



Access Statement for Blenheim Palace

Introduction

Blenheim Palace is set in 2,100 acres of spectacular parkland in the heart of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds.

Visitors with disabilities are always welcome to Blenheim Palace; however, due to the nature and layout of the Palace and grounds we strongly recommend that you are accompanied by an able-bodied carer.

Pre-Arrival

24 hr Free phone telephones information line: 0800 849 6500

Operations Office, Direct Line 01993 810530

Fax: 01993 810570

Email: operations@blenheimpalace.com

Website: www.blenheimpalace.com

The access statement for Blenheim Palace is available on the website, at the Flagstaff Information point and by post on request.

How to Get to Blenheim Palace

Locations: OS Ref: SP441

- By road: Blenheim Palace is 8 miles North West of Oxford on the A44 Evesham Road. From London and Birmingham via the M40 exit at Junction 9, signposted from both directions. The journey takes 20 minutes from Oxford, 90 minutes from central London and 45 minutes from Stratford on Avon and 90 minutes from Bath.
- For the Satellite Navigation use post code OX20 1PP
- By Rail: Trains run regularly from London Paddington and Birmingham to Oxford to Oxford call 08457 484950 for rail information and assistance. A bus or taxi is necessary from Oxford Station to Blenheim Palace. For further details and accessibility information for Oxford Rail Station follow this link <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations/oxf.html#Accessibility>

- **By Coach:** Coaches operate regularly from London Victoria to Oxford bus station. A bus or taxi is necessary from Oxford Station to Blenheim Palace.
- **By Bus:** The Number S3 bus runs from the Oxford Gloucester Green bus station to Woodstock at 30 minute intervals. The Palace is 10 minutes walk from the bus stop. If assistance is required from this point please call the operations office in advance on 01993 810530.
- **By Taxi:** Accessible taxi telephone numbers
 - 001 Taxis 01865 240000
 - ABC Taxis 01865 770077
 - City Taxis 01865 794000
 - Radio Taxis 01865 242424
 - Metro Cabs 01865 777770
- Car parking at Blenheim Palace is included in the normal admission charges. No extra charges are applied for car parking.

Arrival and Car Parking Facilities

- **Car parking:** We have a large area close to the Palace Courtyard entrance set aside for parking for people with disabled badges on their vehicles. People without badges, with mobility restrictions, can be dropped off at this point. Please ask for assistance and directions when entering the park.
- The surfaces around the Park, Formal Gardens and courtyards vary from tarmac to gravel to grass paths. The disabled car park is tarmac. The visitor car park is grass. The car park at the Pleasure Gardens is tarmac.
- For assistance in the car park an attendant is available at the Flagstaff information point or call 01993 810530.
- Dogs are allowed in the Park only, not in the Formal Gardens, Pleasure Gardens or Palace Courtyards. Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times. Assistance dogs are welcome in all accessible areas. Water for dogs is available at the Flagstaff gift shop.
- A leaflet with daily information and a map is available at the Flagstaff information point. This is designed to provide extra information to assist persons requiring detailed accessibility information for that day.

Main Entrance, Reception & Ticketing Area

- Ticketing is at the gates as you enter the park. All gates are equally accessible.
- Please make the ticketing staff aware of disabled persons and carers in the vehicle. Staff are not always aware and do not want to cause offence.
- A disabled person is required to purchase a standard admission ticket.

- A carer or companion of a disabled person is given free entry. A carers' ticket will be issued at the entry point
- If assistance is required please ask a member of staff at the Flagstaff kiosk. This kiosk is situated next to the disabled parking area and at the entrance to the Palace Courtyards.

Visiting the Palace

THE PALACE STATE ROOMS

Entry to the State Rooms tour is through the Palace front door. This involves climbing 22 wide steps. Wheelchair users are able to access the State Rooms via the platform lift situated next to the Chapel. The State Rooms are on one level. Chairs are available throughout the route. Guided tours are available from Monday to Saturday. Sundays are not guided; however guides are available in each of the rooms.

(Please see information on page 4 regarding the platform lift)

'BLENHEIM PALAE: THE UNTOLD STORY'

This permanent visitor experience is situated on the upper floor of The Palace. Entrance is via the Palace front door. This involves climbing 22 steps to the front door. There is a further staircase to climb of 47 steps to the exhibition and a staircase down from the exhibition of 67 steps. The exhibition is regrettably not accessible for wheelchairs or pushchairs. A visual presentation of the experience is available in the small cinema. Directions to the cinema can be obtained from the Flagstaff information point or by asking any member of the Palace staff

THE PRIVATE APARTMENT TOUR

Tours of the Private Apartments are available in the summer months at the discretion of the family. The tours are only bookable on the day either at the Bookstall in the Great Hall or at Flagstaff Information Point. The tour is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs, and is not recommended for children under the age of 5 years. The tour involves several sets of stairs and narrow corridors. There is a supplement charge for this tour.

Public Areas - Getting Around

VISITOR WHEELCHAIRS

- Visitors are welcome to bring their wheelchairs to Blenheim Palace. We would like to mention that some of the gravelled areas and cobbles are uneven and care should be taken when pushing a wheelchair.
- Manually propelled wheel chairs are welcome into the Palace State Rooms. Access is via the **platform lift** situated next to the Chapel. An assistant will be available to work the lift. Please visit the Churchill Shop to request assistance; please do not attempt to use the lift without a member of staff to assist. Unfortunately due to weight limits on the platform lift, electric chairs are not able to gain access into the Palace State Rooms. The maximum Weight Limit for the platform lift is 230KG.

Blenheim Palace has 9 manual wheelchairs available for visitors to borrow

- 3 are available from the main gift shop adjacent to the disabled parking area. These have large wheels and are suitable for using in the Palace and grounds.
- 6 are available from the front door of the Palace. These have smaller wheels and are for use within the Palace.
- 2 electric scooters are available for hire from the Flagstaff Information Point. These are for use in the grounds only; these are provided by Event Mobility. There is a charge for using them per hour or by day. We also request a small deposit, returned to you on the return of the scooter.

All wheelchairs are available on a first come first served basis. We are only able to take advanced bookings prior to midday

Public WCs

A unisex toilet with disabled facilities and baby changing is situated in the East Courtyard just beyond the entrance to the Palace courtyards.

Disabled toilets are available in the following locations:

- One unisex in the toilet the East Courtyard just beyond the entrance to the Palace Courtyards.
- The male and female toilets in the Palace next to the Water Terrace Café
- One unisex in the toilet in the Pleasure Gardens next to the 'Blenheim Bygones' Exhibition

Baby changing facilities

- A unisex baby changing facility is situated in the East Courtyard just beyond the entrance to the Palace courtyards.
- The female toilets in the Palace next to the Water Terrace Café
- The female toilets in the Pleasure Gardens next to the 'Blenheim Bygones' Exhibition

Catering Facilities' - Café's

We have four visitor catering facilities at Blenheim Palace, each are wheelchair accessible.

- The Water Terrace Café. This is a self service café offering hot and cold refreshments. The café has movable furniture. There is a ramp from the restaurant onto the terrace overlooking the fountains; however the terrace leads to a gravelled area which may be difficult for people with mobility difficulties. There is no wheelchair access from the Water Terraces to the South Lawn. Access to the south lawn is via Fisherman's gate see page 7 for details.

- The Indian Room Restaurant. This is a charming room situated next to the Water Terrace Cafe. Afternoon tea is available from 3.00 pm. The Indian Room Restaurant is available for group bookings of up to 50 people. This room is accessible for wheelchairs. Booking is advisable by telephoning 01993 810519.
- The Pantry is situated at the exit of the Flagstaff Gift Shop near to the car park, this facility serves delicious Blenheim Ice Cream as well as hot and cold drinks and light snacks. This area has limited outdoor seating on picnic benches and can be entered from the shop or the Park. This is a small area that is accessible for wheelchairs.
- The Garden Café. Situated in the Pleasure Gardens. This restaurant offers hot and cold snacks and a variety of beverages. The restaurant has movable furniture and is accessible for wheelchairs.

PLEASE ASK A MEMBER OF STAFF IF YOU REQUIRE ANY ASSISTANCE. ALL STAFF WILL BE WEARING A BLENHEIM PALACE NAME BADGE

The Shops

We have four shops at Blenheim Palace

- The Flagstaff Gift Shop: Situated at the exit of the Palace courtyards. Accessible for wheelchairs Please ask for assistance with large items and if required, to reach objects from the shelves.
- The Churchill Shop: A small shop with a small ramp at the entrance. Suitable for wheelchairs, however please note it can become crowded on busy days.
- The Palace Shop: Situated on the upper floor of the Palace. This is not accessible for wheelchairs.
- The Pleasure Gardens Shop: Situated next to the Lavender Garden and Butterfly House. This shop opens at peak times and is accessible for wheel chairs.

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Outdoor facilities

THE PARK AND GARDENS

- The Formal Gardens; entry into the Formal Gardens is either via the Water Terraces Café which involves several sets of steps or via **Fisherman's Gate**. The directions and daily entry code for this gate should be collected from the Flagstaff Information Kiosk.

The gate can be found on the west side of the Palace beyond the stables exhibition. Please follow the round disabled signs. Many of the paths in the gardens are gravel; you will find a few slopes.

- The Water Terraces; a majestic Formal Garden with decorative fountains, situated on the west side of the Palace: accessible from the Great Courtyard through the Water Terraces Café. Ramps are situated at all points with steps to the Terrace. Another entrance is next to the Churchill Shop; this has 3 sets of steps onto the Terrace, 22 steps in total to get to the centre of the Terrace. Access from the Water Terraces to the South Lawn involves 15 steps. Wheelchair users are advised to follow the route via the Fisherman's gate. (see above)
- The Secret Garden is situated to the east side of the South Lawn; the Secret Garden is a garden of many sensory pleasures. Suitable for wheelchairs. Benches are placed throughout the garden. Approximately 20 minutes walk from Fisherman's Gate on gravel paths.
- The Rose Garden can be found to the west of the South Lawn beyond the Temple of Diana and on the way to the Cascades. A fantastic aroma is given from these wonderful roses during the summer months. Approximately 20 minutes walk from Fisherman's Gate on gravel paths. Garden benches are scattered through the garden.
- The Cascades are at the furthest point of the South Lawn. Some paths are uneven and unsuitable for wheelchairs especially after wet weather. Visitors to the Cascade are advised to proceed via the Rose Garden avoiding the steps on the Lakeside walk. Approximately 30 minutes walk from Fisherman's Gate on gravel paths.
- The Italian found on the east side of the Palace. A private garden that can be viewed only from the South Lawn. There is no access for any visitors into this garden.
- The Pleasure Gardens are a fifteen minute walk away from the Palace through the Park. They are not accessible via the South Lawn. A large car park can be found next to the Pleasure Gardens, the miniature train operates between the Pleasure Gardens and the Palace. The Pleasure Gardens can be found in the original Walled Garden and include the Marlborough Maze, Adventure Playground, 'Blenheim Bygones' Exhibition and Butterfly House. The Butterfly House has a narrow entrance that may not be wide enough for larger wheelchairs to enter. The Marlborough Maze has narrow paths and tight corners that may not suit all wheelchairs.
- The Park has a continuous tarmac route around the Queens Pool Lake which is approximately one and half miles. There is a longer tarmac route around the park of about four miles. Both walks involve steep inclines. For a map of the routes see the Visitor leaflet available at the gates and information point at Flagstaff.

Other Attractions

- **THE STABLES EXHIBITION AND CINEMA**
On the west side of the Great Courtyard this exhibition is sited within the old stable block. The area is Accessible for wheelchairs. However be aware that the cobbled floor in this area can be uneven in places.

- **THE MINITURE TRAIN**
Built in the 1950's with some pre- war carriages the Train runs from the Flagstaff car park to the Pleasure Gardens car park. The train is not able to carry people in wheelchairs or pushchairs. There is a small step up into the carriages.

- **THE BUGGY TOUR**
The 8 seated buggy tour around Queens Pool in the summer months. The Buggies do not accommodate wheelchairs. However the seats are quite open for climbing on and off. There is a small charge for this tour which is booked via the flagstaff kiosk

Additional Information

INFORMATION FOR VISITORS WITH IMPAIRED HEARING

- We do not have audio guides or induction loops in the State Rooms however, a signed tour can be booked in advance. This should be organised via the operations office. At least 7 days notice is required.

INFORMATION FOR VISITORS WITH IMPAIRED VISION

- A Touch Tour of the State Rooms can be booked in advance. This should be organised via the operations office. At least 7 days notice is required

INFORMATION FOR VISITORS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

- We kindly request that carers should stay with the person with learning difficulties at all times. Please be especially aware of others whilst in the Palace.

- When visiting the Park and Gardens beware of Paths that are adjacent to the lake as the water is deep in places.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

- All Blenheim Palace Staff are trained in the emergency procedures. In the event of an alarm sounding, please follow the instruction of the Palace staff.

SICKNESS OR INJURY

- We have trained first aiders on site at all times. Please ask the nearest member of staff if help is required. It is necessary for staff to record details of all accidents and injuries.

CONTACT DEATAILS

Address: Blenheim Palace

Woodstock

Oxon, OX20 1PP

Telephone: 01993 810530

Fax: 01993 810570

Email: operations@blenheimpalace.com

Website: www.blenheimpalace.com

Hours of operation: Office hours: Monday - Sunday 9.00am - 5.00 pm

Local public transport numbers:

➤ Bus Services

The Oxford Bus Company 01865 785400

Stagecoach 01865 772250

➤ Local accessible taxi numbers: Wheelchair accessible taxis are available from the taxi companies listed below. Please note they can only take manual wheelchairs and smaller type electric wheelchairs.

001 Taxis 01865 240000

ABC Taxis 01865 770077

City Taxis 01865 794000

Radio Taxis 01865 242424

Metro Cabs 01865 777770

Future Plans

Blenheim Palace is a World Heritage Site and protected from change by English Heritage.

Every effort is made where possible to make the Palace, Park and Gardens accessible. We are always looking for ways to improve our facilities where possible to help our visitors enjoy their visit to Blenheim Palace.

Please do pass on your comments about your visit to Blenheim Palace via our visitors comment book found in the Chapel, our short survey questionnaires found in the shops and cafés, on our website survey or by speaking to a member of the Palace staff.

Contact Telephone and Email Address

We welcome your feedback to help us continually improve if you have any comments please phone 01993810530 or email operations@blenheimpalace.com