



# discovering fossils

*Introducing the palaeontology of Great Britain*



**PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT FULLY**

## **BEACHY HEAD FOSSIL HUNT**

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# 1. INTRODUCING DISCOVERING FOSSILS

**Please take a moment to read this document fully as it contains important information concerning the safety of yourself and others, and our conditions of participation. We are only able to invite you to join the fossil hunt if you accept the dangers associated with fossil hunting and agree with our conditions of participation. At the end of this document (section 11) you will find instructions for confirming you have read, understood and accept the conditions of participation, and instructions for supplying payment and completing your booking. Beachy Head is a public place and you have the choice of visiting without Discovering Fossils at your own risk if you prefer.**

Discovering Fossils have been providing public and private fossil hunts since 2002, introducing thousands of people to the fascinating world of fossils. The purpose of this document is to provide as much information as possible about the activities we'll be undertaking and the associated risks prior to agreeing to attend, and also sets out the conditions of participation. If you have any questions regarding the information in this document please contact us.

## 2. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You must be 18 or over to register for Discovering Fossils fossil hunts. If you are below this age you will need to be accompanied by an individual aged 18 or over who is willing to act on your behalf and accepts responsibility for your safety on the day. Children and families are welcome when accompanied by the adult who registered the places and accepts responsibility for their safety and actions during the fossil hunt. Children must be supervised by their parent(s) or guardian(s) at all times. Children must be four years or older to participate.

## 3. HEALTH & SAFETY

Your safety is our primary concern during the fossil hunt. We want you to enjoy the day and minimise the risk of injury occurring to you and your companions. Before attending the fossil hunt it's important you understand the hazards you may encounter and the steps you can take to reduce the risk.

For the majority of time, when undertaken sensibly and with knowledge of how to minimise the risk of danger, fossil hunting is relatively safe; however, like many recreational activities it's not possible to eliminate all dangers and in extreme cases this could result in serious injury or even death.

Productive fossil collecting locations occur in areas with high rates of erosion, mostly due to natural processes but sometimes by the actions of people. In these areas you will likely encounter unpredictable terrain including, but not limited to: falling rocks, slippery/unstable surfaces, areas prone to isolation by the incoming tide and steep drops.

Throughout the fossil hunt the Discovering Fossils leader will seek to minimise the risk to participants by avoiding apparent areas/activities of greatest danger. Prevailing weather conditions and unpredictable terrain may mean the planned route is changed on the day to reduce the risk to participants.

Children must be at least four years old to participate. If a young child in your party has a smaller than average head circumference please bring a cycle helmet as the hard hats provided may not fit tightly; for most children including those aged 4-5 years our hard hats can be adjusted to fit. Infants under 4 years old are not permitted to attend and may not be carried during the fossil hunt due to the risk of slipping on rocks. We advise against participation if you are pregnant or have a medical condition that may heighten your personal risk.

On the following pages (section 3.1 – 3.2) is a risk assessment and hazard map that outlines the common dangers you should be aware of before agreeing to attend the fossil hunt. There may be other unforeseen dangers not described. Bad weather conditions may heighten the extent of the risk.

**PLEASE ENSURE ALL PARTICIPANTS ACCOMPANYING YOU ARE PROVIDED A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT IN ADVANCE OF THE FOSSIL HUNT.**

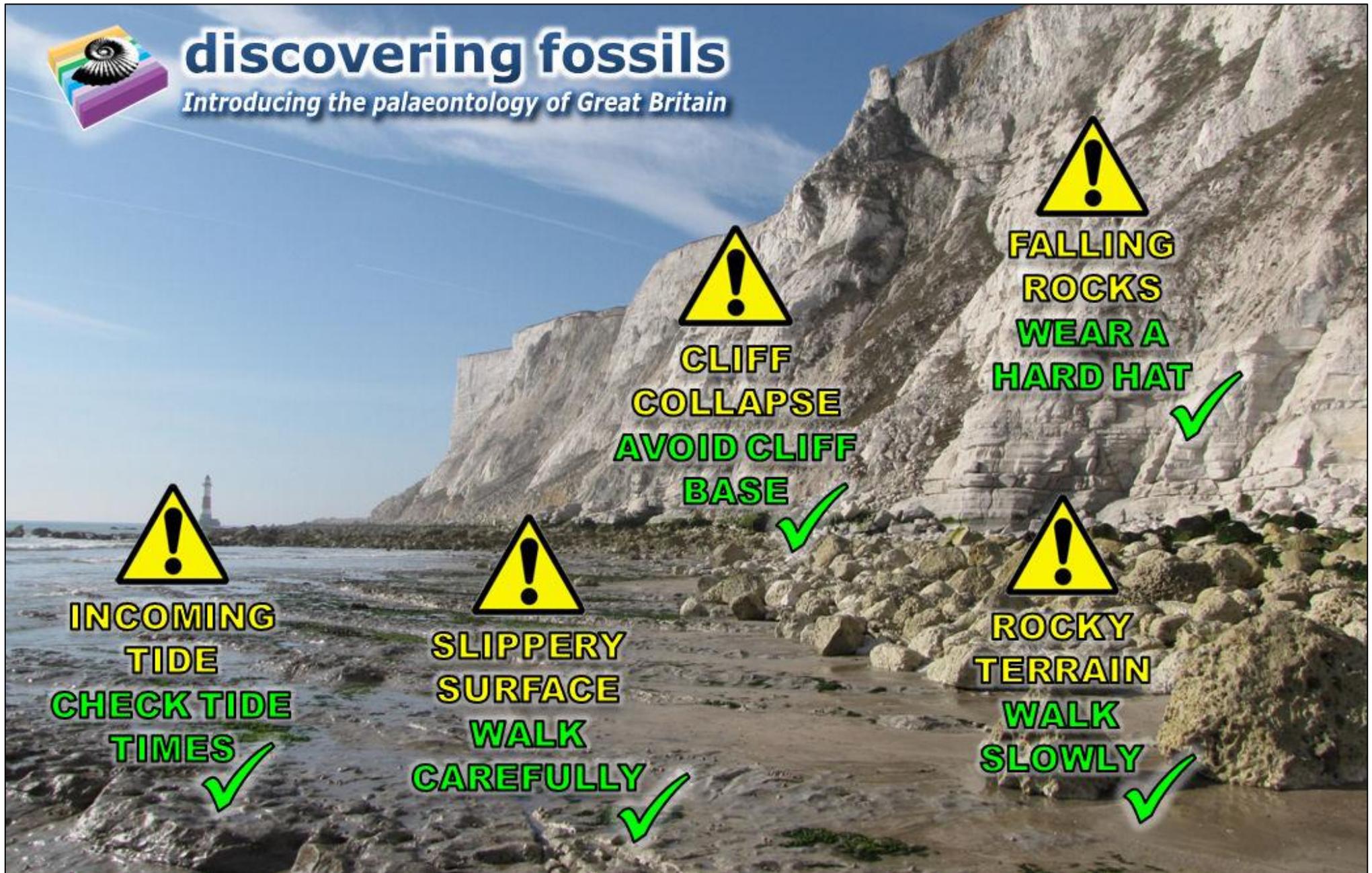
## 3.1 RISK ASSESSMENT

The following risk assessment is intended to make clear the dangers you will likely encounter during the fossil hunt and the steps you can take to minimise the risk to yourself and others. Please read the details fully and ensure everyone accompanying you or within your care is also fully informed. There may be other dangers not listed below. The risk assessment is followed by a hazard map to illustrate the general area where the fossil hunt will take place.

Hazard	Description	Who's at risk?	Severity	Likelihood	Actions to reduce risk
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FALLING ROCKS</b></p> <p>The chalk cliffs are liable to partial or large-scale collapse without warning.</p> <p>Individual boulders or large sections of the cliff-face may fall to the beach below.</p>	<p>Everyone attending the fossil hunt.</p>	<p>Falling rocks have the potential to inflict serious injury or even death.</p> <p>Impacts to the head are the greatest danger.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unlikely</b></p>  <p>There have been no large scale cliff falls observed during past fossil hunts; however, there is often evidence of recent collapses. Individual falling rocks are more frequent.</p>	<p>The fossil hunt will take place a reasonably safe distance from the cliff base, and therefore outside the area of greatest danger. Do not approach the cliff base. You will be asked to move away from the cliff if we notice you are too close.</p> <p>Hard hats will be supplied by Discovering Fossils and must be worn at all times.</p> <p>If your child has a particularly small head, i.e. a hard hat may not fit tightly, you may like to bring a cycle helmet from home – this is preferable to a poorly fitted hard hat. The hard hats provided are adjustable and fit most children 4+ years.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SLIPPERY SURFACES</b></p> <p>The fossil hunt requires walking over loose, slippery boulders.</p> <p>Green algae may heighten the risk of slipping underfoot.</p>	<p>Everyone attending the fossil hunt.</p> <p>Young children and the elderly are at greater risk.</p>	<p>Slipping and falling could result in twisted ankles, sprained wrists and impacts to the body and head.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Likely</b></p>  <p>There have been a number of minor slips, but no major injuries as a result.</p>	<p>Walking boots are recommended. Alternatively a pair of wellies or trainers specifically designed for walking off-road will provide some protection.</p> <p>Hard hats will be supplied by Discovering Fossils and must be worn at all times.</p> <p>Participants are asked to walk carefully and slowly at all times.</p> <p>Avoid walking on green rocks.</p>

Hazard	Description	Who's at risk?	Severity	Likelihood	Actions to reduce risk
	<p><b>TIDAL/DEEP WATER</b></p> <p>Participants will likely come in contact with sea water during the fossil hunt.</p> <p>The presence of water poses the risk of drowning no matter how deep.</p>	<p>Everyone participating in the fossil hunt.</p> <p>Participants with a medical condition that may result in periods of unconsciousness.</p> <p>Young children and the elderly are at greater risk.</p>	<p>In a worst case scenario, especially if combined with a period of unconsciousness, then there's a possibility of drowning.</p>	<p><b>Very unlikely</b>  </p> <p>To date there have been no incidents to report.</p>	<p>Keep close to the shore and avoid walking into deep water. Young children should be supervised at all times.</p> <p>If you or anyone accompanying your group suffers from a medical condition that could result in a loss of consciousness please ensure you/they are accompanied at all times and avoid walking off alone.</p> <p>Tidal movements are available from Discovering Fossils.</p>
	<p><b>STEEP/HIGH DROPS</b></p> <p>In order to access the productive fossil hunting grounds, the group will pass along a public footpath close to the cliff edge.</p> <p>Participants will also be required to descend a number of steep wooden steps to the beach.</p>	<p>Everyone participating in the fossil hunt.</p> <p>Young children are at greater risk.</p>	<p>Falling from the cliff top or slipping down the steps to beach could result in serious injury from impact to the body and head.</p>	<p><b>Very unlikely</b>  </p> <p>To date there have been no incidents to report.</p>	<p>Participants are asked to walk carefully and slowly at all times, and avoid getting too close to the cliff edge.</p> <p>Please ask the fossil hunt leader for assistance if you have difficulty walking down steps.</p>
	<p><b>HAMMER &amp; CHISEL</b></p> <p>For the best fossil hunting experience participants will require the use of a hammer &amp; chisel to extract fossils.</p> <p>This activity carries the risk of injury from striking fingers, as well as rock fragments ejected at speed from the point of impact.</p>	<p>Everyone participating in the fossil hunt.</p> <p>The user of the hammer &amp; chisel is at heightened risk.</p> <p>Onlookers may also be within range of flying debris ejected from the point of impact.</p>	<p>Bruised and/or broken/cut fingers from contact between the hammer &amp; chisel.</p> <p>Fragments of rock debris coming into contact with eyes – causing mild to severe eye trauma.</p>	<p><b>LIKELY</b>  </p> <p>It's not uncommon for participants to bruise fingers.</p> <p>There have been no serious injuries.</p>	<p>To reduce the risk of injury to fingers, participants are asked to hammer slowly and carefully, and avoid placing fingers on top of the chisel.</p> <p>Everyone will be offered safety glasses which should be worn while hammering or observing others.</p> <p>Discovering Fossils will carry plasters and sterile eye-wash in the event of an accident.</p>

## 3.2 HAZARD MAP



### 3.3 SAFETY & RESPONSIBILITY

The following notice is provided to clarify that you are responsible for your personal safety and those who accompany you, and exclude the Discovering Fossils leader(s) from liability in the event of an accident or injury during the fossil hunt. The Discovering Fossils event leader will seek to minimise the risk to participants to the best of their ability by avoiding areas/activities of greatest known/apparent danger. By attending a fossil hunt organised by Discovering Fossils you agree to take responsibility for your own safety and those that accompany you. We cannot provide one-to-one supervision to the whole group simultaneously, and you must therefore act with responsibility and common sense independent of the Discovering Fossils leader.

Hard hats will be provided to all participants for use during the fossil hunt and must be worn at all times. The hard hats are size adjustable and fit adults and children; however, if your child has a particularly small head you might like to bring a cycle helmet from home, this is preferable to a loosely fitted hard hat. Eye protection will also be available to reduce the risk of rock fragments entering the eyes whilst undertaking or observing hammering.

Although there have been no serious injuries during previous Discovering Fossils events, there are potential hazards in the locations visited that could result in serious injury or even death. By agreeing to participate in the fossil hunt you are confirming to have read and understood the hazards outlined in the risk assessment provided. This information should be considered alongside your own experience and research before attending.

Due to the nature of fossil hunting outdoors we cannot control the prevailing weather conditions. We are unable to accept any responsibility for participation during unfavourable or severe weather conditions. By attending the fossil hunt you agree to continually assess the weather and environmental conditions (on behalf of yourself and those who accompany you) and make a personal judgment whether to proceed with the Discovering Fossils leader(s), fossil hunt participants or a member of the public. The prevailing weather and condition of the terrain may mean the planned route is changed on the day to reduce the risk to participants.

If you have any questions relating to safety please contact us prior to attending the fossil hunt.

### 4. PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

**Discovering Fossils does not provide public liability insurance to participants.** If you are an individual/family, school, organisation or club that requires public liability insurance you will need to make independent arrangements prior to attending the fossil hunt.

### 5. CODE OF CONDUCT

Many of the fossil hunt locations visited are geologically and environmentally sensitive with specific guidelines and laws affecting the activities that are undertaken. We ask all participants respect the locations visited and avoid causing damage to any *in situ* material (in the ground and/or in its natural position). In some instances, e.g. quarries, the extraction of fossils *in situ* is permitted - guidance will be provided to participants on the day. In coastal locations fossil collecting efforts should be concentrated on the loose material on the beach. See also 'Frequently Asked Questions' – section 10 for more information.

We ask all participants act responsibly throughout the event and avoid causing unnecessary disturbance to other members of the group or the general public. Should your actions result in disturbance or injury to a member of the group or the public (whether they are part of the fossil hunt or not), you agree to take complete responsibility.

Participants are permitted to keep the fossils they discover; however, should you make a discovery that is deemed to be of significant scientific value we would ask that it be donated to the Natural History Museum in London or a similar public institution. Advice will be provided by the Discovering Fossils leader. See also 'Frequently Asked Questions' – section 10 for more information.

## 6. PERSONAL PROPERTY

We are unable to accept responsibility for personal property belonging to any individual attending the fossil hunt. You understand that any personal property used or carried with you, left in cars or at any other location, whether suggested you do so by Discovering Fossils or not, is done so at your own personal risk. You understand that should your actions or the actions of anyone who accompanies you cause damage to the property of Discovering Fossils, any third parties, the land owner (if applicable) other participants on the fossil hunt, or the general public, that you are solely responsible.

## 7. PHOTOGRAPHY

Please be aware that a digital camera/phone will be in use by the event leader(s) throughout the event to document the fossils discovered and activities undertaken by the group. These photos will be stored for future reference and possibly published online, on social media, or in printed documents. By attending a public fossil hunt you agree that any photos featuring yourself or members of the group can be used publicly either commercially or non-commercially. If you would like a copy of any photos taken during the fossil hunt please contact Discovering Fossils by email. For private fossil hunts you can ask that photos are not taken, in which case please inform the Discovering Fossils event leader in advance.

## 8. CANCELLATION / POSTPONEMENT

The vast majority of fossil hunts proceed as planned, however around 10% will be subject to postponement due to bad weather. Therefore we ask you be mindful of your flexibility to date changes before agreeing to book your places. Having flexibility to postpone is essential to our ability to offer public fossil hunts, without which we would be unable to offer them. We are unable to provide a refund due to weather related postponement. If you're planning to attend as a tourist and postponement is therefore not possible as you will no longer be in the country, then please contact us to discuss your requirements before completing your booking as we may be able to offer some flexibility in certain circumstances.

**Your right to cancel or postpone:** You may cancel your places on the fossil hunt at any point prior to scheduled date. A refund will be issued if 28 days or more notice is provided by email and is subject to a 15% admin fee which will be deducted from the sum paid; if cancellation occurs within 28 days of the fossil hunt the refund will be subject to a 50% charge; we are unable to provide a refund if the cancellation takes place within 3 days of the fossil hunt as it's unlikely we will find participants to fill your place(s). On some occasions where demand is particularly high we maintain a reserve list and it may be possible to find someone to fill your places, in which case any cancellation charges will be limited to 15%. We will do our best to minimise the expense you incur due to cancellation and will inform you what is possible at the time. You may postpone your attendance on the fossil hunt at any point up until 21 days prior without charge. If less than 21 days notice is provided a 15% charge will be payable before a new date is agreed. We are unable to accept postponement requests on the day.

**Discovering Fossils right to cancel or postpone:** We may cancel or postpone the fossil hunt at any point prior to the scheduled date including on the day if weather conditions are considered too dangerous to proceed/continue. Participants will be notified by email of any changes prior to the fossil hunt, please check your inbox frequently in the week leading up to the fossil hunt and on the day in case of any last minute announcements and do not embark on a long journey without checking. If you provide a mobile number in your booking form we will also send a text message if the announcement is urgent, i.e. within 24 hours of the planned date. If cancellation or postponement occurs due to non-weather related reasons, e.g. sickness or personal reasons, everyone will be offered places on a future fossil hunt or a full refund. If heavy rain, lightning, and/or strong winds are forecast the fossil hunt will likely be postponed and participants offered places on an alternative date. Prior to the fossil hunt we will assess the weather forecast using at least two data sources to provide the most robust insight and enable an informed decision whether to proceed. The safety of participants is our utmost concern and we will postpone if we consider the risk too great. We may abort the fossil hunt midway through if weather conditions deteriorate to a dangerous level, in which case we are unable to offer places on future date or a refund (this rarely happens unless a weather forecast proves inaccurate).

We are unable to accept responsibility for any additional costs incurred as a result of cancellation or postponement, e.g. hotel expenses, train tickets etc.

**PLEASE ENSURE ALL PARTICIPANTS ACCOMPANYING YOU ARE PROVIDED A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT IN ADVANCE OF THE FOSSIL HUNT.**

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## 9. TOOLS & SAFETY EQUIPMENT

For the best fossil hunting experience a hammer & chisel are recommended - these are used for splitting prospective rocks and extracting fossils.

Fossil hunting equipment is available for purchase from Discovering Fossils or alternatively you're welcome to bring your own. Our light-weight rock hammer & chisel is ideal for children and adults seeking a versatile tool for splitting small rocks and extracting fragile specimens. Our heavy-weight hammer & chisel is capable of splitting large boulders in search of fossils – recommended for adults only. You can order fossil hunting equipment alongside your places on the fossil hunt and collect on the day (see booking form for instructions). We are unable to provide equipment through the post.

LIGHT-WEIGHT ROCK HAMMER  
& COLD-STEEL CHISEL **£20**



HEAVY-WEIGHT ROCK HAMMER  
& COLD-STEEL CHISEL **£22**



**'Cold steel' chisel included  
with a hammer purchase  
or available separately for £3.**



You will also need to bring material for wrapping your finds to prevent them getting damaged – newspaper, bubble wrap, kitchen roll, or foam sheets are ideal. Hard hats and eye protection will be provided to all participants at the meeting point. Alternatively you may bring your own safety equipment if preferred. Hard hats must be worn at all times to protect from falling rocks and impact with the ground in the event of slipping.

## 10. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Will we actually find fossils?**

Yes, Beachy Head is highly fossiliferous. During the fossil hunt you will have the opportunity to observe and collect many fragmentary fossils; complete specimens are also common although less frequently encountered. A typical family/individual that engages fully in the experience can hope to come away with several good fossil examples. You will be provided a fossil hunting guide in PDF format to read prior to the fossil hunt, this can be used to improve your chances of success. Further guidance will be provided throughout the fossil hunt.

### **Can we keep the fossils we find?**

Yes, although there are some exceptions and limits worth noting. Generally speaking any fossils you encounter loose on the beach or discover within boulders can be kept, i.e. taken off the beach. Most of the fossils encountered will be discovered in this way and so only a small proportion are restricted. The restrictions concern fossils observed *in situ*, i.e. in their life position, so within bedrock visible at the surface or within the cliff face - these cannot be collected legally in most instances. We also ask participants act responsibly with the number of specimens collected, limiting the volume of duplication, taking only a small number of the best specimens. If you discover a specimen of significant scientific value we may ask that it reside in a public institution, e.g. a relevant museum. Further advice will be offered at the time.

### **What happens if it rains?**

The fossil hunt will proceed in wet weather, in fact a little rain can make it easier to spot fossils at the surface of prospective rocks. You should plan to bring clothing suitable to changeable weather conditions. Further guidance of what to wear will be provided in a PDF document upon receipt of your completed booking form and payment. If however the weather conditions deteriorate to an extent whereby proceeding/continuing is deemed too dangerous, then the fossil hunt may be aborted. Every attempt to foresee potentially dangerous weather conditions will be made in advance of the day and if necessary the fossil hunt may be postponed. Please see the section 8 'Cancellation / Postponement' within this document for further details.

### **Can I bring a dog?**

Provided the dog is well trained and does not disturb other participants then we're happy to welcome dogs. We may ask for the dog to remain on a lead if it's seen to be causing a disturbance.

### **Can I attend the fossil hunt as an observer?**

Yes, although you will be required to wear a hard hat and protective glasses for health & safety reasons. Observer places are charged at the standard adult/child rate.

### **Do I need a hammer & chisel?**

Yes, for the best experience we recommend you bring your own hammer & chisel. We are unable to offer these for hire on the day so please purchase them in advance or from Discovering Fossils on the day. An opportunity to purchase a hammer & chisel is included in the booking form. A small number of hammers & chisels are available to share among the group if anyone forgets to bring their own or is unable to purchase them. Please also refer to section 9 'Tools & Safety Equipment' within this document for further details.

### **How far will we be walking?**

During the course of the day we will cover approximately 2 miles. The beach access point is located 15 minutes walk from the car park.

### **Can I pay on the day?**

In some instances we may agree to accept your booking form & payment on the day. Please contact us if you are unable to complete your booking in advance of the day.

# 11. BOOKING FORM

In order to complete your booking and secure your place(s) on the fossil hunt please complete the following booking form and payment request. We kindly ask that you print the following booking form and complete it by hand, and return it by email as a scanned/photo attachment. If you're unable to complete it by hand we're happy to discuss alternatives, please contact us to make arrangements. Please note that your places are not confirmed until we've received your payment and completed booking form. Upon receipt of these the full details of when and where to meet will be sent to the email address provided below.



**TO BOOK ELECTRONICALLY:** Please print & complete this page and send a scanned copy or photograph to **roy1@discoveringfossils.co.uk**. Upon receipt of your completed booking form we'll issue an online payment request from PayPal which will arrive as a separate email soon after. You can pay securely using any credit or debit card and do not require a PayPal account. Full instructions of how to pay are contained in the email you'll receive from PayPal. If you experience any difficulties please get in touch.

**LOCATION OF FOSSIL HUNT** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE OF FOSSIL HUNT** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME OF INDIVIDUAL BOOKING THE PLACES** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_  
(This person must be present on the fossil hunt)

**MOBILE / PHONE NUMBER(S)** THIS IS USED IF WE NEED TO CONTACT YOU URGENTLY \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE STATE THE NAME(S) OF ANY OTHER ADULTS ATTENDING THE FOSSIL HUNT** \_\_\_\_\_  
ALL ADULTS LISTED HERE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND ANY CHILDREN THAT ACCOMPANY THEM. PLEASE ENSURE ALL ADULTS HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS DOCUMENT. \_\_\_\_\_  
IF YOU REQUIRE MORE SPACE PLEASE LIST ADDITIONAL NAMES ON THE REVERSE

**WILL YOU BE ACCOMPANIED BY ANY CHILDREN AGED 4-18 YEARS?** YES\* / NO >>> **\*IF YES, PLEASE STATE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN** \_\_\_\_\_  
CHILDREN MUST BE SUPERVISED BY YOU OR ANOTHER ADULT IN YOUR PARTY AT ALL TIMES. UNFORTUNATELY WE ARE UNABLE TO ACCOMMODATE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 4 YEARS.

**HOW MANY HAMMER & CHISELS WOULD YOU LIKE?**  
(OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED):  
**Light-weight geology hammer & chisel (+£20)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Heavy-weight hammer & chisel (+£22)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chisel only (+£3)** \_\_\_\_\_  
PLEASE ADD THE SUM DUE TO YOUR CHEQUE OR PAYPAL PAYMENT

**IMPORTANT:** By signing below you are confirming to have read and understood the accompanying risk assessment and agree with the conditions of participation outlined in the full document. You understand that there is a small possibility of postponement due to bad weather. You are responsible for ensuring all adults accompanying you receive a full copy of this document and understand and agree with the conditions of participation. The Discovering Fossils event leader(s) do not accept liability in the event of an accident.

**PLEASE SIGN HERE (PERSON BOOKING THE PLACES MUST BE PRESENT ON THE FOSSIL HUNT)** \_\_\_\_\_