



VISUAL ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE FOR WWT WASHINGTON WETLAND CENTRE

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www.wwt.org.uk/washington



WELCOME

WWT Washington Wetland Centre is a wetland nature reserve and visitor attraction on the banks of the River Wear. Open 363 days a year, our family-friendly site offers visitors of all ages and abilities a host of unforgettable wildlife encounters and beautiful scenery whatever the weather.

Visitors can explore 103 acres of exciting wetlands, woodlands and meadows that are home to rare wildfowl, flocks of waders, Chilean flamingos, Asian short-clawed otters, Eurasian cranes and more.

Every season brings a host of different flora and fauna, including regionally rare favourites such as avocet and Northern marsh orchid, as well as a variety of insects and amphibians; meaning no two visits are the same.

VISITING AT A GLANCE

LEVEL ACCESS

- The main entrance has level access with a ramp. The ramp is portable.
- There is level access from the main entrance to:
 - Cafe
 - Admissions desk
 - Visitor toilets within the centre building
 - Compost toilet in grounds
 - Gift Shop
 - Cafe veranda

HEARING

- Some staff have disability awareness training.

VISUAL

- The walls and the doors have high colour contrast.
- We have information in large print – please ask a member of staff.

GENERAL

- We want our visitors to have the best experience whilst here so please just ask any member of our team if we can do anything for you.
- We have a complimentary ticket policy for essential carers.
- There are 2 public toilets for disabled visitors.
- Some staff have disability awareness training.
- All doors and gates within the visitor centre and grounds are manually operated.
- The inner circuit of site is tarmac surfaced.
- Paths across the wild reserve are a combination of compressed stone chippings and woodchip
- There are a number of hills and airlock gates on site which may be a challenge to visitors with limited mobility (see below)
- There can be noise at times across our site (e.g. grass cutting equipment/pressure washers) and on-site vehicles (tractors, HGVs). If these may impact your visit, please ask our admission team if any such works are planned during your visit and they will help you to understand where this work will be taking place and plan a quieter route for your day.

MAP AND KEY

- Tension gate – no entry to solo users – you must have someone to hold the gate for you.
- Steep path – please take care and keep to a low speed both up and downhill.
- Steep path and / or uneven surface. Please do not take scooters into this area.



GETTING HERE

Pattinson
Washington
NE38 8LE

TRAVEL BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- You can get to WWT Washington Wetland Centre by bus.
- The centre is served daily by buses to the Waterview Park government building which is 0.5 miles/0.8 km from our site (downhill). Please visit <https://www.gonortheast.co.uk/services> and search 'Waterview Park' for the latest timetable information.

TRAVEL BY TAXI

- You can get a taxi with Washington Taxis by calling 0191 415 1441. The taxi company has a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

PARKING

- We have a car park. There are 6 accessible parking spaces. The parking is less than 50 metres from the main entrance. Parking is free. The route from the main car park to the visitor centre is 1800mm or wider, sloped and winding.
- There is a level access drop-off point at the main entrance which we would encourage those driving visitors with mobility issues to use (we are unable to designate this as disabled parking due to delivery vehicle requirements but there are 2 parking spaces in the lower car park for those with mobility issues, however, these are not wide enough to be deemed accessible).



Disabled visitor
drop-off sign



Disabled visitor parking spaces in the main car park



Path entrance to the centre building from the main car park



Path slope to centre from main car park

ARRIVAL

MAIN ENTRANCE EXTERIOR

- There is a 6cm lip at the entrance to the visitor centre - a portable ramp is available to aid entry. The ramp is portable and can be moved from entrance to exit door on request - if visiting alone, please call 0191 4165454 to ask staff to open the door and bring the ramp to assist your entry.
- The path is 1800mm wide, or more.

MAIN ENTRANCE

- The door is 980mm wide.
- The main door is side hung and manual.
- The door to the main entrance is closed in very cold weather, please call 0191 4165454 to ask for staff assistance to enter.
- The reception point/pay desk is to your left upon entering the visitor centre.



Bottom of pedestrian path leading to entrance



Main visitor entrance to the centre building

GETTING AROUND INSIDE

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT - GENERAL INFORMATION

- We have high colour contrast between walls and doorframes.

TICKET/ INFORMATION DESK

ADMISSIONS DESK

- From the main entrance to the desk, there is level access. The route is 1800mm wide, or more.
- During busy times this area can become congested and noisy – please make staff aware if you need a quieter admission.



Arrival desk – picture window



Arrival desk – shop admissions area

ESSENTIAL CARERS

- We have a complimentary ticket policy for essential carers.

TOILETS

VISITOR TOILETS WITHIN THE CENTRE BUILDING

- There is a public toilet for disabled visitors at the far end of the main corridor from the entrance area.
- From the main entrance to the accessible toilet, there is level access. The route is 1200mm wide, or more.
- The direction of transfer onto the toilet is to the right.
- There is 1300mm at the side of the toilet. There is 1080mm in front of the toilet. The toilet seat is 430mm high. The toilet has handrails.
- The disabled toilet has a baby changing table which is at an accessible height. There is a family toilet with baby changing room also within the centre building, which has a bench and two changing mats at standing height.



Disabled toilet within the visitor centre with baby changing table

COMPOST TOILET

- There is a public toilet for disabled visitors.
- From the main entrance to the public toilet, there is level access. There is a permanent ramp.
- The route is 1200mm wide, or more.
- The direction of transfer onto the toilet is to the left and right.
- The toilets have handrails.
- This compost toilet is located in between the Asian short-clawed otter enclosure and Northumbrian Water hide. It has a changing table and accessible space.



Compost toilet access

SHOP

GIFT SHOP

- From the main entrance to the shop, there is level access. The route is 1200mm wide, or more. The route through the shop is 800mm wide, or more.



Shop access

PLACE TO EAT AND DRINK

WATERSIDE CAFE

- From the main entrance to the dining area, there is level access. The route is 1200mm wide, or more. To get to a table, there are no steps.
- The route through the dining area is 800mm wide, or more.
- Service is from a self-service counter. Visitors requiring assistance to carry trays of food and drink to a table should ask a member of staff.
- There is no background music.
- The table and plates have high colour contrast.
- Two-handed mugs are available on request.
- A microwave is available for visitor use for specialist foods.
- We cater for vegetarian, gluten free (celiacs), lactose free (dairy free) and vegan specific diets.
- Staff are happy to assist by reading out menus and describing or locating products for those visitors with visual impairments.
- There is a 2-inch lip at the café to veranda doorway.
- Staff assistance to access the veranda is available on request.



Cafe area tables and service area



Cafe counter

GETTING AROUND OUTSIDE

INNER CIRCLE - OUR MAIN ANIMAL COLLECTION

- The trail is 830metres long. The trail has a hard surface. The trail is sloped in parts and there are cambers on some paths. The trail has seats.
- This part of the attraction includes various stopping points to view wildlife including areas with gates which are simple to push.
- The otter viewing platform has an accessible ramp to one side for viewing and the holt area is fully accessible with large viewing windows.
- The otter talks at 11.30am and 2.30pm daily are very popular and this area can become congested and noisy during busier days.



Ganderland exhibit approach and gate



Otter viewing platform for visitors using mobility scooters or wheelchairs and buggy access



Gate into Close Encounters



Close Encounters bridge



Interpretation boards

PLAY AREA

- The play area is in 3 parts:
 - An early years section which contains a toddler swing, water play, small play house and wobble dish.
 - Middle section with sand pit and nature kitchen.
 - An older years section with large climbing frame, slide and rope walk.
- The play area has several meandering paths and lots of shrubbery to allow for exploration and imaginative play. This can mean that children may not always be visible to guardians.

PONDZONE

- Our Pondzone is open at various times throughout the year during staff led sessions only. Please visit <https://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/washington/whats-on/events> to check for Pond Dipping sessions and all other events.

WILD RESERVE

- The trail is 2600metres long. Some of the trail has a loose surface. There are a variety of small and large gates that visitors will be required to go through. The small gates are manageable in a wheelchair or on an electric scooter, however the larger tension gates will require some assistance. The trail is sloped, steeply in areas marked on the map at the beginning of this guide. The trail has seats. There are bird hides along the trail.
- All hides have moveable seating to allow access to wheelchair and mobility scooter users.
- The path to Lagoon View hide is steep. It can be accessed by experienced mobility scooter users but with caution and at low speed. It is not suitable for wheelchair users. The path is not DDA compliant. Please ask the admissions team if you require any further assistance.
- There is an additional path from Lagoon View hide which has several sleeper steps and a slope. This is a rough terrain with an uneven surface and may be unsuitable for some visitors.
- **Some sections of footpath in Spring Gill are steep and it is not recommended that wheelchair users or mobility scooters continue beyond the areas marked on the map above.**
- A tension gate must be passed through at North Wood, the amphibian ponds, river viewpoint and Hawthorn Wood which may prove difficult for unaccompanied mobility aid users and pushchairs.
- There's a variety of benches and seating areas around the wild reserve.



Tension gate access
at river viewpoint



Tension gate access
at North Wood



Spring Gill winding path
(no access for mobility
aids)



Spring Gill boardwalk
bridge



Amphibian ponds
boardwalk path



Amphibian ponds
woodchip path



Tension gate access at amphibian ponds / east end of Wader Lake



Path from tension gates at Hawthorn Wood down to Lagoon View hide



Path from Lagoon View hide with options of path with incline (left) and path with steps (right)



Path with steps from lagoon meadow path down to Lagoon View hide



Seating at Window on the Wear 2



Seating at the dragonfly ponds

WILDLIFE VIEWING HIDES

AT A GLANCE

Hide name	Distance from centre	Door width	Window height (floor to bottom of window)	Access notes
Hawthorn Wood hide	740m	980mm	775mm, 895mm & 610mm	Access is via a permanent ramp. There's a selection of chairs for choice of height.
Lagoon view hide	900m	1000mm	940mm	There's a steep slope to this hide which is not suitable for those using mobility aids. There is a selection of chairs for choice of height.
Northumbrian Water hide	400m	1200mm	980mm	There's a selection of chairs for choice of height.
Paddy Fleming hide	605m	1200mm	940mm	There's a selection of chairs for choice of height.
Diageo hide	685m	1200mm	915mm	There's a selection of chairs for choice of height.
Vic Robins hide	800m	2000mm	660mm, 1060mm and 1280mm	Access is via a permanent ramp. There is a selection of chairs for choice of height.

HAWTHORN HIDE

- At the hide entrance, there is a permanent ramp. The door is 980.00mm wide.
- There are low windows in the hide, so mobility aid users can view the wildlife.



Hawthorn Wood hide access



Hawthorn Wood hide larger window

LAGOON VIEW HIDE

- At the hide entrance, there is level access with a small step (1 inch) to get inside. The door is 1000.00mm wide.
- There are low windows in the hide, so mobility aid users can see outside.



Lagoon view hide access

NORTHUMBRIAN WATER HIDE

- At the hide entrance, there is level access. The door is 1200.00mm wide.



Northumbrian Water
hide access

PADDY FLEMING HIDE

- The hide entrance has a 2-inch lip which causes no issues for most mobility aid users. The door is 1200.00mm wide.



Paddy Fleming hide
access

DIAGEO HIDE

- At the hide entrance, there is level access. The door is 1200mm wide.



Diageo hide access

VIC ROBINS HIDE

- At the hide entrance, access is via a sloped permanent path. The structure is open on one side with a width of 2000mm. There are several viewing windows at varying heights.



Vic Robins hide
access

PICNIC AREAS

REEDBED SHELTER

- The path is 1800mm wide, or more and tarmac.
- Some tables have space for wheelchair users. You can bring your own food to the picnic area.
- There are a variety of picnic tables around site. Some of these are accessible for wheelchair / mobility scooter users with extended picnic benches for ease.



Reedbed shelter picnic table with disabled visitor access



Sheltered accessible picnic table at the reedbed shelter



Picnic area around the Stream Channel – access path is grassed. Some tables are accessible



Accessible picnic bench
at river viewpoint – path is
compacted stone
chippings

CAFE VERANDA

- From the main entrance to this area, there is level access with a small lip and ramp. The route is 1200mm wide, or more. The entrance is 980mm wide.
- The cafe veranda is accessible from the main centre building and through the cafe itself.



Café veranda seating

CUSTOMER CARE SUPPORT

ACCESSIBILITY EQUIPMENT

- The centre has a manual wheelchair available to borrow during a visit – please book in advance on 0191 4165454.
- The centre also has several electric mobility scooters available to borrow. Please book in advance on 0191 416 5454. A short induction program is given to each new user of the electric scooters.
- We have an area to charge mobility scooters and battery powered wheelchairs.
- If you require something to be charged, please speak to a member of the admissions team who will get this arranged for you.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

- We have emergency evacuation procedures for disabled visitors.
- We have a full evacuation procedure to clear the centre building with staff that will be available to assist all visitors if and when needed.

CUSTOMER CARE SUPPORT

- Some staff have disability awareness training.
- We have information in large print.
- We can print a large-scale visitor map on request for any visitors who may need it.

DOGS

- Unfortunately we can't allow dogs or pets of any kind on site, with the exception of trained assistance dogs, as our wildlife may become distressed. Trained assistance dogs are welcome but must be kept on their lead and under control at all times.
- Assistance dogs cannot be taken into our walk-through exhibits at Close Encounters and Ganderland.
- Please ensure any dog waste is removed. If any of our birds/animals behaviour is affected by the presence of your dog, we respectfully ask that you move away from the area.
- Please do not leave your dog in your car whilst visiting.