

Venue Access Information and Access Statement for Disabled Visitors

Venue: Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens

Entrance Charges

Admission is free for everyone. Some exhibitions may have an additional charge.

Car Parking

The Museum and Winter Gardens is on the edge of Mowbray Park in the city centre. It does not have its own dedicated car park. The nearest pay and display car park is at the Civic Centre, approximately 200m from the Museum and Winter Gardens entrance, down hill along Burdon Road. Tatham Street open air car park is also close by. The entrance to the Museum is approximately 400m walk, past Tavistock Place then either along the North Terrace of the Park or along Borough Road.

There are several designated bays for disabled drivers close to the Museum entrance on Burdon Road and some on John Street approx 100m away.

Public Transport Access Routes and Drop Off Points

The nearest Metro station is Sunderland. This station also operates trains to Newcastle and Middlesbrough and is about a 100m walk from the Museum. The nearest bus station is the Sunderland Interchange, this is a 500m walk from the Museum.

The nearest taxi rank is close to the Sunderland Metro station. Taxis, coaches and mini buses may use the extended bus stop at the Museum entrance on Burdon Road for dropping off and picking up passengers.

Building Entrance

There is a level access entrance to the Museum on Burdon Road. A set of automatic doors leads to the front desk and shop area. The Museum's galleries and displays are then accessed up a wide corridor which has a shallow incline.

Getting Around

There are lifts and stairs providing access to all floors and the Winter Gardens Treetop Walk. The lifts have tactile buttons. All floors have level access. There are power assisted doors to the main areas of the Museum, these are operated by push pads.

Seating

There is a selection of seating throughout the Museum where visitors can rest.

Public Telephone

There is a phone box close to the Museum's entrance. The Museum phone can be used in an emergency or to book taxis for disabled visitors.

Gallery Plans

There are large print and tactile maps with Braille positioned throughout the Museum.

Assistance Dogs

We welcome assistance dogs and can provide a bowl of water on request.

Induction Loops

There are induction loops in the shop, learning rooms and special exhibition galleries.

Talking Audio Guides and Listening Point

There are audio points in some galleries. These are found in Sunderland Pottery, Secrets of the Past and 20th Century Sunderland. An audio tour of the Winter Gardens has been specially designed for use by visitors with a visual impairment.

Displays, Exhibitions and Attractions

Films and Interactive Displays

There are various interactives in all galleries and tactile objects too they include:

Ground Floor

- The Time Machine – dressing up clothes for children.
- Sunderland Pottery - an audio track describes the conditions of the pottery workers in Victorian times.

- Secrets of the Past - an audio track describes the burial remains found at Hastings Hill. The gallery includes several items open to touch including a stratigraphy wall showing archaeological finds in layers.
- Coal - subtitled film drama describing the life of children working in the mines during Victorian times.
- Winter Gardens - the pond and stream edgings are highlighted with white strips. A range of plant materials such as fruits and seeds are open to touch on the Treetop Walk. An audio tour for visually impaired visitors is available at reception.

First Floor

- 20th Century Sunderland - soundtracks with subtitles describe the lives of four Sunderland women at different times during the 20th Century.
- Lost Worlds - several fossils are on open display.
- Worlds Alive – there is a film of wild animals with a soundtrack of animal sounds.

Second Floor

- Art Gallery - a touch screen computer and audio guide give information about the life and work of the artist LS Lowry. There is a tactile version of the oil painting Dockside, Sunderland.

Third Floor

- Launched on Wearside – two model ship hulls with Braille labels.

Special Exhibitions, Events and Learning Family Activities

Throughout the year, the Museum holds a wide variety of exhibitions, events and activities. For further information please contact the Museum.

Guided Tours for Groups

The Museum does not usually provide guided tours but if your group would like to have one please contact the Museum and we will do what we can to provide a guide. Three weeks notice should be given.

Accessible Toilets/Baby Changing areas

On the ground floor there are male and female accessible toilets and a unisex family toilet with accessible baby changing facilities.

Other unisex accessible toilets can be found on each floor. The accessible toilet on the second floor next to the Art Gallery is a *closo*mat toilet. The learning rooms on the ground floor have male and female accessible toilets (these are only available to groups using the learning rooms).

Shops and Cafés

Eden café serves a wide selection of hot and cold drinks, cakes, sandwiches and meals. The café has a range of seating. The shop sells books, cards, gifts and souvenirs as well as a good selection of cheaper items for children.

Pre-visit Information

We can produce a range of materials including leaflets and venue guides in various forms. Please contact the Museum for further information.

Wheelchair Hire

We have one manual wheelchair available for use by visitors these can be pre-booked in advance of the day of your visit. There is no charge for this service.

Fire Alarms

The fire alarms give an audible tone and visual flashing light warning. The lifts cannot be used in the event of a fire. There are evac-chairs to assist disabled people to exit the building and safe fire refuge points to await evacuation. These are clearly signposted. If you are likely to need assistance to exit the building in the event of a fire alarm please tell a member of staff on your arrival.

Staff

All staff are here to help visitors enjoy the time they spend in our venues. If there is anything that we can do to make your visit more enjoyable please contact us, we will be happy to assist you.

Contact Us

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Access Statement

We make every attempt to make our venues as accessible as possible but some aspects of the building and the nature of the exhibitions we show sometimes make it difficult to make everything fully accessible.

Here are some examples:

i) The Museum building is Grade 2 listed. Although the building has seen several changes over the years, the main structure of the building and some of the original fixtures and fittings (ie doors) are protected which means it cannot be altered without the permission of English Heritage whose role it is to try whenever possible to preserve buildings in their original form.

For example flat street level entrance into the Museum could only be achieved through the building of the extension (which opened in 2001) rather than altering the stepped entrance to the original building which we were not allowed to do.

ii) Many of our exhibits need to be protected from damage caused either accidentally by visitors or indeed by the environments in which they are displayed.

While many of our exhibits are displayed in cases we do try to put items on open display where the object is not at risk. However this is not always possible. Where items are on open display it is important that the ambient relative humidity and temperature of the gallery is maintained and at a constant level. This means that doors leading into and out of a gallery will need to be closed.

There are other occasions when items on open display need to be protected and cannot be touched. In this instance you may find that there are some low slung barriers which will indicate how close you can get to something. Again if you require further assistance, please ask a member of staff but remember you will not be allowed to touch it.

Light levels in exhibitions of paintings and of costume and textiles need to be low. High lux levels will cause paintings and fabrics to fade over a period of time. If you need assistance, please ask a member of staff.