

Stourhead Access Statement

Stourhead Estate Office, Stourton, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 6QD

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Introduction

Lying in secluded privacy in its own valley, Stourhead is one of the finest landscape gardens in the world. Designed by Henry Hoare II as a place to entertain, the garden was laid out between 1741 and 1780. The magnificent lake is central to this iconic garden of classical temples and follies. Its lakeside paths and backdrop of colourful, rare and exotic trees reveal many beautifully contrived vistas, capturing the imagination of visitors for over two centuries. While the garden seasons change in beautiful succession, the majestic Palladian mansion, originally home to the Hoare family, houses a unique collection of Chippendale furniture, magnificent paintings and an exquisite Regency library. Way-marked walks can be enjoyed across the chalk downland and woodland of the wider estate, which is managed for nature conservation.

Assistance dogs are welcome in all areas of the property at all times. All dogs are welcome on the wider estate at all times but should be kept on a lead when appropriate. Dogs on fixed leads can be walked in the landscape garden after 4pm from March – November and all day between December – February.

Mobile phone reception throughout the village of Stourton is patchy / poor. Depending on the nature of the problem or emergency we suggest you contact Visitor Reception on 01747 842030 (during property open hours) or dial 999.

Visitors can choose to visit the Garden and the House and/or to take walks in the wider estate. The favoured visitor route is approximately 3km and travels over a variety of surfaces including compacted gravel, cobble stones, tar and chip, wooden bridges and grass. The route undulates and winds throughout the garden with some steep slopes and uneven steps, the light is not evenly distributed and some areas would be considered dark, this darkness and change in light levels is fundamental to the atmosphere and experience in the garden.

There is a defined circuit walk in the form of a pathway but the character of the garden is such that you are encouraged to leave the main route to explore other areas of the garden and see the plants close up. The whole walk encompasses a grand lake of approx. 15 acres; the lake does have exposed banks and is deep in places.

Inside the house all showrooms are on one level and are accessed by a flight of steps. Within the house, for conservation reasons, light levels can be low. Visitors are asked to leave large bags at the entrance to the house.

Full details of the garden and house visitor routes are provided below. Unless otherwise stated all doors and pathways are wide enough for wheelchair access.

Arrival & Parking Facilities

Stourhead is located 1.5 miles from the A303 and is straightforward to find. There are brown signs directing visitors to Stourhead from the A303 and the B3092.

Designated spaces for disabled visitors are signposted from the entrance to the car park. They are located within 50m of the visitor reception building. A mixture of parking provision is available. 10 designated bays are available on a fairly firm surface for ambulant disabled visitors. These are indicated by the usual wheelchair symbol. Additional fully wheelchair accessible spaces are available in the main car visitor car park. There is further provision of designated parking bays in the Spread Eagle car park close to the lakeside garden entrance.

Car parking charges apply for non-members of the National Trust. The main car park is surfaced with tarmac and compacted gravel hard surface. During busy periods an overflow car park with a grass surface is used.

The main entrances to the garden and house are located approximately 500m away from the main car park in opposite directions. A fully accessible minibus is available. This service is operated by volunteers throughout the main open season and operates a circuit around the property. Bus stops are available at the House, Spread Eagle car park for the lower garden entrance and Visitor Reception. Members of staff at entry points into the garden and house can call the minibus by radio.

WCs

Accessible toilets are located in the Visitor Reception Courtyard and in the Spread Eagle Courtyard. These have emergency cords to which our Visitor Reception team respond. Automatic hand driers are provided in all WCs across the property. We do not have an adult changing table or hoist on the property. Both accessible WCs in the Spread Eagle Courtyard are right hand transfer.

Visitor Reception

This modern stone-built building has double doors at the entry and exit points, stone floors and a vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams. Access to the visitor reception courtyard is down a shallow paved slope and there is a level entrance. The doors are manually opening and open outwards. Staff and volunteers are available to assist with opening the doors if required.

Large windows at the front of the building provide natural light but the overhanging roof design means that lux levels are not high. Natural light is supplemented by electric spotlights. The main reception desk is 910mm high however there is a lowered section at the far end (650mm high). Only ticket sales transactions take place behind this desk and staff will come around the front of the counter. The welcome for members is provided by staff and volunteers who stand in the centre of the building.

Chairs and tables are available in the Visitor Reception building. Armchairs are available for visitor use. We are currently updating our hearing loop to improve the service we can offer.

Manual wheelchairs are available for visitors to borrow. Two are kept at Visitor Reception and four at the lakeside garden entrance. There is no need to book and they can be borrowed on the day of your visit subject to availability. Our accessible minibus service is co-ordinated from Visitor Reception and staff can provide advice about how the service operates.

House

The Palladian mansion is located at the top of the property and is reached by using a humped-bridge leading through the Walled garden. It lies approximately 500m from the main car park. The tarmac and Breedon gravel drive is approximately 250m long and is up hill – a relatively shallow gradient but a long slope – with speed humps. Access is possible, avoiding the steep slope leading from the Visitor Reception building by taking the accessible minibus.

13 shallow stone steps are found at the entrance to the mansion. The double doors at the entrance to the house open manually inwards. Volunteers on duty in the Entrance Hall can assist with opening the doors if required.

A Baronmead Stairmate Major stairclimber is available to enable wheelchair users to access the house. We ask that this facility is booked in advance so that we can make sure sufficient trained operators are available – two trained members of the team are required to be present. Please call 01747 841152 to arrange your visit. The mobile platform lift can carry all types of wheelchairs including powered wheelchairs – but the maximum weight which can safely be carried is 200kg (visitor and wheelchair). The platform is 76cm wide x 126cm long – we have occasionally seen wheelchairs which are too wide for the platform but this is an unusual occurrence. If you use a mobility scooter and wish to use the stairclimber to access the house we will have to ask you to transfer into one of our loan wheelchairs as scooters cannot be safely transported on the stairclimber.

You will need to reverse your chair onto the stairclimber platform. An integrated ramp is available and staff can provide assistance if required. The stairclimber has a tilting platform and climbs the stairs at an angle of 45 degrees, gradually levelling out as it reaches the top of the stairs. The stairclimber climbs the stairs backwards and descends them facing forwards. For your safety and comfort your wheelchair needs to sit as far back on the stairclimber platform as possible. If your wheelchair has small guide wheels on its motor / battery which would stop the main wheels of your chair from touching the back of the platform you will be asked to remove / move them. Manual wheelchairs are available to borrow if you're unable to remove the guide wheels and are happy and able to transfer from one chair to another.

If you would like to see a film of the stairclimber in action please use the following link <https://baronmead.com/portfolio/stairmate-major/>



Once inside the house all the showrooms are on one floor and there are no further steps. There are a variety of floor surfaces – marble, wooden floor boards, parquet, rugs and fitted carpets. The majority of rooms have some soft furnishings – either carpets, rugs, blinds, curtains or cushions.

No fluorescent bulbs are used in the showrooms. For conservation reasons light levels can be low and natural light is restricted through the use of blinds. This is supplemented by table lamps and standard lamps. Most rooms have no central light fittings. Three rooms have chandeliers.

Corridors and doors throughout the house are all wide and wheelchairs can be easily turned. Manual wheelchairs are available to use in the house – please ask a volunteer on duty in the Entrance Hall if you'd like to borrow one. Seats for visitors are provided in all the showrooms. Volunteers are on duty in each room and are happy to help.

WCs are provided in the basement of the house but the nearest accessible WC is in the Visitor Reception Courtyard. The basement is accessed via a small flight of shallow steps. An introductory film is shown in this part of the house.

Large print and braille guides are available from the Entrance Hall. If you want to take a break during your visit there is a sofa in the Italian Room which is quiet space two thirds of the way around the visitor route.

Catering

The main restaurant is within easy reach of the car park and visitor reception. It is accessed via a paved slope with a shallow gradient. Outdoor seating is provided in a paved courtyard area and a number of the wooden picnic benches have been adapted for wheelchair users. Access to the main restaurant is level and the doors in to the building are manually opened with power assist. The main entry doors into the retail and catering complex open both ways. The door into the main restaurant opens outwards, has a power assist button and staff can help with opening it if required. The restaurant is a single-storey modern building with plenty of natural light. The floor is stone tiled – the surface is uneven and care should be taken

when inside the building. There are no soft furnishings in the restaurant. Inside the building wooden tables and chairs are provided – a large number of the seats have arms. None of the furniture is fixed to the ground and it can be rearranged as required. Staff will happily help with this.

The restaurant operates on an assisted-service basis. Counter heights are under 850mm. Staff will provide any assistance required. You are welcome to take a seat if you are experiencing difficulty queuing – alert a member of staff and they will come and take your order. There is circulation space of around 1200mm between the tables. Induction loops are provided at the till points. Menus are available in large print and straws are available. Circular picnic benches with umbrellas are provided in the courtyard outside the restaurant and a number of these are wheelchair accessible. The tables have a clearance of 670mm underneath them.

Additional catering is available from the Spread Eagle Inn and the Ice-Cream Parlour both of which are located in the Spread Eagle Courtyard. Neither are run by the National Trust but are operated by independent business partners.

Retail

Our shop is located in the same building as our restaurant. Close to the car park and visitor reception it is accessed by a shallow, paved downward slope. Access into the lobby of the main building is level and the doors are manually opened with power assist. The main entry doors into the retail and catering complex open both ways. The door into the shop opens outwards, has a power assist button and staff can help with opening it if required. The shop is housed in a single-storey modern building with plenty of natural light. The floor is stone tiled – the surface is uneven and care should be taken when inside the building.

Circulation space between the display stands is tight but accessible for wheelchair users. The till point has a lowered counter and is fitted with an induction loop. Staff will happily assist by passing down items to be viewed if they cannot be reached by customers. All items are individually priced and staff will help with any enquiries including reading price labels.

Garden

All visitors to Stourhead are given a map to help them find their way around the property. This includes information regarding the location of steps and steep slopes. The lower garden walk around the lake is recommended for visitors using wheelchairs and mobility scooters and for those who struggle to walk long distances. The lakeside circuit is just over 1 mile long. There are a number of paths where the gradient is too steep to allow for the safe use of mobility scooters – these paths are indicated by signage in the garden and an alternate route is suggested.

The main route around the garden is comprised of compacted or semi-compacted gravel paths. There are also informal paths across lawns which are accessible during periods of dry weather. Wheelchairs for use in the garden can be borrowed from visitor reception or the

lakeside garden entrance. Tours around the garden on our volunteer-driven golf buggy are available – they begin from the lakeside garden entrance and go as far as the Pantheon. The buggy is not wheelchair accessible but for those who can transfer, wheelchairs can be stored safely at the entrance to the garden. These tours are offered subject to volunteer availability – please talk to a member of the team on the day of your visit to find out more.

There are steps into and out of the Grotto and through the Rock Arch on the path up to the Temple of Apollo. There are also shallow steps on some of the paths leading from the garden in to Six Wells Bottom valley and down from the Shades in the top garden. Handrails are not provided but the stone either side of the Grotto and Rock Arch steps provides hand holds. Within the walled garden at the top end of the property there are a few stone steps leading from one garden compartment to another. The bottom walled garden compartment is fully accessible to wheelchair users but the top two compartments are more difficult to access.

The Pantheon, the Gothic Cottage, Temple of Flora and the Temple of Apollo are all open to visitors when sufficient volunteer guides are available. Each of these garden buildings is a grade 1 listed structure and have not been adapted since they were built in the mideighteenth century. The Gothic Cottage and the Temple of Flora both have one step up to their front doors. The Pantheon and Temple of Apollo are both accessed by a small flight of stairs.

The only gate on the visitor route through the garden is at the main lakeside entrance – a member of the team is always on hand to open the gate if necessary. There are a number of points on the garden tour where visitors can leave the garden and access the wider estate. From the lower garden many of these paths have stiles but there is an accessible walk from outside the house, across the parkland towards the Obelisk and on towards King Alfred's Tower. This walk is relatively level and although there are cattlegrids, large kissing gates are also provided. There are no stiles along this path.

An iPhone App to help interpret the garden is available for download from the internet. Free public wi-fi is available in the restaurant for visitors. Additional interpretation is available within the garden buildings and volunteer garden guides are available to answer questions. Over 60 benches are located around the main garden visitor route – mostly on the main paths. There are significant water features in the garden – a 15 acre lake lies at the heart of the garden. There are two smaller lakes within the garden. Within the walled garden is an enclosed protected dipping pond and there's a fountain at the south front of the house.

Contact details for more information

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