



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Outdoor Education: Reconnecting with Nature

Thirty minutes outside can restore a tired class's attention — under narrower conditions, and by smaller margins, than is usually claimed. The conditions are the course.

DURATION 5 days · 25 hours	LANGUAGE English (B1+)	GROUP SIZE Max 20 participants
DAILY SCHEDULE 09:30–15:00 Monday to Friday, with a break for lunch	CERTIFICATE Attendance + Europass Mobility	
AUDIENCE All school levels — including staff who take classes outside or manage the school's outdoor space No specific prerequisites — open to all teachers and school staff.		
COURSE CENTRES Antalya · İstanbul · İzmir · Mersin · Budapest · Bremen · Rome Dates and cities of the scheduled sessions are listed on the course page.		

01 Overview

By Friday you can say exactly what taking a class outside is good for, and you have a session, a term's plan and a timetable proposal built to those limits.

- **Monday** — you score the outdoor space you are standing in against the evidence, and write down what outdoor learning can and cannot honestly claim to do.
- **Tuesday** — you sort your existing outdoor activities into what actually restores attention and what only looks like it does, then rebuild one.
- **Wednesday** — you work out where a real thirty-minute session fits inside your own timetable.
- **Thursday** — you build a risk and logistics sheet for one session, and rehearse the answer to the colleague who thinks it's a day off.
- **Friday** — you turn the week's work into a term's plan, stated at the limits of what the evidence actually supports.

You go home with a session that fits your timetable, a logistics sheet a head teacher will sign, and a term's plan with the one-page timetable proposal that unlocks it. You also go home able to say precisely what the evidence supports — including the thirty-minute problem, and what you did about it.

02 Course description

Environmental psychologists noticed it long before it had a name: put a mentally exhausted person somewhere natural for a while and their ability to concentrate comes back in a way a coffee break indoors doesn't quite manage. That became Attention Restoration Theory, and it is the reason this week treats taking a class outside as a teaching method rather than a break from one.

It is also where care is needed. The current evidence supports a narrower claim than the usual one: the effects are real but small, clearest at around thirty minutes, and mostly measured outside schools rather than in them. The studies behind that, and the separate school-based review, are taken apart on Monday. None of these findings kills the idea. All of them change what you should design.

So the week is built on the four conditions Kaplan's theory actually names, because those are the parts a teacher can control. Monday is the evidence and its limits. Tuesday is being away, and the distinction that does most of the work: soft fascination — leaves, water, birds, weather — holds attention gently and leaves room to think, while hard fascination grabs it and leaves none. Plenty of outdoor activities are hard fascination in disguise and restore nothing. Wednesday is extent and compatibility, and the problem that is easiest to leave out: the evidence points at thirty minutes *in the space*, and a single period — forty-five minutes in some systems, fifty or sixty in others — has to cover the walk both ways, gathering the class, giving the instruction, and getting everyone back before the bell. Thursday is running it when the weather, the timetable and a sceptical colleague are all against you. Friday builds the term's plan and marks the limits.

What you can defend matters here as much as what you can deliver. A teacher who claims outdoor learning transforms attainment will be asked for evidence, once, and will not be asked again. A teacher who can say precisely what the research supports, what it doesn't, and what they are doing about the thirty-minute problem is in a different conversation.

03 Learning outcomes

- 01 Say precisely what the research does and does not support — which findings come from attention-restoration studies and which from school-based outdoor learning — and hold that line with a sceptical colleague or a head teacher.
- 02 Tell soft fascination from hard, and rebuild an outdoor activity that was quietly the wrong kind.
- 03 Audit a real outdoor space against the four conditions Attention Restoration Theory names.
- 04 Fit a thirty-minute outdoor session into a real timetable, with the trade-off written down rather than wished away.
- 05 Run a session in poor weather from a risk and logistics sheet a head teacher will actually sign.
- 06 Turn one session into a term's plan, and write the one-page timetable proposal that asks for what the term needs.

04 Methodology

Evidence first, including its limits

The week opens with what the research does not settle. A claim you cannot defend in a staff meeting is worse than no claim, and it is the thing that gets outdoor learning quietly dropped from a timetable.

The soft-fascination filter

Every activity gets checked against one question — does this hold attention gently, or does it grab it? Only the first restores anything, and a surprising number of established outdoor activities fail.

05 Daily programme

Day 1

What Actually Gets Tired

- **Opening and introductions:** each participant describes the last time they took a class outside and what they told themselves it was for — the answers become the week's working material
- **Directed attention and why it runs down:** what a school morning actually depletes, and why "they just need fresh air" is a description rather than an explanation
- Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, 1995) and the four conditions it names: being away, fascination, extent, compatibility
- The evidence, with its limits, and what each study actually covers: Bell and colleagues' 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis (Journal of Environmental Psychology) on nature exposure and cognition — effects real but small and highly variable, clearest at around thirty minutes. Johnson and colleagues' 2021 replication, also about nature exposure rather than schools: nature on a screen did not reliably restore the executive-attention component it measured. Then Mann and colleagues' 2022 review (Frontiers in Public Health), the school-specific one: 147 studies of nature-based outdoor learning, reporting gains in engagement, social and collaborative skills and self-concept, with some evidence of academic improvement, and rating its own evidence base as generally moderate. What this rules out, and what it leaves standing
- **Outside for the first session:** the group walks the site and scores it against the four conditions, out loud, disagreeing where it disagrees
- **Output:** a one-page statement of what outdoor learning can and cannot be claimed to do — written to be said to a colleague, not filed

Day 2

Being Away, and the Two Kinds of Fascination

- **Warm-up:** "Away or not" — in pairs, each participant names the closest outdoor space to their own classroom and argues whether it clears "being away"; the disagreements set up the day
- **"Being away":** what actually makes a space feel away from the demands of the day, and the honest question of whether the corner of the school car park qualifies
- The distinction that does most of the work — soft fascination holds attention gently and leaves room to reflect; hard fascination seizes it and leaves none. Moving water, leaves, cloud, birds, a fire on one side; a competitive game, a loud instruction, a scavenger race against the clock, a phone on the other
- **Sorting:** the group puts its own existing outdoor activities into the two piles. This is the uncomfortable part of the week — a good number of well-loved activities turn out to be hard fascination outdoors, which is to say indoor lessons held in a field
- **Rebuild:** take one activity that failed the sort and redesign it soft, then run it
- **Output:** your activities sorted, and one of them rebuilt and tested

Day 3

Extent, Compatibility, and the Thirty-Minute Problem

- **Extent:** a restorative space has to be rich and coherent enough to hold attention once it has caught it — why a bare tarmac yard fails, and why a scruffy hedge line, a bit of rough ground or a single old tree can work better than a landscaped courtyard
 - **Compatibility:** the setting has to fit what the student is actually being asked to do. A clipboard worksheet is frequently incompatible with the place it is being carried through, and the session fails for that reason rather than for lack of enthusiasm
 - **The thirty-minute problem, put through actual arithmetic:** the evidence points at roughly half an hour in the space, a single period is forty-five to sixty minutes depending on the system, and the walk both ways, gathering the class, giving the instruction and getting everyone back before the bell all come out of that. What is actually available — a doubled period, tutor or form time, a fortnightly block, a closer part of the site than the one you had in mind, an agreement with the teacher either side of you
 - Participants map their own timetable from memory and find where the thirty minutes could genuinely come from, or establish honestly that it cannot and what the shorter version is worth
 - **Output:** one session that fits a real timetable, with the trade-off stated
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Day 4

Running It When Conditions Are Against You

- **Weather:** the contingency that keeps the outdoor content instead of cancelling it — how to move an activity, not abandon it, and which of the four conditions you are protecting when you do. The group does it for real: Day 2's rebuilt activity is taken back out in whatever Thursday's weather is, and moved rather than cancelled if it has to be
 - **Managing a group outside:** giving instructions at distance and in wind (practised on the site), headcounts, boundaries, what happens when something goes wrong, and why a rushed, tightly-policed session destroys "being away" and "compatibility" before it starts
 - Risk and permission in a form your own school's paperwork can absorb: the sheet a head teacher will actually sign, and the difference between a real hazard and an anxious one. Nothing needs bringing — this is worked from memory of how your own school does it
 - **The sceptical colleague, rehearsed out loud:** the objection is almost always that it is a day off. Participants practise the two-minute answer using Monday's evidence statement, with an observer checking whether they overclaimed
 - **Access, marked rather than taught:** outdoor sessions exclude quietly, and designing against that is a course of its own — Outdoor Education for Inclusive Learning; this one names the boundary instead of pretending to cover it
 - **Output:** a risk and logistics sheet for one session, plus a rehearsed answer to the objection
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Day 5

A Term of It, and What It Is Not a Fix For

- **Site audit sheets out again:** Day 1's scores laid beside the term's plan, to find the sessions heading for a space that scores badly on the condition they most depend on
- **Building the term:** which lessons go out, how often, and what the thirty-minute finding means for a calendar rather than a single afternoon
- **The limits, stated plainly:** attention restoration is not a behaviour intervention, not a mental-health treatment and not a substitute for teaching. The effects are real and small. Claims beyond that are the reason sceptical colleagues exist

- Where the resistance will actually come from, named in order: the lesson you already control needs nothing from anyone; the thirty-minute version needs the colleague whose lesson touches yours; and site access, supervision ratios or a gate that stays locked need a decision nobody in the room can make
- Turning the last of those into a timetable proposal rather than a complaint — one side of paper showing which weeks, which periods, and what it costs the people either side of you, because that is the form the answer has to take before anyone can say yes to it
- **Output:** a term's plan, and the one-page timetable proposal that goes with it
- **Closing:** certificates, course evaluation and event survey

PLEASE NOTE

Sessions run from 09:30 to 15:00, Monday to Friday, with a break for lunch. Timings can shift a little to suit the venue and the group.

Course activities and content may vary depending on participants' needs and the trainer leading the session; any changes are at the trainer's discretion. If there is a specific topic you would like included, please let us know — content-related requests must reach us at least 3 weeks before the course start date so we can confirm them in time.

06 Materials

- Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, 1995, Journal of Environmental Psychology) and its four conditions — being away, fascination, extent, compatibility — carried through all five days
- The studies the week's evidence rests on, named so you can cite them: Bell and colleagues' 2025 meta-analysis on exposure duration, Johnson and colleagues' 2021 replication on simulated nature, and Mann and colleagues' 2022 review of nature-based outdoor learning in schools — the school-specific one, which found benefits to engagement, social and collaborative skills and self-concept, with some evidence of academic improvement. Bell and Mann are both open access; the Johnson replication is not
- A site audit sheet scored against the four conditions, completed on Day 1 and reused on Day 5 against the term's plan
- Soft/hard fascination sorting cards — a calibration set, plus blanks the group fills in with its own activities
- A timetable-fitting worksheet, and a risk-and-logistics outline shaped to fit the forms your school already uses
- An outdoor space at or near the centre, in whatever weather the week produces — the week is taught in it, not about it

07 How to prepare

- Nothing needs writing up beforehand. It helps to come with one outdoor session you have run, or wanted to run, somewhere in your mind — and a rough sense of how your school's timetable is blocked, since Wednesday works on fitting thirty minutes into it. Both are recalled from memory; there is no document to bring.
- Outdoor sessions run on mostly accessible, level terrain, but parts of the site involve uneven or unpaved ground. Tell us about any mobility, health or accessibility need when you apply so we can adapt where we work on site. Comfortable outdoor clothing and closed walking shoes are worth packing for every outdoor session, along with something for rain and something for sun.

08 After the course

- Participants will receive their Certificate of Attendance and the co-signed Europass Mobility document.
- Participants will complete a general course evaluation and event survey.

- Participants will receive course materials, videos, photos, and PDF documents in both digital and print formats.
- Follow-up support: self-evaluation materials are provided. Depending on the group, an email group may be set up so that participants can keep exchanging ideas.

09 Why this is Erasmus+ eligible

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide names environment and the fight against climate change as a horizontal priority, and asks that “sustainability should become a part of the entire spectrum of education and training, including curricula and professional development for educators” (Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2026, Part A – Priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme, p. 9). This week is that in two respects: it is professional development for educators, and its output is a rearrangement of curriculum time so that students are outdoors regularly rather than occasionally. It does not teach the climate crisis — the catalogue has separate courses that do. The Guide also gives priority to projects that “enable behavioural changes for individual preferences, cultural values, awareness, and more generally support active engagement for sustainable development” (same section, p. 10), and this week’s output is exactly that kind of designed, repeated engagement: a timetable in which students are in the natural world regularly rather than on one trip a year. Staff return able to state what the evidence on outdoor learning actually supports, to design sessions against the four conditions that make a setting restorative, and to fit those sessions into a timetable that was not built for them.

10 What the course fee covers

INCLUDED IN THE COURSE FEE

- 25 hours of training and course materials
- Certificate of Attendance + Europass support
- On-site local support throughout the week

ARRANGED SEPARATELY BY THE PARTICIPANT

- Travel to the host city — invitation letter on request
- Accommodation — we share recommended options
- Travel & health insurance

ISSUED BY

Erasmus Mobility Academy

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COURSE PAGE

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ABOUT ERASMUS MOBILITY ACADEMY

Erasmus Mobility Academy (OID: E10304561) is an Erasmus+ training provider offering professional development courses for educators, school staff and youth workers across Europe. Our courses are designed for international mobility — open to participants travelling from a country other than the host country — and support schools in building lasting institutional capacity. We provide structured learning, logistical guidance and certification with Europass.