

The Scottish Parliament Information for disabled visitors

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Copies of this guide are available in various formats such as Braille, audio CD and British Sign Language DVD. Please contact Visitor Services for further information or call at the Visitor Information Desk.

Welcome to the Scottish Parliament

This access guide aims to help disabled people who are visiting the Scottish Parliament. This means all disabled people - invited as guests, casual visitors, watching parliamentary business or taking a tour.

The guide also gives information to help you plan your journey to the Parliament by public transport and by car. You can find details of entrance arrangements and how to get around the Parliament. The guide also lists the services available for disabled people within the Parliament.

If you require additional information about visiting the Parliament you can call at the Visitor Information Desk or contact us in a variety of ways:

By post: Visitor Services
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

By telephone: 0131 348 5200

By text: 07786 209888

By fax: 0131 348 5601

By textphone: 0800 092 7100

We also welcome calls using the Text Relay service

By email:

sp.bookings@scottish.parliament.uk

Website: www.scottish.parliament.uk

Opening times

Weekdays

Business days

(normally Tuesday to Thursday)

All year

09.00 to 18.30 (9.00 am to 6.30 pm)

Non-business days

(normally Mondays and Fridays and every weekday
when Parliament is in recess)

April to September

10.00 to 17.30 (10.00 am to 5.30 pm)

October to March

10.00 to 16.00 (10.00 am to 4.00 pm)

Saturdays and public holidays

All year

11.00 to 17.30 (11.00 am to 5.30 pm)

Closed on Sundays

Last admission is 30 minutes before closing.

The Scottish Parliament closes over the Christmas and New Year period. Please look at the website or contact Visitor Services for details.

Travel to the Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament building is located in the Holyrood area of central Edinburgh at the foot of the Royal Mile near to the Palace of Holyroodhouse.

By road

The nearest car parks to the Parliament are St John's Hill (which is accessed from Holyrood Road) or next to Edinburgh Waverley railway station.

A small number of public parking spaces, reserved for blue badge holders, are available on Horse Wynd for visitors to the Holyrood area. Another location will be provided when access to these parking spaces is suspended.

By train

The Parliament building is just over 1.5 kilometres (or about one mile) from Edinburgh Waverley railway station.

By bus

Visitors can use Lothian Buses service numbers 35 and 36 to get to the Scottish Parliament. The 35 service runs from Edinburgh Airport to Ocean Terminal and crosses Lothian Road. The 36 service runs from Ocean Terminal to the West End and goes along Princes Street.

Visitors using the 35 service should get off at Canongate. Those using the 36 service should get off at Horse Wynd. Each service operates low floor easy access buses with retractable boarding ramps and a dedicated wheelchair space.

By cycle

Public cycle racks are located next to the Holyrood Information Centre on Horse Wynd.

Setting down

Visitors to the Parliament arriving by car or taxi can be set down on Horse Wynd. Dropped kerbs and a pelican crossing are provided to allow easy access from either side of the road.

Travel information

Travel information for all services can be obtained from Traveline Scotland by telephone on 0871 200 22 33 or from their website at www.travelinescotland.com

The Garden Level

Visitors to the Scottish Parliament enter from the public entrance on Horse Wynd. Facing the Parliament, with the Palace of Holyroodhouse behind you, the entrance is to the right of the glazed area. You cannot see the entrance from the roadside. It becomes visible as you get closer to the building. There are three ponds and several bollards set into the pavement in front of the public entrance.

The entrance is signposted and the main door is automatic. Once inside you will be asked to pass through an airport-style security check. If a buzzer sounds, staff may check you with a hand-held scanner. Staff will help disabled visitors pass through the security checks.

Accessible toilet facilities are available in the entrance foyer. Visitors pass from the entrance foyer through a

set of manual doors into the Main Hall. Immediately on the left in the Main Hall is the Visitor Information Desk.

When you come into the building you are at the Garden Level. At this level you can view the exhibition in the Main Hall, join a tour, visit the café, browse in the shop and explore the public areas of the building. There are two committee rooms on the Garden Level, just beyond the Main Hall.

From the Garden Level you can take the lift or stairs to Level 2. Here you can visit the public gallery and look at the Debating Chamber. On business days you need to get a ticket from the Visitor Information Desk to visit the gallery.

The Upper Levels

The Upper Levels provide access to the public gallery of the Debating Chamber and to some of the committee rooms.

Visitors use the public stairs off the Main Hall to get to the public gallery of the Debating Chamber.

Alternatively, you can use the lift and press the button for Level 2.

From the top of the stairs, or the lift, it is a short walk to the public gallery of the Debating Chamber.

Once in the public gallery visitors can view the Debating Chamber and on business days watch proceedings. The public gallery has reserved spaces for wheelchair users. It is fitted with television screens, an infrared system and an induction loop. This is to help disabled visitors follow proceedings.

Headsets and receivers are available from the Visitor Information Desk in the Main Hall.

You can visit the Debating Chamber floor only on a guided tour. The guided tour route involves going up two gently sloping ramps to get to the rear of the Chamber.

The tour passes down a ramp to move from the back of the Chamber to the open area at the front. When leaving the Chamber, the tour exits up a gently sloping ramp.

Services and Facilities

[Accessible toilets](#)

Accessible toilet facilities are provided throughout the building. Staff will advise visitors of the nearest available facilities.

There is one Changing Places toilet with a changing bench and ceiling-fixed hoist. Visitors wishing to use the Changing Places toilet should ask a member of staff for directions.

[Assistance dogs](#)

Assistance dogs are permitted within the Parliament building. Water bowls for assistance dogs can be obtained from the Visitor Information Desk.

BSL (British Sign Language)

Where visitors are attending parliamentary business or going on a guided tour, BSL / English interpreters are available if booked in advance through Visitors Services. You are advised to give at least two weeks' notice if possible.

Café

The café, located off the Main Hall, sells a range of drinks and light refreshments. The café area is accessible and assistance is available from staff on request.

The café has an induction loop, straws, accessible cups, plates and cutlery, high chairs, bottle and baby food warming, and gluten-free food. Menus are clearly written and staff will assist customers in reading menus.

Chairs

Getting around the Parliament building can involve walking some distance, especially on a guided tour. Visitors can make use of portable chairs during their visit by contacting the Visitor Information Desk or by asking their tour guide.

Committee rooms

The Parliament has several committee rooms. These are situated near the crèche on the Garden Level and on Levels 1 and 4 of Towers 1 and 2.

All committee rooms are fitted with induction loops, an infrared system and television monitors. Headsets and receivers are available from the Visitor Information Desk. Spaces are reserved for wheelchair users in the public seating area in each committee room.

Communication support needs

Visitors with communication support needs who are attending parliamentary business can contact Visitor Services to arrange communication support. Please contact us in advance to discuss any specific communication support that may be needed.

Crèche

The Scottish Parliament's crèche is free to members of the public who want to attend debates and meetings or explore the building.

It has child-level toilets, baby changing facilities, bottle warming, a breast feeding area, and an accessible toilet.

There are places for children aged six weeks to five years. They can stay for up to four hours.

The service can be booked in advance by calling

0131 348 6192 or emailing
creche@scottish.parliament.uk. The crèche is not
open at weekends or on public holidays.

Email

You can contact the Scottish Parliament by email at:

sp.bookings@scottish.parliament.uk
(for Visitor Services)

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk
(for the Public Information Service)

Emergency evacuation

In the event of an emergency situation the building will be evacuated. Visitors are asked to follow the evacuation signs and the instructions of Parliament staff.

Visitors with a hearing impairment can request a

vibrating pager to alert them to any emergency situation during their visit. Please ask at the Visitor Information Desk.

Visitors with mobility difficulties can use designated lifts to leave the building. Parliament staff will assist visitors in leaving the building during an emergency.

Exhibitions

An exhibition in the Main Hall, next to the public entrance, offers visitors an opportunity to find out more about the Parliament and its history. The exhibition includes a tactile model of the Debating Chamber.

The Main Hall is also used for various temporary exhibitions. Information on exhibitions is available in a range of formats from the Visitor Information Desk.

First aid

A first aid point is available in the main entrance foyer. If you require first aid assistance please contact any member of staff. All trained first aid staff wear green and white first aid badges.

Garden Lobby

If you are taking a tour of the Parliament you will visit the Garden Lobby. Access to the Garden Lobby is by a staircase or by using a lift. Visitors are accompanied when visiting this private area of the building and staff will assist you in using the lift.

The Garden Lobby has an accessible cash machine and two accessible toilets. One of these is the Changing Places toilet with hoist.

Garden meeting rooms

The Parliament has several meeting rooms on the Garden Level. Some of the meeting rooms have

television monitors and portable induction loops are available.

Guided tours

Tours are usually available on non-business days. These include recess periods and Saturdays. The tour normally includes visiting the floor of the Debating Chamber and a committee room, and a walk through the Garden Lobby to view the MSP Building and Queensberry House. Some of these areas may not be available if events or meetings are being held.

Timed tickets are available for tours. You are advised to book in advance by contacting Visitor Services. Information on tour times is available on the Scottish Parliament website or from Visitor Services.

Headsets

Headsets and receivers for people attending meetings of the Parliament and committees are available from

the Visitor Information Desk to help people hear proceedings.

Induction loops

Induction loops are installed in all the main locations. These locations are shown by induction loop signs. Areas with a loop include the Visitor Information Desk, committee rooms, the public gallery, the Debating Chamber, the crèche, the shop, and the Education Centre. Contact Visitor Services if you will need a portable induction loop during your visit.

Information

Further information about the Parliament and its work is available on the Parliament's website and in our range of information leaflets.

Information leaflets are available in the Main Hall and from stands at key points around the building. If you require information in alternative formats such as

Braille, large print, easy read, audio or BSL DVD, please ask at the Visitor Information Desk.

Lifts

The Parliament has lift access to all areas of the building. Each lift has destination information, voice prompts and Braille labelling of controls.

If there is a fire, Parliament staff will direct visitors to the special fire evacuation lifts.

Lockers

Lockers are available for visitors in the Main Hall.

There is a £1 charge for using the lockers which is refunded on return of the key. Lockers are situated at various heights.

Payphone

An accessible payphone with a hearing loop is located in the Main Hall. The payphone can also be used to send text messages and access the internet.

Public gallery

The public gallery has an induction loop and television screens to help visitors follow proceedings on business days. (You will need a ticket to get into the public gallery on business days.) The public gallery has reserved spaces for wheelchair users. There are no public toilets at the public gallery level.

Public gallery tickets

On business days you can watch proceedings in the Chamber or committee rooms, but you will need a ticket to do this. Tickets are free and should be booked in advance through Visitor Services to ensure a place.

Pushchairs

Visitors can arrange a free pushchair loan in advance of their visit by contacting Visitor Services.

Shop

The Scottish Parliament shop has an induction loop and a two-level counter. Help is available from staff on request.

Signs

Throughout the building visitors will find information and direction signs. All main signs have Braille equivalents next to the text.

Stairs

There are handrails on both sides of all staircases. There are 61 steps in the staircase from the Main Hall to the public gallery of the Debating Chamber and 9 in the staircase to the Garden Lobby. However, lifts are

available to access all areas of the building visitors may need to reach.

[Text message](#)

You can text the Scottish Parliament on 07786 209888.

[Textphone](#)

You can contact the Scottish Parliament by textphone on 0800 092 7100.

[Text Relay](#)

You can contact the Scottish Parliament using the Text Relay service by calling 18001 0131 348 5200 for Visitor Services and 18001 0131 348 5000 for the Public Information Service.

Visitor Information Desk

If you have booked tickets for a guided tour, a committee meeting or a meeting of the full Parliament, you need to go to the Visitor Information Desk in the Main Hall to collect your tickets.

You should also go to the Visitor Information Desk if you have arranged to meet with an MSP or a member of Parliament staff.

The staff at the Visitor Information Desk will be happy to help if you have any questions or need assistance during your visit. For example, they can provide headsets, portable chairs and vibrating pagers.

Water fountain

A water fountain is situated next to the lockers in the Main Hall.

Website

The Scottish Parliament website address is:
www.scottish.parliament.uk

Wheelchair loan

Visitors can arrange a free wheelchair loan in advance of their visit by contacting Visitor Services. Visitors will need to provide their own escort for pushing the wheelchair.

We want to do all we can to make sure everyone is able to visit the Scottish Parliament. Please contact us or call at the Visitor Information Desk to let us know what we can do to help.

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