



National
Trust

Dunster Castle & Watermill Access Statement

Dunster Castle and Watermill

Dunster

Minehead

Somerset

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Key points

On arrival

- If a member of your party has mobility issues or if you have other access concerns, please highlight this to our staff on arrival. They will seek to help you to get the best from your visit.
- We would recommend that you phone our office in advance of your visit, to talk through your access requirements.

Gradients

- Occupying a defensive position at the top of a hill, the paths to the castle are steep. The gardens are cultivated on terraces around the hill and are generally accessible.

Surfaces

- There are a multitude of different surfaces around the property. Outside, these include, but are not limited to: tarmac, bound and rolled stone, cobbles, loose gravel, grass, wood chippings.
- Interior surfaces include polished wooden floors, carpets, rugs, flagstones, cobbles, tiles, brick, timber, linoleum, concrete, composite flooring, expanded metal grids.

Mobility vehicles

- We have three 'Tramper' personal mobility vehicles (PMVs) which are suitable for the exterior terrain.
- They are free of charge and subject to availability and available from our reception points. Donations are very welcome.
- These can be reserved and are available on a first come, first served basis.
- This site is unsuitable for three-wheeled and many other smaller wheeled powered-mobility-vehicles.

Wheelchair users

- The castle is accessed via steps.
- At the entrance to the castle, wheelchair users who are able can ascend the steps and use their own wheelchairs in the castle.
- There are also two manual wheelchairs available for use within the castle.
- We are not able to accommodate powered-mobility-vehicles in the castle.

Emergency communications

- Mobile phone reception is variable and depends upon your network provider.
- In case of an emergency our Duty Manager can be reached on 07785 290463 or seek assistance from a member of staff.

Key points

Severe weather

- At times of severe weather parts of the property may be closed for safety reasons.
- Any ropes or barriers should not be crossed, and all signs should be observed.

Bags, pushchairs and carriers

- You are welcome to bring bags into the castle, but you may be asked to leave large bags or rucksacks in the porch where they will be supervised.
- Please refer to your welcome map for pushchair friendly routes (the yellow sections show steep incline or steps).
- Pushchairs cannot be accommodated in the castle but may be left at the porch.
- Rear carriers may be left at the porch.

Light levels

- There can be strong contrasts in light levels in the interiors, depending on prevailing weather conditions and when moving from outside to inside the castle.
- On sunny days garden paths can be dappled in shade.

Dogs

- Dogs on short leads (at all times) are welcome in all areas, with the exception of the castle interiors and courtesy vehicle, where only assistance dogs are permitted.
- The reservoir may not be suitable for your dog, due to the expanded metal grid flooring.
- Dog waste bins are provided and are marked on our property map on the welcome leaflet.
- Water bowls are provided outside visitor reception points, the shop and on the South Terrace.

Water

- There is a small ornamental pond on the South Terrace with a low parapet.
- Toddlers and other small children should be supervised in this area. Its location is marked on the welcome leaflet.
- The river Avill runs through the river gardens and along the side of the park.
- The banks are unfenced and may be unstable at the edges. Care should be taken not to stray near to the edges or climb down the banks. The river is clearly marked on the welcome leaflet.
- At times of flood, areas of the garden will be closed off to prevent access.

Key points

Arrival and parking facilities

- The site is easy to find with the entrance to the drive off the A39. There are brown tourist signs from Williton on the A39 and A358, and from Minehead on the A39.
- The entrance is signed. The driveway is single car width drive to the car park with passing places.
- We have 7 designated spaces for blue badge holders, located next to our visitor reception. These are hard-standing with clearly marked bays.
- The upper section of the car park is rolled tarmac. The lower section is grass with level gravelled access roads. Overflow parking is a five-minute walk from the visitor reception and is used during peak times such as school holidays and bank holidays.
- If all blue badge spaces are full, visitors are welcome to drop passengers off at the visitor reception prior to parking elsewhere.

WCs

- We currently have one accessible toilet located near the shop which is left hand transfer. Taps and toilet are lever operated.
- All toilets are lit by LED lighting.
- Hand dryers are electric and automatic.
- Taps and toilets are hands free to operate in the main facilities adjacent to the shop. The floors are tiled.
- Baby changing facilities in all WCs.

Key points

Visitor Reception

- There are three entry points to Dunster Castle: the main A39 entrance up to the car park, pedestrian access from Dunster high street and another pedestrian access point at the Watermill, via West Street and Mill Lane.
- Powered-mobility-vehicles (PMVs) are available for loan from the main reception and can be pre-booked by calling the property office. There is a short driver assessment and a declaration for users to sign.

Main reception

- Small timber building. There are three steps to the entrance or a ramp and handrail to the side of the building. There is a gradual slope from the car park to the reception building.

Please note that the building is not currently open to visitors. We will be operating at the entrance doors, from behind a desk with screen for everyone's safety.

- When open, the building's doors at the entrance are foldable and the total width when open is 289cm and when half open is 144cm.
- The doors at the back of the building are wheelchair accessible and have a handrail on the path. When the doors are fully open the width is 134cm.
- It can be very noisy as there is no sound proofing but in fair weather, we often greet visitors outside, saving National Trust members from entering the building.
- There are two counters which are 105cm high. Staff can come round to the front of the counter to assist when necessary.
- Lit by natural light and LED lights.
- There is a wooden bench outside the back of the building.
- An induction loop is available.

Ticket office

- There is a gradual steepening rolled tarmac slope from the main reception and car park to the Ticket Office and Stables.

Key points

Stables

- Access to the stables is by rolled tarmac path. The entrance door has a cobbled apron.
- The Stables are opposite the Ticket Office and is approximately a five minute walk from the car park at a very gentle pace.
- Access is through a 139cm wide door.
- All on one level, the floor is cobbled, light levels are low.
- There is natural light and LEDs.
- There is an audio track which plays atmospheric stables sounds.

Retail

- Located within the Stables the shop has a cobbled floor.
- The shop is accessed through a glass door which is 103cm wide. It is manual, opens inwards at least 90 degrees and is usually left in an open position. If it is closed, staff members are available to assist.
- It is lit by LED lighting and natural light.
- There is 120cm between display stands in all but one area.
- Staff are on hand to assist in any way necessary.

Castle

- Access is through the 183cm wide main entrance door which is non-assisted but is always open at least 90 degrees inwards. There are 11 steps in two flights with handrails.
- Wheelchair users who can manage a small number of steps can access via the conservatory which has four shallow steps and a single handrail; they are welcome to use their own wheelchair once in the castle. Access is via the cobbled Pump Court area with a narrowest point of 102cm. The path outside the conservatory (South Terrace) is light gravel.
- There are two manual wheelchairs available to access the ground floor only.
- Visitors are welcome to bring in bags and pushchairs which are left at the entrance porch- which is always supervised. Bags are placed within storage chests to keep them secure.
- The normal visitor exit is via the Conservatory which has a tiled floor and four shallow steps with handrail to the light gravel path.
- Within the castle all rooms have polished wooden floors in combination with carpets.
- The castle is lit by a combination of tungsten, halogen, LED bulbs and natural light in all rooms. Light levels are controlled for conservation purposes with blinds and will vary along with times of day and prevailing conditions.
- The castle visitor route has numerous changes of levels with two main floors. The first floor can be accessed by carpeted stairs only. They are shallow and have a chair for resting on halfway up, and a handrail. Return to the ground floor is via a smaller carpeted staircase with conventional sized treads and risers with a handrail.
- On the ground floor there are steps down to the Library Passage (6) and Billiard Room (3) and up to the Library (6). These all have single handrails.
- There is a space to turn a wheelchair in all accessible rooms.
- There is a WC located in the Gun Room, however due to its location, compact size and narrow entrance, it is not wheelchair accessible.

Key points

Watermill

- Located at the far end of the River Garden, the Watermill is a 15-minute gentle walk from the visitor reception building in the main car park.
- From the visitor reception building, the path is uneven compacted stone and tarmac and is on a gentle downward slope. The path levels out and is light gravel.
- There are two external doors. The first, as you are entering from the River Garden is 111cm wide, the second if you enter from Mill Lane is 86cm wide; they both open inwards and are left open during opening hours. There is a door between the Watermill and Watermill shop/entrance point which is 86cm wide; it opens inwards towards the shop. It is possible to avoid this door as there is an access gate in the outside barrier. Staff are able to assist with access where necessary.
- Access to the external lower viewing area is down a narrow, level path enclosed by a fence and down two steps. This area can also be accessed from the River Garden via an open gate (also a fire exit point) which is 112cm wide.
- The upper external viewing platform is accessed by 10 steps with non-slip tread and a handrail on both sides.
- The floor inside the Watermill is painted concrete within the shop, brick and concrete in the lower Mill and timber which is uneven in places on the first floor and hard surfaced oath on the lower viewing area.
- The counter is 91cm high, however staff are able to move around the counter to offer assistance.
- Seating is available on a bench situated in the shop next to the counter.
- Due to fire regulations, the Bin (top) floor is only open to a maximum of 6 people at a time, providing there is a member of staff or volunteer present on the Stone (first) floor. The steps accessing both the Stone and Bin floors are very narrow and steep.
- A short film plays on a constant loop on the ground floor, showing all areas of the Watermill and demonstrates how it operates.

Garden

- Set on a steep terraced hillside.
- The property welcome leaflet has a map which includes clearly marked paths, highlighting those which are unsuitable for powered-mobility-vehicles (PMVs) in yellow, as they include steps or steep slopes.
- Routes with steps are marked as such on directional signs.
- The paths around the garden vary between tarmac and bound and unbound aggregate, cobbles and sets, light gravel and woodchip. The composting area may be muddy.
- The level areas in the gardens (including for wheelchairs and pushchairs) are the Mill Walk in the River Gardens, the South Terrace and Green Court. All other areas have varying gradients. The steepest paths are marked in yellow on the welcome leaflet.
- Most steps, but not all, have handrails.
- There are no gates to open, and benches are located at regular points.
- The unfenced river Avill runs through the River Garden.
- There are two bridges- both are narrow and have gradients. Lover's Bridge has a low parapet on one side and stepped access at one end. Neither bridge is suitable for powered-mobility-vehicles (PMVs).