

Bodiam Castle and Grounds Access Statement

Contact details

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Points to note

1. There is level access to the castle courtyard area only. The towers are reached by steep spiral staircases. The risers range from approximately 26 to 32 cms in height and up to a maximum of 56 steps to the top of the tower. The stairs are lit but the internal rooms are by natural daylight only.
2. There is very limited mobile phone reception across the whole site.
3. Assistance dogs are welcome throughout the property. Other dogs are welcome in the castle grounds only and must be kept on leads at all times. There is a tethering point and water bowl outside Castle Cottage, the building opposite the castle entrance. This is refilled regularly or can be refilled upon request.
4. There are several areas of water in the grounds, a moat, ponds and the River Rother which can be high and fast flowing in winter. The pathways are gravel throughout the property.
5. There are two manual wheelchairs available for loan. Visitors are also welcome to use their own electric buggies in the castle and grounds.

Arrival & Parking Facilities

1. There are brown signs directing visitors to Bodiam Castle however these are fairly limited and are better from the Sussex than Kent direction.
2. The main car park is gravelled. There are 4 designated disabled parking bays outside of the tea room and a further 4 spaces at the east end of the car park, 75 metres from the Visitor Reception. A further 2 disabled bays are located at the top of the site, near the castle entrance. All designated bays are on gravel.
3. There is an overflow car park to the left of the main car park which is grass surface and has 11 steps leading up to the Visitor Reception. An accessible alternative is also available via the main gravel car park.
4. A transfer vehicle which can take 5 people is available throughout the day during the main season, and runs regularly between the car park and the castle entrance. This also stops at Visitor Reception and Castle Cottage. Unfortunately this is not accessible for people who cannot transfer from their wheelchair. Visitors unable to use the transfer vehicle would be directed towards the designated bays at the top of the site.

WCs

1. An accessible toilet is located next to the main visitor toilets at the entrance to the car park. This is 1.6 x 2.2 metres in size and has a right hand transfer including a seat for small children to keep them safe whilst the facility is being used.
2. There is a designated baby changing room next to the accessible toilet, baby changing facilities are also available in all visitor toilets. There is no adult changing facility on site.
3. The accessible toilet is lit by fluorescent lighting as are the main visitor toilets. All toilets have automatic hand driers.

Visitor Reception

1. This building is located at the end of the car park, 200 metres from the tea room and 180 metres from the shop. It is made of general caravan materials with a wooden floor covering upon which there is a large mat to absorb both dirt and noise.
2. The building is accessed and exited either via metal ramps with gradients of 8% and 9% respectively or 3 steps all of which have timber handrails.
3. The two glass entry doors with vinyl markers are inward opening, each measuring 87cms in width with a 9cm bar in the middle. The doors are manual opening however there is a member of staff on hand to assist if this is required.
4. The reception desk is 72cms high with a lower counter 58 cms high for wheelchair users.
5. Full length glass doors and window provide natural light. LED lighting and halogen spot lights are also used.
6. There is a fixed seating area and moveable chairs available, none of which have armrests.
7. There is a fixed induction loop facility.
8. Two manual wheelchairs are available for visitors to use. These can be booked in advance however this isn't necessary.

Castle

1. The castle is reached by a gravel footpath with a slight incline. There are benches along the route. There is a level grass area between Castle Cottage and the castle entrance.
2. It is 380 metres from Visitor Reception to the head of the bridge and a further 70 metres to reach the castle gatehouse and entrance,
3. A mobility buggy is available to transfer visitors between the car park, visitor reception and castle.
4. Visitors enter the castle via a wooden footbridge across the castle moat followed by a short distance of level gravel pathway. There is a wooden handrail on both sides of the slatted footbridge.
5. One of the large wooden castle entrance doors is permanently open during visitor hours for ease of access in to the castle courtyard. This is wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and buggies. The other door can be manually opened by a member of staff should this be required.
6. There is level access in the castle courtyard only, the towers being reached by steep spiral staircases. A folder is available containing castle information and photographs from the top of the towers upon request. A tactile model of the castle is also available upon request.
7. Access to the undercroft is via a steep gravel slope with a 12% gradient, unfortunately there is no wheelchair access to this area during the winter months.
8. The story of Bodiam DVD giving an introduction to the castle is reached via a gravel slope with a 6% gradient. This contains subtitles.
9. None of the castle rooms contain any soft furnishings, the walls being of sandstone and the flooring either wooden, stone or gravel with grass in the courtyard area.
10. The castle is lit by natural daylight with low energy light bulbs on the stairwells and in some of the tower rooms.
11. Benches are available in various locations in both the courtyard and DVD room. A few of these have arm and back rests with the majority being simple plank style benches.

12. A member of staff is always available inside the castle should a visitor require any further assistance.
13. There are no visitor toilet facilities available inside or near the castle itself, all toilets are located in the visitor car park.
14. Medieval character talks take place regularly throughout the day. Induction loops aren't used for these however talks are adapted according to the audience and they are on hand throughout the day to talk to visitors on a more informal and individual basis.
15. A tactile model of the castle is available upon request. An interactive audio adventure entitled "A Knight's Peril", aimed primarily at families, is also available free of charge from Castle Cottage.
16. Powered wheelchairs and powered mobility vehicles can be used in the castle courtyard area.
17. Benches are available in various locations in the castle grounds, with views to the castle.

Castle cottage

1. The castle cottage containing the Story of Bodiam exhibition, A Knight's Peril and Second hand Bookshop is located directly opposite the entrance to the castle and can be reached via a gravel pathway and a concrete paved area in to the cottage itself.
2. There is level access in to the building with two doors 90 cms wide. These are manually operated however during visitor opening hours they are held open. The entrance to the second hand bookshop is via 3 steps with a wooden handrail.
3. The building is brick construction with timber cladding and concrete pavers. In addition to natural daylight there are sodium floodlit bulbs.
4. There is a bench seat inside the space and another bench with back and armrests outside the cottage in the patio area. This patio area also has a water bowl and tethering point for dogs.
5. In peak season there is a secondary catering outlet here serving hot and cold drinks and light snacks. Some retail items are also available to purchase.

Catering

1. The Wharf Tea Room is located next to the visitor toilets to the right of the entrance to the main visitor car park. It is distance of 200 mtrs from here to Visitor Reception.
2. There is level access via gravel and then a concrete slabs directly in front of the tea room itself.
3. The two entry swing doors are 67 cms in width opening in both directions. They are manual opening, but a member of the Catering team is on hand to assist if required.
4. There is some outdoor seating with tables both at the front and back of the tea room which can accommodate wheelchairs.
5. The counter varies in height from 86.5 cms to a maximum of 91.5 cms. Catering team members are also on hand to assist with service and carrying trays and PDQ machines can be handed over to visitors.
6. There is adequate circulation space for wheelchairs.
7. A fixed induction loop is available at the main counter.
8. The menus are hand written on large chalkboards. Straws are available and 3 sets of large handled cutlery upon request.

9. The tea room is of a wooden structure with wooden flooring. In addition to natural daylight, there is additional lighting via large incandescent bulbs. The furniture is also of wood with rubber stoppers on the bottom of the chair legs. The tables are 75cms high.

Retail

1. The Castle Gift Shop is located next to the Wharf Tea Room in the main visitor car park and 180 mtrs from Visitor Reception.
2. There are two entrances to the shop. One has level access via a paved area and two non-power operated swing doors each 68 cms in width. The opposite door is accessed via 5 concrete steps with a handrail on both sides. This is 105 cms wide and opens inwards. A member of the retail team is on hand to assist if required.
3. The floor is wooden and in addition to natural daylight, there are internal spot lights and an external floodlight.
4. There is adequate circulation space for a wheelchair user between all display stands and there is an induction loop at the till point.
5. The counter is 900 mms high however retail staff are on hand to assist visitors with service here or lifting and carrying goods if required. Staff are also able to help with any pricing enquiries.

Contact details for more information

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Bodiam Castle

'A Portred History'

Welcome to one of Britain's most picturesque and evocative castles.

The castle was built in 1385 by Sir Edward Dallingridge, a soldier of fortune. Debate continues to this day as to whether he built the castle to defend the surrounding countryside or simply to show off his power and wealth. What is known for certain is that it was a working estate with farmland, wharf and flour mill.

Originally the site would have been elaborately landscaped with ponds and pools, as well as the moat you can still see today. Not only would these have added to the defences, but they would have made a picturesque scene to impress visitors.

Many of the features are not immediately obvious today, but the map will help you identify their locations as you wind your way up to the castle itself.

The castle became unliveable during the English Civil Wars and fell into disrepair. We have several people to thank for its restoration, the most notable being Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, who left the castle to the National Trust in 1926.

Top 5 things to do at Bodiam

- Explore the castle courtyard and climb up the towers for stunning views across the High Weald, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Learn more about medieval castle life through our daily medieval character talks.
- A Knight's Peril. It's 1387 and someone wants Sir Edward Dallingridge dead. Help his daughter Kate discover who before it's too late. Don't just listen to the story; become part of it.
- See the original portcullis - possibly the oldest in England.
- Explore and enjoy nature at its best: the estate is alive with dragonflies, lichens, bats, birds and our famous fish.

Many of the features on Sir Edward's estate are not immediately obvious today. This plan will help you to identify them.

- 1 Wharf**
This site was used from medieval times onwards for river trade. In the 1800s coal was stored in wharf is now part of the Tea Room building.
- 2 Mill Pond**
The unusually large pond provided a flow of water to drive Sir Edward's watermill.
- 3 Probable Site of Mill**
For grinding corn.
- 4 Tenement Plots**
Houses fronted the road through the village with gardens stretching out behind. The slight ridges are the remains of the garden boundaries.

- 5 Pill Box**
Built in 1940 to defend Bodiam bridge in the event of a German invasion.
- 6 Water Features**
These were filled by springs. They added to the beauty of the landscape and may also have been used as a fish ponds.
- 7 Site of Original Access Path**
Sir Edward and his guests would have approached the castle along this route.
- 8 Site of Postern Bridge**
In medieval times a wooden bridge stretched across the moat to the Postern Tower.
- 9 Original Main Bridge Access to Castle**
The medieval bridge crossed from here to the stone octagonal island in the moat.
- 10 Ruins of Barbican Gatehouse**
An additional tower defending the main gate.

