to the water, wildlife and wilderness of Polk County. Here are some helpful tips to make this visit as rewarding and enjoyable as possible for your child.

Students will be primarily outside; therefore it is important that they dress appropriately for the weather.

- Please check the weather the day before their scheduled trip, and have them dress appropriately.
- Students will be hiking in natural areas so it is necessary for them to wear socks and **closed-toe**, protective shoes (no open toed, open backed, or flats). There are biting insects and loose dirt, please help protect their toes by having them wear closed-toe shoes (such as tennis shoes).
- Shoes may get muddy so we recommend that they wear old, broken-in tennis shoes.
- Students may bring a hat.
- Sunscreen and insect repellent are also recommended and should be applied before coming to the center. (If your child has severe allergies to insects, please inform your child's teacher.)
- If your child has severe allergies to pollen, insects or other elements that occur outdoors, please provide this information to your school teacher and discuss with them what to do in case of an emergency.

Polk's Nature Discovery Center does not have a cafeteria or snack vending machines. Students are required to bring a lunch with them. We recommend bringing a bottle of water for the hike, there are water fountains where bottles may be refilled.

We hope their visit is an exciting and educational visit, so much that they want you to bring them back to discover more natural wonders. Good news, a visit here is FREE! We are open Tuesday – Saturday 9am – 4pm and Sunday noon-4pm and the trails at Circle B Bar Reserve are open everyday during daylight hours.

Sincerely,

The Staff at Polk's Nature Discovery Center

For more information on visiting Polk's Nature Discovery Center and Circle B Bar Reserve call 863-668-4673.



Rules and Expectations

A great deal of wildlife lives in the areas surrounding the Center. To ensure safety and the integrity of the program, there are a few rules that must be followed. In addition, Circle B Bar Reserve is open to the public; school groups will encounter other visitors and must be respectful of them. Share these rules with the students, adult chaperones and teachers are expected to enforce these rules.

RULE: On The Trails.

- Stay with the group at all times.
- Be quiet and listen attentively, you will see more
- Stay on trails. They have been specially designed for visitors to use so that the natural environment can remain undisturbed.
- Be sure to look in all directions continuously while walking (including down).
- Slow down, take your time when walking you will see more and will not stumble as often.
- When you stop check where you are standing - be especially cautious of ant beds.
- Be respectful to other visitors; move to the right side of the trail when encountering others.

RULE: Keep your hands, feet, and personal belongings to yourself.

- Do not pick up, kick or throw any objects.
- Nature can touch you but you should not touch nature. They may be a protected species or poisonous things, but savor the moment when a dragonfly lands on you.
- Never touch or catch any type of wild animal. If a dangerous animal is encountered, chaperones and students should freeze and then move away quietly.
- Do not throw trash on trails. Whatever you carry in must be carried out!

RULE: Keep noise to a minimum.

- Keep noise to a minimum on the trails, including footsteps. Human noises will frighten wildlife into hiding.
- Do not call out or yell to other groups or the public.

RULE: In the Exhibit Hall

- Listen to all instructions, given at Visitor's Desk
- Do not run.
- No loud or high pitched screaming.
- No standing or jumping on the fox hole opening metal grate.
- When coming off of the ladder make sure you come down the entire way – NO jumping
- No food (including gum and candy) or drinks allowed.
- Take your time there are 20 different plants and animals in the Exhibit Hall to find.
- No more than 10 students at a time in the Exhibit Hall.
- No more than 3 students at a time in the fox hole.

We hope that your visit will be an educational and memorable one and look forward to seeing you soon.

The staff at Polk's Nature Discovery Center



Field Experience Reminders for Self-Guided Visits

Don't Forget

- Review the PNDC Pre-visit Information
- Review the Rules and Expectations with students
- Make sure all group leaders have your agenda and a trail map
- Check for medical conditions/allergies - bring medicines
- Beware of any health or medical conditions of students or adults prior to the day of your visit, and have a plan on how to respond
- Bring lunches (if you are staying for lunch) or snacks and water for all students and chaperones
- Remind students and chaperones of proper clothing, proper footwear, sunscreen and mosquito repellent
- Leave your contact number with your school secretary