



National
Trust

Dunster Castle & Watermill Access Statement

Dunster Castle and Watermill

Dunster

Minehead

Somerset

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On arrival

- If a member of your party has mobility issues or if you have other access concerns, please highlight this to 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.

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 vehicular entrance is signed. The driveway is single track width with passing places.
- There is no visitor vehicle access via the village high street and Castle Hill. This is a pedestrian area and accessible only to authorised vehicles.
- 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.
- We have seven designated parking spaces for blue badge holders, located next to our visitor reception. These are on hardstanding with clearly marked bays.
- The upper section of the car park is rolled tarmac. The middle section is compacted stone and the lower section is grass with level compacted stone 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 near to the visitor reception prior to parking elsewhere.

Gradients

- Built over 1000 years ago, the castle was originally designed as a defensive fortification, occupying a defensive position at the top of a hill. As a result, the paths up to the castle are steep. The gardens are cultivated on terraces around the hill and are generally accessible. Reasonable levels of fitness and stout footwear are required.

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, timber decking, loose gravel & chippings, grass, wood chippings.
- Interior surfaces include polished wooden floors, carpets, rugs, flagstones, cobbles, tiles, brick, timber, linoleum, concrete, composite flooring, expanded metal grids.

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.

Wheelchair users

- The Main Visitor reception has level access.
- The castle is accessed via steps.
- At the entrance to the castle, wheelchair users who are able to do so can ascend the steps (which have handrails) and use their wheelchair in the castle. There are two manual wheelchairs available onsite for use if required. We are not able to accommodate powered-mobility vehicles (PMVs) inside the castle.
- We offer a stair climber for wheelchair users to gain access into the castle ground floor rooms. Visitors need to transfer onto our stair climber from their wheelchair. The stair climber has a weight carrying limit of 130 kg and can accommodate one manual wheelchair and user.
- The Watermill tearoom & Tenants' Hall have ramped access. The Watermill (ground floor) and Stables have level access, but uneven, historic floors.

Mobility vehicles

- Our courtesy vehicle is available daily, from 10am-4pm. The capacity for this is 7 passengers or 1 wheelchair and 4 seated passengers.
- Please enquire about this facility on arrival. This runs as and when there is demand and does not run continuously.
- Those happy and able may be able to transfer from their wheelchair into the vehicle. For those who cannot, the vehicle has an electronic tail lift which will transfer a wheelchair with user into the vehicle. Wheelchairs are then secured at the 4 corners and a full seatbelt is provided. This process takes approximately 10 minutes to load and another 10 minutes to unload.
- We have two '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 in advance by telephone and are available on a first come, first served basis. Reasonable strength is required in order to control the PMVs for hire. A short assessment is carried out in order to ascertain levels of confidence and competence. We reserve the right to deny access to our PMVs if we deem it to be a significant risk.
- This site is unsuitable for three-wheeled and many other smaller wheeled powered-mobility-vehicles.
- PMVs cannot access WCs, where some are accessible to wheelchairs. They will not be able to access inside the castle, the shop, tearoom, or cafés.



Visitor Reception Building

- Small timber building. There are three steps to the entrance and a paved access ramp and handrail to the side of the building. There is a gradual slope from the car park to the reception building.
- The building has double doors at the entrance and the total width open is more than 178cm.



Visitor Reception Building Entrance

- The door at the back of the building is wheelchair accessible and has level access and a handrail on the path. When the doors are fully open the width is 83cm.
- When busy, the reception area 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.

WCs

- We have three accessible WCs located on site. One near the shop, which is lefthand transfer, one located outside the castle on Green Court, and one at the Watermill Tearoom, which is righthand transfer. Taps and toilets 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 are provided in the following WCs: main ladies, main gents, accessible WC by shop; Watermill Tearoom, lower floor; Tenants' Hall café.

Ticket office

- There is a gradual steepening rolled tarmac slope from the main reception and car park to the Ticket Office and Stables. The Ticket office has stepped access with handrails and is not accessible. Staff will come outside to greet anyone with special requirements.
- An induction loop is available.

Stables

- Access to the stables is by rolled tarmac path. Outside 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 and is lit by LED lighting and natural light.
- 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.
- There is 120cm between display stands in all but one area.
- Staff are on hand to assist in any way necessary.

Routes to the castle

- All paths are marked on our welcome map (available from reception points).
- From the Ticket Office there are two main routes to the castle.
- The first is up a short and very steep incline with rolled tarmac and shallow gully to either side up to the Gatehouse followed by two sets of stone stairs with a handrail on the right-hand side. There is a bench (with stepped access) between the Gatehouse and the stairs.
- The second route is along the Vine Walk from the ornamental gates. This is a bound in path with a gradually rising slope which increases as you approach the South Terrace. There are two benches; one a third of the way along and one near the end of the path.
- From the South Terrace there is a consolidated path, then a narrow cobbled route with two doorways (102cm wide) to the front of the castle.
- The ground is level in front of the castle, with rolled tarmac apron with grass either side. There are six benches with arm rests in this area.

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 compacted stone chippings.
- There is one manual wheelchair available to loan for 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 visitor exit is normally via the Conservatory which has a tiled floor and four steps with handrail down to the compacted chipping surface.
- Within the castle most rooms have polished wooden floors in combination with carpets and rugs. One space has a linoleum floor and one ceramic tiles.
- The castle is lit by a combination of LED bulbs and natural light in all rooms. Light levels are controlled with blinds for conservation purposes and will vary along with times of day and prevailing conditions. There are several display screens and one projected film along the visitor route.
- 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. The nearest wheelchair accessible WC is 25m from the main castle entrance.

Crypt

- The crypt is accessed separately to the main castle up a steep slope and via shallow steps.
- Access is up two steps through a 92cm doorway. The door is manual, opens inwards and is open during the crypt opening times.
- Once through the main door, the largest part of the crypt is accessible. The bat exhibition and history of the castle can only be accessed by two shallow steps, up and down. These are well lit from above and have a handrail. The ceiling is low.
- Low light levels inside and lit by LED bulbs, LED exhibition lighting and some natural light.
- The floor is made up of stone slabs and brick, uneven in some places.
- There is an audio track that plays atmospheric noises including dripping water and voices.
- Part of the exhibition in the Ghost area includes periodic light flashes for a brief period.
- There are three barrels which have been adapted for seating and two recessed seats.

Secondhand Bookshop and '1000 Years of History' gatehouse areas

Located in the 14th century gatehouse approximately a 15-minute uphill walk from the car park. Alternatively accessed from Green Court and down the stone gatehouse steps (32 steps). Visitors can use the courtesy vehicle for access to Green court.

From the car park:

- Approximately a 15-minute walk from the car park and up a steep tarmac slope. Enter through gateway arch:
- Turning right takes you to the bookshop, over stone surface into the doorway which is 76 cm wide. The step up into the doorway is angled and between 6 cm and 14 cm high. The floor is of a quarry tiled surface with some inset metal panels. Access to the strongroom within the bookshop is via stepping over a raised entrance measuring 22 cm on the outside and 14 cm inside. Limited wooden seating is available.
- Turning left through the gateway arch takes you to the '1000 Years of History' animation space. There is a raised step entrance into the gatehouse, which is approximately 6cm high and leads through a doorway which is 78cm wide. Stone steps lead downwards around the corner through another doorway which is 64cm wide. The steps are of varying depths between 14 and 22cm high (5 steps). There is a handrail on one side on the bottom half of the steps. The floor of the room is a quarry tiled surface. Limited wooden seating is available.

From Green Court:

- (Access to Green Court available from the car park via the courtesy vehicle).
- Short walk over a tarmac driveway and over a narrow drainage stone gutter to access the stone gatehouse steps (32 steps) which have a handrail.
- There are 32 stone steps with three 90 degree turns
- At the bottom of the steps is an uneven sloping cobbled surface of approximately 3.3 meters in length leading to a short sloping tarmac area, a cobbled edge and stone.

- The doorway to the book shop is on the left over an angled step measuring between 6 cm and 14 cm high. The doorway is 76 cm wide.
- The doorway to the '1000 Years of History' animation space is directly ahead over a raised step entrance (approximately 6cm high). The doorway is 78cm wide and leads to steps downwards to the left through another doorway which is 64cm wide.

Watermill

- Located at the far end of the River Gardens, 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 tarmac and is on a gentle downward slope. The path levels out and is compacted stone and light gravel.
- There are two external doors to the Mill. The first, as you are entering from the River Garden is 111cm wide, the second if you enter from Mill Lane to the Watermill shop/entrance point is 86cm wide; they both open inwards and are kept open during opening hours. There is an internal door between the Watermill and Watermill shop/entrance point which is 86cm wide; it opens inwards towards the shop. The route through the Watermill shop is the suggested thoroughfare as this is also an entrance point, but 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 two steps to a narrow, level path, enclosed by a fence. This 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 wooden 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. The external path is compacted stone.
- Seating is available on a bench situated in the shop next to the counter.
- Due to fire regulations, the Bin (top) floor is normally closed. At certain special events it is 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, demonstrating how it operates.
- The mill machinery casts moving shadows when operating.

Watermill Shop

- Located at the far end of the River Garden within the watermill, the watermill shop is a 15-minute 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 then levels out and is light gravel.
- There are two external entrance doors. The first, as you are entering from the River Garden is 111cm wide, the second if you enter from Mill Lane/ West Street is 86cm wide; they both open inwards and are open. When the Watermill is open there is also a door between the shop/reception area and the main mill which is 69cm wide; it opens inwards towards the shop. It is possible to avoid this door as there is an access gate in the outside barrier.
- The floor is of painted concrete.
- The shop counter is 91cm high, however staff are able to move around the counter to offer assistance

Garden

- Set on a steep terraced hillside within 15 acres.
- 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, Green Court and Butler's Walk. 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 Gardens.
- A small ornamental pond is sited on the South Terrace with a low parapet, surrounded by cobbles.
- 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).

Reservoir

- Access is via steps and a narrow path. All steps have handrails.
- The interior steps and viewing platform are made of expanded metal grids, so are unsuitable for high heels.
- Dogs may struggle with the surface and therefore should be excluded unless they can be carried safely.
- There is low headroom in the entrance tunnel.
- The reservoir is not accessible to wheelchairs, PMVs or pushchairs.
- All lighting is LED and an AV programme with sound and light effects runs on demand.

Severe weather

- At times of severe weather (or post-storm) parts of the property may be closed for safety reasons.
- Any ropes or barriers should not be crossed, and all signs should be observed.
- Our website will be updated as soon as is possible, after any decisions on property closure have been made.

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 or high water levels/fast flowing river water, areas of the garden will be closed off to prevent access.

Catering

- We have 3 catering points on site: The Watermill Tearoom, Tenants' Hall café and Camellia House.

Watermill Tearoom

- Located 50m beyond the Watermill, it can be reached via a 15-minute walk through the river gardens from Visitor Reception. This is a wheel-friendly route. An alternative approach is via Castle Hill, West Street and Mill Lane.
- There is ramped access to the main (upper) floor of the building, with only a small weather-strip at the threshold.
- The door is 93cm wide and opens outwards. It is not power assisted but is usually kept open at least 90 degrees when the Tearoom is open. However, if this is shut due to inclement weather, a member of staff will be able to assist.
- Flooring is of vinyl with a wood pattern on the upper floor and of brick on the lower floor. Walls are of rendered masonry, with dado panelling in painted timber.
- Lighting is a mixture of natural light through windows and skylights and LED lamps.
- Internal and external staircases are provided. The external steps are of stone, with non-slip, tactile studs provided at the head of the flight and contrasting strips to each tread that mark each step. The internal stairs have a vinyl covering with contrasting step edging. Handrails are provided to both staircases.
- The teagarden can be accessed via the external staircase, via a separate set of garden steps, or via a ramped path. It is possible to access the garden with a wheelchair or a PMV, but this access is not all-weather and may not be available at certain times.
- Tables are mostly at a height of 77cm with conventional cushioned seating, without armrests. 14 stools with a seat height of 77cm are provided at tables with a height of 107cm.
- The counter height is 90cm and staff can assist by carrying orders to your table.
- A Garden Servery counter is occasionally used at busy periods during the summer months. This is accessible through the garden and has a serving window at a height of 90cm.
- Indoor and outdoor tables are numbered and one member of the group can order at the counter with catering staff being able to take orders to the table.
- There is seating indoors for up to 80 people over two floors, with further seating in the garden, much of which is of the picnic bench type. Six conventional seats with armrests are provided, alongside 10 picnic benches with a table height of 71cm which are each able to seat 6 people.
- There are hearing loops at all counters
- An accessible toilet is provided within the building on the upper floor through a door with width 90cm. Two further (non-accessible) toilets are provided on the lower floor, accessible via the garden or external staircase. One of these incorporates a baby-change station.

Camellia House

- Located next to the castle on the South Terrace. It is a 15-minute uphill walk from the Visitor Reception. The courtesy vehicle can drop off outside the castle and from there Camellia House can be accessed via Pump Court, which has approximately 10 yards of cobbled path surface. Alternatively, it can be accessed via Vine Walk and the South Terrace.
- To enter there is a single small step of 13cm. The entrance door is 105cm wide and is non-power assisted. It opens inwards and is usually open at least 80 degrees. However if this is shut due to inclement weather a member of staff will be able to assist. For wheelchair access, a portable ramp is present that can be deployed. There is no access for PMVs (including our loan Trampers).
- The floor is stone slabs, and the walls are stone with large windows. It is lit by natural light with LED strip lighting above the counter only.
- Inside seating is limited to three small tables. There are a number of benches nearby, all with armrests and the seat height of the wrought iron benches are 470mm and the wooden bench has a seat height of 440mm.
- The counter is 104cm high. Staff are available to assist with service and carrying trays.
- Members of groups can sit at tables (if available) if queuing becomes difficult and one member of the group can ask for assistance.

Tenants' Hall café

- Tenants' Hall is located on Green Court in view of the Castle.
- It is a 15-minute walk uphill from the carpark reception.
- The courtesy vehicle can drop passengers outside the Castle and Tenants Hall is a 2-minute walk.

- The Tenants Hall entrance is ramped, and the ramp width is 106cm. The porch entrance door is 124cm.
- There is a small step 2cm into Tenants Hall the door width is 77cm.
- The inner door is 104cm wide and is non-power assisted. It opens inwards and is usually open at least 90 degrees. However, if it is shut due to inclement weather a member of staff will be available to assist.
- The floor is wooden, and the walls are plastered stone with large glass windows.
- It is lit by natural light with spotlighting above the counter and large chandeliers.
- There is only one floor and inside seating is limited to 37 with 1 table located on a platform area during busy times.
- The counter is 94cm high, the team are available to assist with service and carrying trays.
- Members of visitor groups can sit at tables if queuing is difficult, and one member of the group can ask catering staff for assistance.
- There is room between the tables to turn a wheelchair.
- There is a hearing loop.
- There are several benches nearby, which all have armrests, and the seat height of the wrought iron benches is 47cm.

Property Map

- Follows on the next page.

Key:

P Car Park
I Visitor Reception and Information/Ticket Office
WC WC

♿ Accessible WC
👶 Baby Changing Facilities
🍴 Picnic Area
👁 Viewpoint
☕ Tearoom
☕ Light refreshments

🚶 Paths unsuitable for wheelchairs, personal mobility vehicles and some pushchairs

👣 Steps

👣 Steep Incline

🗑 Dog Waste Bins

🚫 No Access

1 Stables Exhibition & Shop
2 Gatchouse Books, Oubliette and 1000 Years of History film

3 Vine Walk

4 The Crypt

5 Castle entrance

6 Tenants' Hall Café

7 Bastion Tower

8 Circular Walk

9 Pet Cemetery

10 Jacob's Ladder (steep)

11 Reservoir

12 Keep Garden

13 Gazebo, Uncarthing History Exhibition

14 Butler's Walk

15 South Terrace

16 Watermill Tearoom

17 Watermill

18 Lovers' Bridge

19 River Garden

20 Marshall's Bridge

21 Mill Walk

22 Rustic Log Play Area

23 The Composting Area

24 Jigsaw's Grave

25 Pixie Well

26 Dream Garden



For your safety

Having once been a fortified castle, our gardens have many steep slopes, steps and paths with uneven and loose surfaces. We advise wearing sensible and sturdy shoes. The pond and river are both unfenced and there are low bridge parapets, so please take care and supervise children at all times. Please be aware of moving vehicles using the access drive to the castle and outside our Stables and toilets.

Access to the Keep Garden by pushchair or wheelchair requires a strong companion.

