



## **Access information for WWT Washington Wetland Centre**

Washington Wetland Centre offers an excellent day out for people regardless of their age and abilities. The following information provides details of the facilities that we have and, in some cases, don't have. We hope that this will allow all of our visitors to get the most from their visit. Please let us know if you experience any difficulties during your visit that are not covered by this information.

### **Getting here**

There are regular bus services to Waterview Park (a government building approximately 400m from the main entrance of Washington Wetland Centre). The walk from the bus stop is down a tarmac road and footpath. The gradient from the bus stop is no more than 1:15. Buses travel to Waterview Park from Washington Town Centre, Sunderland, Newcastle, Gateshead, Durham and South Shields.

The centre is well signposted with brown tourist signs on the A19, A195, A1231 and A182. Motorists arriving from the A1(M) will not see signs on the motorway but will pick up signs soon after leaving the A1(M) on the A195 or the A1231. The main car park is tarmac and contains 80 parking bays plus 6 reserved for disabled drivers. There is also an overflow car park made up of a rougher dolomite surface.

Access from the car park is via a tarmac path. Parts of this path are steep and wheelchair users may prefer to access the centre via a short service road (marked 'Authorised vehicles only') which has a shallower gradient. Please be aware of delivery vehicles if using this road.

It is permitted to drop passengers off in the lower car park reached by the short service road. This is a small area used by delivery vehicles and does not contain designated spaces for drivers with a disability. Drivers are asked to return to the main or overflow car park after dropping off passengers with disabilities. Drivers may also return to this area to collect passengers at the end of the visit. Drivers with disabilities are permitted to park in this lower car park if necessary.

Access from this lower car park to the visitor centre is over flat tarmac. There is a small lip at the entrance to the visitor centre. The reception point/pay desk is

immediately to your left upon entering the visitor centre. Further information is available at this point.

A cycle rack is available for use in the area immediately outside the front entrance. Washington Wetland Centre is passed by the C2C cycle route (Whitehaven to Sunderland).

### **Admission charges**

Visitors with disabilities are charged the appropriate rate for their age and whether they are part of an organised group visit (12 people or more). Essential helpers are offered free admission when assisting a visitor with disabilities.

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust is a membership organisation with members receiving free admission to all ten Wetland Centres in the UK. Full details are available on the website [www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk) or from the admissions desk.

### **Getting around**

The visitor centre is a single storey building with level access throughout.

Washington Wetland Centre is located on a hillside site with footpaths leading down the site towards the River Wear. The central circuit (approximately 880m) is on tarmac footpaths. The paths do slope with some steeper areas. Wheelchair users may find some of these areas challenging, although many wheelchair users complete the circuit without too much difficulty.

This circuit gives access to all of our collection birds and family of Asian short-clawed otters. Many of these birds are located in an area known as Close Encounters. There is a short tarmac footpath leading into Close Encounters which leads to a wooden bridge over water.

The longer route around the site incorporates Hawthorn Wood, the saline lagoon/River Wear, Wader Lake, Spring Gill Wood and our wildflower meadows. Admissions staff will be happy to explain the easiest access routes on request.

Access to Hawthorn Wood and its' wild bird feeding station is via a level tarmac footpath. The viewing hide is large enough for easy wheelchair access.

Once past the Hawthorn Wood hide a footpath descends through the wood to Lagoon View hide and its views of the saline lagoon and river reedbed. Wheelchair users are advised to take care along this route as it is a 1:15 gradient. Alternatively, visitors can avoid this route by continuing left along a dolomite path across the top of Lagoon Meadow.

The footpath along the River Wear is level and gives easy access to Wader Lake. It is made of recycled road tarmac and is firm to move along (although not as smooth as new tarmac).

There are three wheelchair accessible hides along Wader Lake with views of the birds on the various islands. This path leads, via access gates, to the Amphibian Ponds. These gates are designed to maintain fox-proof access through the perimeter fence and may prove difficult for larger wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Once through these gates there is further flat access as far as the Dragonfly Ponds. From here the footpath rises towards East Down and Old Oak Meadow before crossing Spring Gill via a wooden footbridge in Spring Gill Wood. Some sections of footpath in Spring Gill are steep and it is not recommended that wheelchair users continue beyond the bridge. The steep section is clearly visible from the bridge as the path rises to the gates back through the perimeter fence. Once up this section of footpath the remainder of the route is on level ground.

### **Borrowing a wheelchair**

The centre has a small number of manual wheelchairs available on free loan, as well as four electric scooters. Wheelchairs and scooters are very popular so please call 0191 416 5454 in advance of your visit to pre-book either of these items. A short induction programme is given to each new user of the electric scooters.

### **Seating**

Within the visitor centre seating can be found in the Waterside Café, picture window and the Discovery Centre. None of this seating is fixed.

Seating in the cafe and fixtures in the shop are positioned in order to allow full access to wheelchair users.

You will find more than 50 seats/benches scattered throughout the grounds.

### **Public telephone**

The shop telephone can be used on request for emergencies or to book taxis for people with disabilities.

## **Dogs**

Assistance dogs are welcomed. The information desk can provide a bowl of water. No other dogs are allowed access to the centre.

## **Induction loops**

The centre does not have induction loops fitted at the present time.

## **Guided tours**

Guided tours of the centre can be provided for groups. These must be booked in advance. Full details can be found here <http://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/washington/plan-your-visit/group-visits/>

## **Leaflets, maps and guidebooks**

The map and day planner leaflet gives key information about the centre and contains a map. Similar details are available on the website [www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk) and are available in large print format.

## **Fire alarms**

The visitor centre is fitted with smoke alarms and break glass points. If the fire alarm should activate (continuous siren) you will be moved to a safe area by visitor centre staff.

## **Toilets and baby changing facilities**

There are male and female toilets in the visitor centre. There is also an accessible toilet, which contains a baby changing unit.

There is a separate baby changing room in the visitor centre which includes a toilet cubicle and a privacy corner. Electric sockets are available in the privacy corner for use with medical equipment.

There is an accessible composting toilet half-way around the grounds, just after the Asian short-clawed otter exhibit, en route to Wader Lake.

## **Eating in Waterside Café**

Waterside Café is in the visitor centre. Hot and cold drinks are available throughout from 10am until 5pm (summer) and until 4pm (winter). Hot meals are available between 11.30am and 2.30pm.

Seating is not fixed and is positioned in order to allow full access for wheelchair users.

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 always a vegetarian option for lunch, along with a vegetarian quiche, jacket potato/sandwich fillings, cakes and biscuits. Allergen information is also available.

Staff are happy to assist by reading out menus and describing or locating products for those visitors with visual impairments.

*Updated July 2017.*