Manx National Heritage
Eiraght Ashoonagh Vannin

Access Guide for Rushen Abbey

Manx National Heritage recognises that historic properties can present difficulties for people with disabilities. We have prepared an access guides for Rushen Abbey to help you plan your visit. This access guide does not contain personal opinions as to our suitability for those with access needs, but aims to accurately describe the historic environment at Rushen Abbey.

Introduction

Rushen Abbey was gifted by King Olaf for use as a monastery in 1134. Rushen Abbey came under Cistercian control and was developed as the Isle of Man's seat of religious power housing the main body of knowledge and literacy for the Island. Today the remains of the Abbey sit in the peace of the Abbey Gardens. The visitor centre tells its story from 1134 to the present day.

Rushen Abbey is usually open seasonally (from Easter – October). Rushen Abbey has an admission fee and various concessions are available. Our annual pass for Island residents and holiday passes can be purchased online prior to visiting. It is our policy that carers accompanying a disabled visitor are admitted free of charge to all our sites. Please see our website for up-to-date information (www.manxnationalheritage.im).

Rushen Abbey is accessible to visitors using wheelchairs although assistance may be required on some of the gravel paths. Motorised scooters are welcome on site.

Rushen Abbey also has a gift shop and refreshments (hot drinks/snacks) are available.

There is a standard unisex accessible toilet within the main visitor centre.

There are baby changing facilities in both male and female toilets.

We look forward to welcoming you. If you have any queries or require assistance please speak to the entrance team on arrival.

Alternatively to discuss your requirements prior to visiting please email enquiries@mnh.im.

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1 Getting to Rushen Abbey

Rushen Abbey is located in the village of Ballasalla in the South of the Island. It is an open air site with a visitor centre.

Rushen Abbey

Map of Rushen Abbey site

By car:

There is a car park on site, which has four marked disabled parking spaces. The car park surface is compacted earth topped with gravel/loose chippings. The car park is uneven in places. Visitors using wheelchairs may require assistance due to the uneven surface.

Disabled parking in main car park

There is level access along a paved pathway leading from the car park to the visitor centre. It is approximately 50 metres to the entrance way from the car park.

Paved pathway to visitor centre

On foot:

Rushen Abbey can be accessed from the main village via pedestrian pavements which lead to the grounds of Rushen Abbey which is in a rural setting. It is a 10 minute walk from the village, which is predominately on the level.

One approach to Rushen Abbey is via the ford on Mill Road near to Silverdale Glen. Visitors with mobility impairments should note that the ford is crossed via a stone bridge with five large steps up and down. There is a hand rail.

Mill Road ford footbridge

By bus:

Ballasalla is on the main Douglas to South bus route. Journey time from Douglas takes approximately 25 minutes. There are bus stops along the main road and Rushen Abbey is a 10 minute walk away.

The route to Rushen Abbey is accessible to visitors using wheelchairs* via the main road route (A7), the pavements have dropped curbs but are very narrow in places. Visitors choosing the Mill Road ford entrance route should note there is a stepped bridge to cross the ford (see above).

***Wheelchair Users Approaching from Ballasalla Village.**

Please note that the pavements within Ballasalla Village are very narrow in places and have obstructions (i.e. bins, posts). Visitors using wheelchairs may find they have to cross the road several times to locate the wider pavements or travel on the road itself. Caution should be exercised or an alternative transport route to Rushen Abbey taken.

By coach:

There is coach parking to the rear of the Abbey Restaurant. It is a 5 minute walk to the entrance over level ground.

2 Entrance Area

Access to Rushen Abbey is through a single glass door. The single glass door is heavy and not automated. The door opens outwards. The main entrance is completely level.

Main entrance – single glass door

The main entrance has a medium height counter and is well lit. There is an induction hearing loop fitted. The reception desk is staffed at all time, and our team is happy to help.

Main reception area and shop counter

Torches are available to borrow from reception for those who require them.

Ear defenders can be borrowed from reception for visitors with sensory difficulties.

We have a wheelchair available to borrow while you visit – just ask when you arrive or call ahead to pre book.

Assistance dogs are welcome and a water bowl is available at reception, please ask.

Play bags can be collected from reception for our younger visitors.

Cloak Room Facilities

Rushen Abbey has a cloakroom facility. Items are left at visitors own risk. Please speak to the reception staff if you need assistance using this facility.

3 Access for Visitors with Disabilities

Rushen Abbey offers a warm welcome to all.

Visitors with specific needs are welcome to contact Manx National Heritage in advance of their visit and descriptive guided tours can be arranged. To discuss your requirements please email enquiries@mnh.im.

Assistance dogs are welcome and a water bowl is available at reception, please ask.

Visitors who use Wheelchairs or have Limited Mobility

Access to the main entrance of Rushen Abbey is level and we have a medium level counter at our reception desk.

The Rushen Abbey visitor centre is on one level and it accessible to visitors using wheelchairs. Please note there are varying floor surfaces throughout the visitor centre and there are several moderate ramps and inclines, together with uneven floor coverings.

We have a wheelchair available to borrow while you visit – just ask when you arrive or phone ahead to pre book.

Motorised scooters are permitted on site, but caution should be exercised on the uneven ground.

There is seating available throughout the galleries.

Please find full details of the gallery level changes below.

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Level Changes (Rushen Abbey)

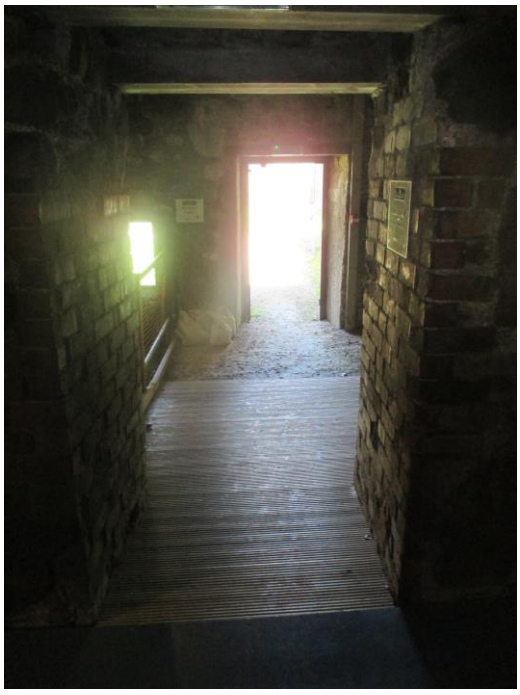
Visitor Centre

The Rushen Abbey visitor centre is on one level and it accessible to visitors using wheelchairs. Please note there are varying floor surfaces throughout the visitor centre and there are several moderate ramps and inclines, together with uneven floor coverings.

Please see details below:

Ramped access from visitor to courtyard – note differing floor finishes

Sloped, decked access from courtyard to Abbey grounds



Decked and uneven floor finish leading from visitor centre to Abbey grounds

Abbey Ruins and Grounds

The Abbey ruins and grounds can be explored by a network of compacted earth paths (topped with loose gravel) and wooden decked paths. The paths are accessible to visitors using wheelchairs, although assistance many be required as the paths are uneven. The paths

can become muddy and slippery when wet. There is also a level grassed area which can be explored. The grass is always kept short.

There is a wooden bridge over a pond, which is near to a sensory garden – with herbs and flowers. There is seating in the gardens.

Please see details below:

Decked wooden paths amongst Abbey ruins

Example of Abbey ground paths – compacted earth topped with gravel

Gravel path around Abbey grounds – showing gardens, pond and bridge

Pond – showing path and bridge

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Visitors who are Blind, Partially Blind or have Sight Loss

The Rushen Abbey visitor centre is on one level. Please note there are varying floor surfaces throughout the visitor centre and there are several moderate ramps and inclines, together with uneven floor coverings. Lighting levels in the Rushen Abbey visitor centre are low in most areas.

Sound, film, light and life-sized displays are used in the galleries as an interpretative tool and to create atmosphere.

The Abbey ruins and grounds can be explored by a network of compacted earth paths (topped with loose gravel) and wooden decked paths. The paths can become muddy and slippery when wet. There is also a level grassed area which can be explored. The grass is always kept short.

The Abbey gardens are a lovely tranquil space, and there is a sensory garden and musical benches where people can sit down and enjoy the atmosphere.

Visitors should note there is an unfenced pond to the far left hand side of the Abbey grounds. If you are concerned about this please stay on the path or speak to a member of staff who will be happy to show you the safe route to follow.

Torches can be borrowed from reception.

Visitors with specific needs are welcome to contact Manx National Heritage in advance of their visit to request a descriptive guided tour. Please email enquiries@mnh.im.

Assistance dogs are welcome and a water bowl is available at reception, please ask.

Visitors who are Deaf or have Hearing Loss

The main reception area has an induction loop. The hearing induction loop requires your hearing aid to be set to T.

Assistance dogs are welcome and a water bowl is available at reception, please ask.

Sound, film, light and life-sized displays are used in the visitor centre as an interpretative tool and to create atmosphere.

There is written interpretation in most galleries.

No films are subtitled. Transcripts are available.

Visitors with specific needs are welcome to contact Manx National Heritage in advance of their visit to talk about your requirements. Please email enquiries@mnh.im.

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Visitors who have Learning or Sensory Difficulties

Sound, film and life-sized displays are used in Rushen Abbey's visitor centre as an interpretative tool and to create atmosphere. There are lots of fun and hands-on activities to take part in at Rushen Abbey – both in the visitor centre and in the Abbey grounds.

During term time Rushen Abbey can become busy with school visits and coach parties; and during the school holidays can be busy with family visits. This all means the site can become noisy and disorientating, which some visitors may find challenging.

When planning your visit our staff would be happy to advise whether Rushen Abbey has any large pre-booked groups and can advise of quieter visiting times.

The Abbey gardens are a lovely tranquil space, and there is a sensory garden and musical benches where people can sit down and enjoy the atmosphere.

Torches and ear defenders can be borrowed from reception for visitors with sensory difficulties.

Manx National Heritage is a member of the sunflower lanyard scheme and our staff are always happy to help.

We can also offer familiarisation tours for visitors with sensory needs during quieter times so they feel more confident to revisit. Please email enquiries@mnh.im.

4 Young Children

Young children are very welcome at Rushen Abbey and are encouraged to explore and have fun. Children can follow the family friendly 'Monky Business' activities including throwing a pot on the potter's wheel, making sounds of the Abbey and the fruit picking challenge in the Jam Factory. You can also enjoy time in the gardens with play mats and toys available for babies and toddlers. This tranquil setting is the perfect location for a family picnic. Please ask at reception to collect our 'Monky Business' play bags to take into the grounds with you.

Sound, film, light and life-sized displays are used in the visitor centre as an interpretative tool and to create atmosphere. The lighting levels are low. This can sometimes be scary and disorientating to younger visitors. We offer torches as often shining a light in a scary corner can help dispel the fears.

Please note there is a large unfenced pond to the far left hand side of the garden. Please familiarise yourself with the pond's location and take extra care when children are playing in this area.

Pond to the left hand side of the site – please keep an eye on young children

All Manx National Heritage sites support and welcome breastfeeding mothers.

You are welcome to leave your buggy in the cloakroom area.

Baby changing facilities are available in the male and female toilets.

5 Toilets

Ground Floor Facilities

Rushen Abbey has one standard unisex accessible toilet in the main visitor centre. It is located 20 metres to the rear of the main reception area. There is also a male and female toilet in this area.

There is level access to all toilets, although there is a moderate ramp leading down to the toilets.

The male and female toilets both contain changing facilities for babies and toddlers.

Entrance to toilet block – showing ramp

Accessible Toilet

Near to the main reception area is a clearly marked standard unisex accessible toilet with outward opening door and twist lock. The door is heavy. Further details:

- Right hand lateral transfer space with a drop down rail.
- There are wall mounted rails.
- There is a lower level sink with two twist/turn taps.
- There is a functional emergency alarm available.
- Disposal facilities are available in the cubicle.
- There are no mirrors.
- There is a hand dryer. It is placed higher than 100cm.

- There are no baby change facilities.
- Vinyl floor, good colour contrast to walls.
- Good overhead lighting.

Standard Unisex Accessible Toilet

6 Gift Shop

Our Gift Shop is located at the entrance way to Rushen Abbey.

The Gift Shop has a mid-level counter.

There is a hearing induction loop at the shop counter.

There are tall display racks and low tables accessible from a seated position.

Lighting in the shop is good natural daylight with additional overhead lighting.

There is small refreshment area to the rear of the shop. Hot drinks and snacks are available. There is seating available. Please ask a member of staff if you require assistance.

Rushen Abbey Gift Shop

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7 The Abbey Restaurant

Next to Rushen Abbey is the Abbey Restaurant.

Abbey Restaurant has level access for wheelchair users and an accessible toilet.

For more information on access needs, dietary requirements or to book a table please contact the Abbey Restaurant on 01624 822393 or email manager@theabbeyrestaurant.co.im.

The Abbey Restaurant

8 Future Plans

The Rushen Abbey team receive customer service and equality awareness training and are always happy to help. We work with a range of partners across the Island to ensure our sites and collections are accessible, engaging and inspiring to a broad range of users. We are always seeking to improve our services for visitors and appreciate your feedback.

Manx National Heritage is committed to improving access to heritage assets for everybody; and is working to embed an inclusive 'access for all' philosophy across the organisation and in everything we do.

If you would like to discuss access and inclusion in more detail please contact Access & Inclusion Champions Katie King on 01624 648023, Katie.king@mnh.im, or Suzie Walker on 01624 648018, Suzanne.walker@mnh.im.

Contact Information

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Opening hours:	*Please see our website for up-to-date opening hours*