

Dunster Castle and Gardens Access Statement

Dunster Castle and Gardens Dunster
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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 who will seek to help you get the best from your visit.

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.
- Interiors surfaces include polished wooden floors, carpet, 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 terrain.
- They used free of charge subject to availability and are available at our reception points.
- These can be reserved and are available on a first come, first served basis.
- The site is unsuitable for three-wheeled and many other smaller wheeled powered-mobility-vehicles (PMVs).

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 always be supervised .
- Please refer to our 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-mounted baby carriers cannot be accommodated in the castle, but front carriers are provided for loan.
- 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, 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 both shops 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.

Arrival & 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, and the driveway is single car width drive to the main 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 car park, located closest to the visitor reception building, is rolled tarmac; the lower half is grass with level graveled access roads. Overflow parking is a five-minute walk from the visitor reception building but it's rare that it's used.
- If all blue badge spaces are full visitors are welcome to drop passengers off at the reception building prior to parking.

WCs

- We have one accessible toilet located near the shop which is left hand transfer. Taps and toilet are lever operated.
- All the 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.

Visitor Reception

- There are three entry points to Dunster Castle: the main A39 entrance up to the car park; one from Dunster High street and the other pedestrian access from West Street via Mill Lane from the Watermill. The first two are covered here. The Watermill has its own section which is currently closed and cannot be accessed.
- Powered-mobility-vehicles (PMV's) are available for loan from the main reception and can be pre-booked by calling the property or requested on the day. There is a short driver assessment and a declaration for users to sign and we ask that only people who have used a PMV before use one at this site.

Main Reception – located in the car park. Visitors currently do not go inside building.

- Small timber building. There are three steps to the entrance or there is a ramp and handrail to the side of the building. There is a gradual slope from the car park to the reception building.
- The doors at the entrance are foldable and the total width when open is 289cm and when half open is 144.5cm.
- 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 so unless paying for entry there is no need to enter the building.
- There are two counters which are 105cm high, but staff will come round the front of the counter to assist anyone.
- Lit by natural light and LED lights
- There are seats available consisting of a wooden bench and folding chairs with no arm rests
- An induction loop is available.

Ticket Office reception – located opposite the shop. Currently closed.

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



Visitor Reception entrance

Stables

- Access to the Stables is by rolled tarmac path. The entrance door has a cobbled apron.
- The Stables are opposite the second ticket office and are approximately a 5 minute walk uphill from the car park.
- Access is through a 139cm wide door.
- All on one level the flooring is cobbled, light levels are low. Light is provided by natural light and LEDs.
- There is an audio track that plays atmospheric sounds.

Retail

- Located within the stables the shop has a cobbled floor.
- The shop is accessed through a glass door that is 103cm wide. It is manual, opens inwards at least 90 degrees and is usually left in the open position. If it is closed staff members are available to assist.
- It is lit by LED lighting and natural light.
- There is 1200mm between display stands in all areas except one.
- Staff are on hand to assist in any way necessary.



Entrance to Stables and shop.



Shop counter

One-way route

- One-way route in place – this involves inclines, steps and uneven surfaces.
- There is a separate step free route via the private drive that staff can explain on arrival.
- There is a bench (with stepped access) between the Gatehouse and the stairs.
- The one-way route will take you up 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 flat path which is signposted that avoids steps that will take you 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 6 benches with arm rests.
- From the castle you will take a narrow-cobbled route with two doorways (102cm wide) to the back of the Castle. Then there is a flat path with 13 steps and a steep incline to take to back to the stables. You can exit here or continue the route to the river garden which is down a long flat path with some cobbled areas and uneven sections, there's 30+ steps down to the river gardens and the route is flat but on natural materials so some unevenness.

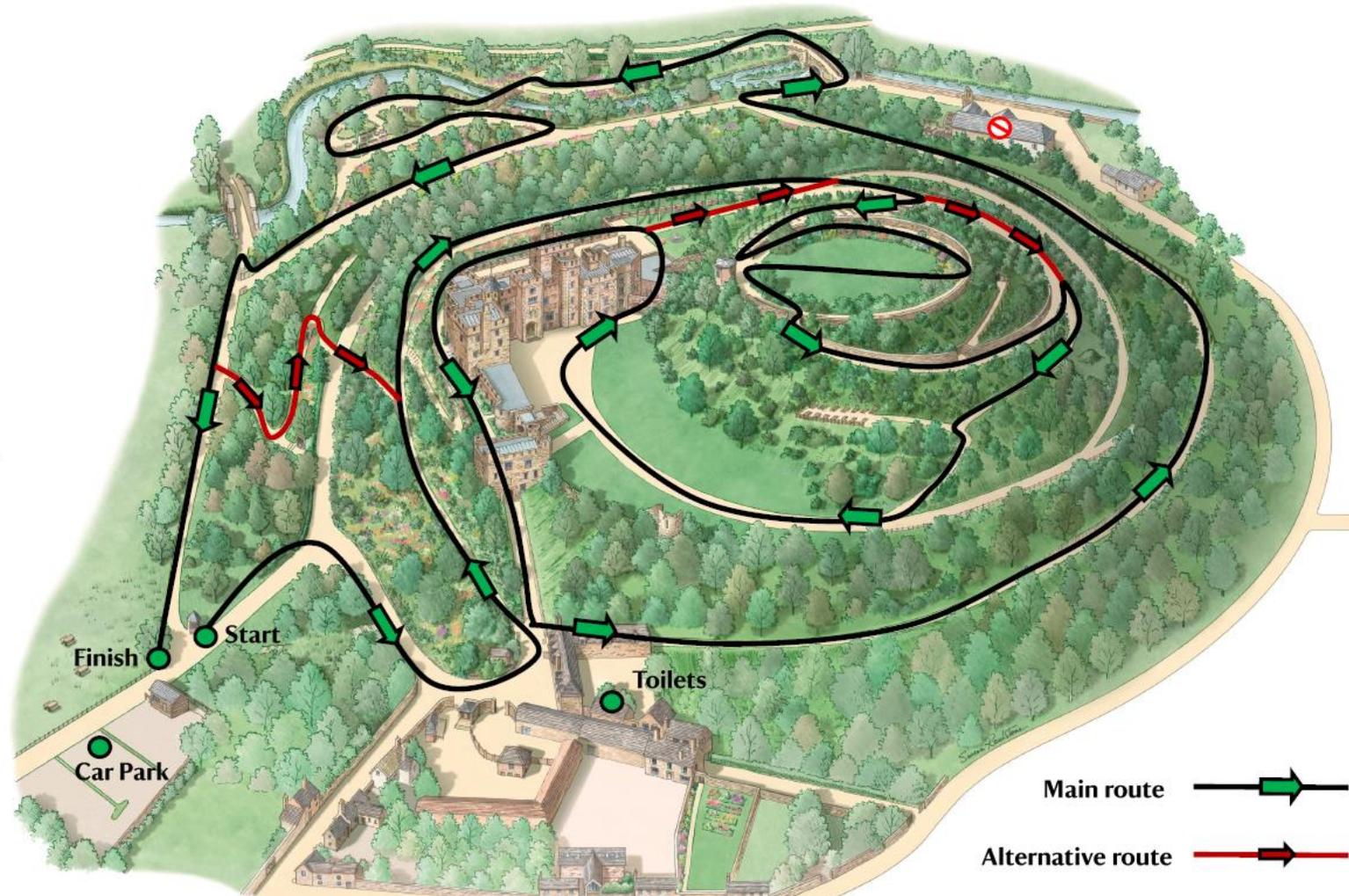


Access route up to Shop, Stables, Ticket Office and Castle

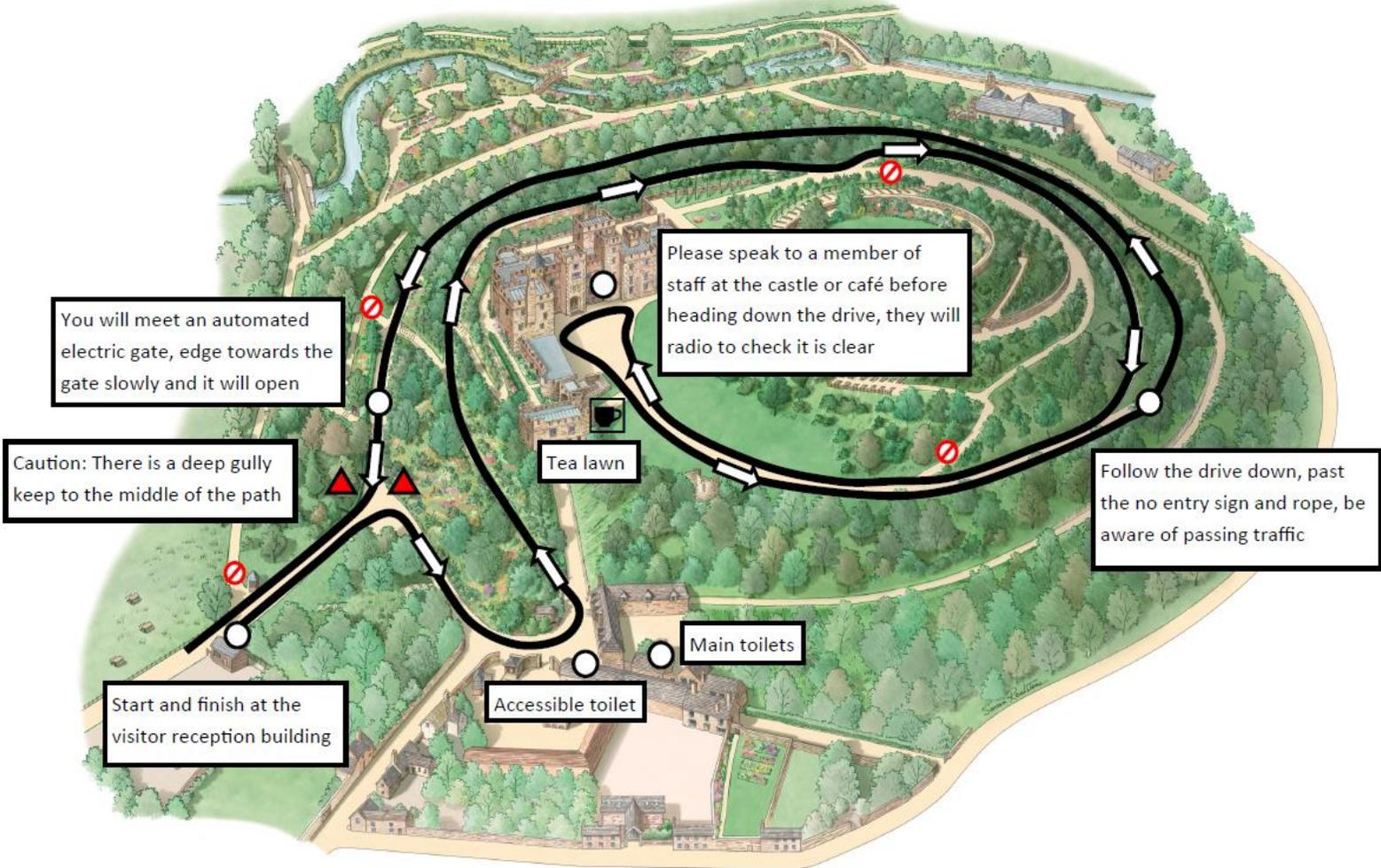


Access route from Stables and Ticket Office

One-way route



One-way route (flat)



Castle

- Access is through the 183cm wide main entrance door which is non-assisted opening but is always open at least 90 degrees inwards and up 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 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 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 through 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), Billiard Room (3) and up to the Library (6). These all have single handrails.
- There is 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.

Watermill – currently closed

- Located at the far end of the River Garden, the Watermill 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.
- 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 (which also doubles as 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 to both sides.
- The floor inside the Mill 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 path on the lower viewing area.
- The counter is 91cm high, but 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 no more than 6 people at any one time, providing there is a staff member or volunteer present on the Stone (first) Floor. The steps accessing the Bin Floor are very narrow and steep.
- A short film plays on a constant loop on the ground floor showing all areas of the mill and demonstrates how the mill operates.

Watermill Shop – currently closed

Catering

Tenants Hall – please note: there is currently a marquee outside with a ramp to access.

Tenants Hall is a pop up catering offer.

- This is located on Green Court in view of the Castle.
- It is a 15-minute walk uphill from the carpark reception.
- The courtesy vehicle is able to drop people off outside the Castle and
- Tenants Hall is a 2-minute walk.
- The Tenants Hall entrance is ramped the ramp width is 106cm
- The entrance door is 124cm
- There is a small step 2cm into Tenants Hall the door width is 77cm
- The entrance 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.
- We have both plastic and paper straws, we only have disposable cups and plates and wooden cutlery available.
- 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 37 with 1 table located on a platform area during busy times.
- We have both plastic and paper straws, we only have disposable cups and plates and wooden cutlery available.
- The counter is 105cm 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.
- Prices are displayed on a large board.
- There is a hearing loop
- There are several benches nearby, which all have arm rests and the seat height of the wrought iron benches are 470mm

Garden

- Set on a steep terraced hillside.
- The property welcome leaflet has a map which includes clearly marked paths, highlighting those that are not suitable for powered-mobility-vehicles 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 as 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. [Add dimensions] Lovers Bridge has a low parapet on one side and stepped access at one end. Neither bridge is suitable for powered-mobility-vehicles.
- Entrance to the Dream Garden is through an 86cm-wide doorway, the paving is mainly narrow grass paths with loose gravel and paving around the outside of the garden. It is not suitable for powered-mobility-vehicles or double pushchairs. There is wheelchair access to the outer paths.

Reservoir - closed