



Access Guide for Castle Rushen

Manx National Heritage recognises that historic properties can present difficulties for people with disabilities. We have prepared an access guides for Castle Rushen 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 Castle Rushen.

Introduction

Castle Rushen is located in the ancient capital of the Isle of Man, Castletown. The impressive limestone fortress was once home to the Kings and Lords of Mann. Founded by the Norse King Reginald in the late 1100's, Castle Rushen was developed by successive rulers between the 13th and 16th centuries. During its time it was used as a fortress, royal residence, a mint and even a prison. Today Castle Rushen is considered to be one of the best preserved medieval castles in Europe.

Visitors to Castle Rushen are welcome to climb the spiral staircases, explore the dressed rooms and chat to our knowledgeable guides about the fascinating history behind this unique building.

There is limited access for visitors using wheel chairs to the Castle keep (main building), although the ground floor, inner bailey and courtyard are accessible. Please see the mobility impairment section for more detailed information.

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

We look forward to welcoming you. If you have any queries or require assistance please speak to our staff on arrival.

Alternatively to discuss your requirements prior to visiting please phone the castle 01624 827413 or email enquiries@mnh.im.



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1 Getting to Castle Rushen

Castle Rushen is located in the heart of Castletown, in fact the town grew up around the 12th century fortress.



Castle Rushen

By car:

There is on street parking around Castle Rushen, and two nearby free-of-charge car parks. Visitors should note that Castletown operates a parking disc zone, which means free parking for an allotted time. Some areas of Castletown offer 2 hour limits, others up to 24 hours. Please check the signs when you park.

Disabled badge holders can park in the disc zone for double the allotted time, a parking disc must be displayed. Parking discs can be collected from any IOM Post Office or the Welcome Centre at the Sea Terminal in Douglas.

There are double yellow lines in a number of places around Castle Rushen, please note that on the Isle of Man disabled badge holders are not permitted to park on these lines.

There is a drop off point immediately in front of the main Castle entrance.

There is a dropped curb to access the Castle.



Castle Rushen main entrance as seen from the road

On foot:

Castle Rushen is next to the harbour in Castletown and is on level ground. There are pedestrian pavements leading to the main entrance and there are dropped curbs. There are no pedestrian crossings to aid access.

The pavements of Castletown are narrow in places and paved with textured slabs. Visitors using wheel chairs may require assistance due to the uneven surfaces. In addition the slabs can become slippery when wet.

Please note that Castletown is the ancient capital of the Isle of Man and is thus historic in nature. Many of the streets and pavements are uneven.

By bus:

There is a bus stop in the main square. Journey time from Douglas takes approximately 25 minutes.

The route to Castle Rushen is wheelchair and buggy accessible, but visitors using wheel chairs may require assistance due to the uneven pavements.

By coach:

Coach visitors can be dropped off outside Castle Rushen. There is a marked bay near to the Quayside for drop off. There is a coach park on Farrant's Way (to the rear of the Market Square). Visitors should be made aware that Castle Rushen is a 5-10 minute walk from the coach park.

2 Entrance Area

Access to Castle Rushen grounds is through a wide tarmacked entrance way (the barbican), which has a gentle upward incline. It is approximately 40 metres to reach the main doors. At the main entrance there is a set of double glass doors which open outwards. They are opened using a touch button.



Main entrance approach to Castle Rushen showing outward opening glass doors with 'Touch to Open' button



The entrance way is level, although there is a slightly raised lip on the door threshold.



Entrance way showing slight raised lip on door threshold

Once in the entrance way the flooring is laminate wood and is level. The entrance area contains the main reception desk and gift shop. The reception desk has a medium height counter and is well lit. The reception desk is staffed at all time, and the team is happy to help.



Castle Rushen reception area and shop counter

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

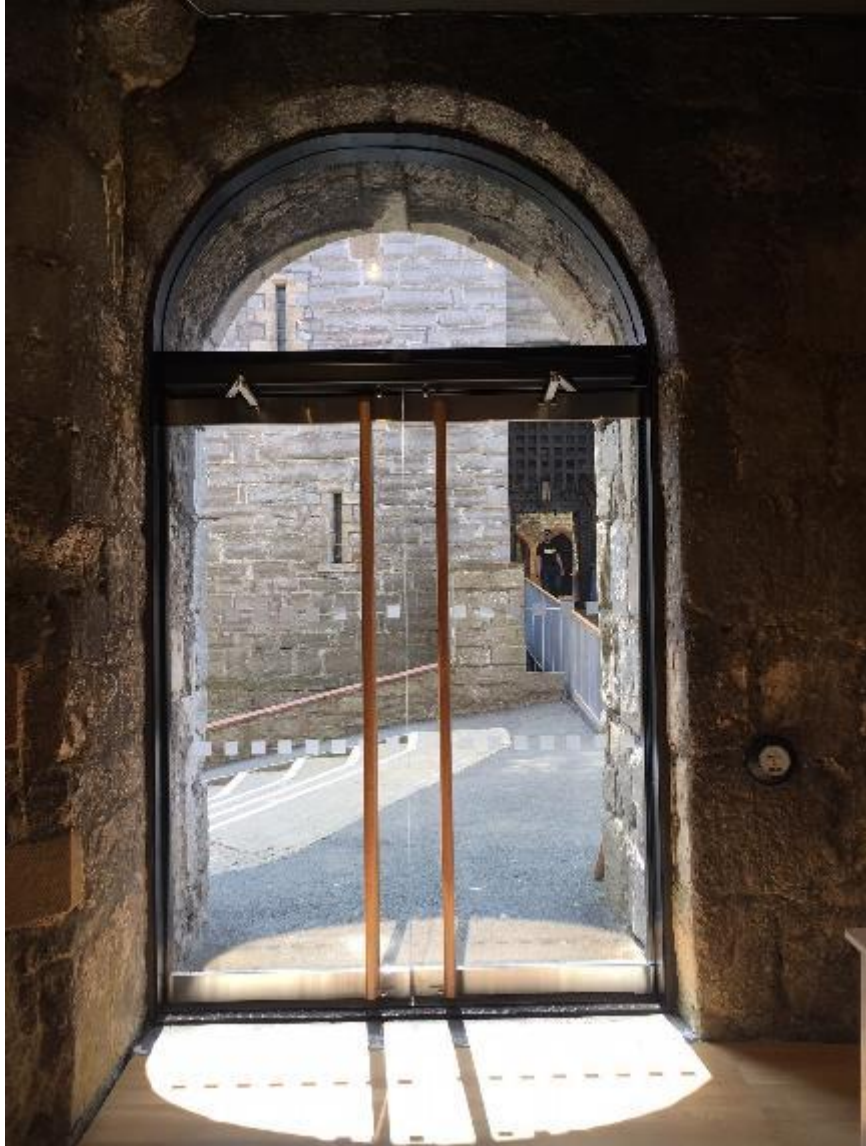
Assistance dogs are welcome and a water bowl is available at reception, please ask. The main reception area also contains a gift shop and to the right hand side is a stone archway leading to an orientation gallery and gathering space. This is all on the level and has a laminate floor.



Orientation gallery, gathering space and children's interactive gallery

Entrance to the Castle Grounds:

The entrance to the Castle grounds is accessed through a set of double glass doors. They are opened using a 'Touch to Open' button. The access route is on the level, although there is a slight raised lip at the door threshold. The entrance to the Castle grounds is tarmacked.



Main entrance approach to Castle Rushen showing outward opening glass doors with 'Touch to Open' button

Cloak Room Facilities

Castle Rushen does not have a dedicated cloakroom facility, but our team is happy to store large bags, buggies or bulky items in our reception area providing space is available. Items are left at visitors own risk.



3 Access for Disabled Visitors

Castle Rushen 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 or call the castle on 01624 827413 in advance and speak to our friendly team who would be happy to help.

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

Visitors who use Wheelchairs or have Limited Mobility



Castle Rushen – aerial view showing grounds

Access to Castle Rushen grounds is through a wide tarmacked entrance way (the barbican), which has a gentle upward incline. It is approximately 40 metres to reach the main doors. At the main entrance there is a set of double glass doors which open outwards. They are opened using a touch button.

Castle Rushen for Visitors Using Wheelchairs

Castle Rushen is a medieval fortress and the Castle keep (main building) has a spiral staircase and a historic staircase to access the upper levels. There are no alternative methods for accessing the upper floors.

There is ramped and/or level access to the ground floor of the Castle keep, the film room, the exhibition space and the inner bailey (Castle grounds). The ground floor of the Castle keep is fully accessible to visitors using wheel chairs. All ramps are wooden and have a non-slip surface. The ramps lead to stone floors within the ground floor of the Castle.

The exhibition room and film room explain more about the history of the Castle and also contain audio visual material detailing features of the rooms and views from the upper floors of the Castle.

Motorised scooters are permitted in the Castle grounds, but caution should be exercised on the uneven ground.

Please see details of the Castle's ramped access areas.

The Castle Keep:



Drawbridge to Castle keep



Showing threshold from drawbridge to Castle keep

Aerial view of Castle courtyard





Castle keep courtyard leading to exhibition room and film room

Level entrance to ground floor exhibition room and film room



The doorway to the exhibition room is 73cm wide. Please note there is an alternative entrance to the film and exhibition room which is also on the level and measures 109cm wide.



Alternative entrance to film room and exhibition gallery – doorway width 109cm



Doorway leading to film room (via small corridor)

The doorway to the film room leading from the exhibition room is 80cm wide. Please note there is an alternative entrance to the film room which is also on the level and measures 109cm wide.



Doorway leading to film room

Second doorway leading into the film room from the exhibition room is 73cm wide. Please note there is an alternative entrance to the film room which is also on the level and measures 109cm wide.

Exhibition Room showing the stone floor



The Castle Grounds:



Derby House Walkway - tarmacked ramped access to the inner bailey & toilet block



The Inner Bailey – level grassed area with ramped access over remains of gaol house wall

Castle Rushen Level Changes

There is a one way route to follow through Castle Rushen, which leads visitors from the courtyard up a spiral staircase to the upper ramparts (wall walks), then down through another set of stairs to explore the period dressed rooms.

Visitors who do not wish to use the spiral staircase route can request to use the 'prison stairwell' route to the castle interior. The staff on duty will be happy to show you the way. These steps resemble a more conventional staircase, but are still historic in nature with low level lighting. Please see images below for further details.

Castle Rushen is a 900 year old historic building. It has low lighting levels, historic steps of varying size and the floor surfaces vary. The steps can become slippery when wet or when the weather is damp. Visitors should take care when exploring the Castle.

Castle Rushen Exhibition Room & Film

There is level access from the Castle keep courtyard to the exhibition room which tells the history of the Castle. Leading from this room on the level there is a film room which shows a short presentation about the history of the castle (see photos above for more details). There are handrails on all ramps.



Ramp leading from Courtyard to exhibition and film room – alternatively there are two steps which can be used instead



Level access to the exhibition room and film room

Spiral Staircase Route (Up)

There are 68 steps on the spiral staircase route to the rampart walks. There is a handrail. The route is one way. There are rooms leading off the spiral staircase for visitors to explore and to take a rest en-route. The rooms are all historic in nature, with steep steps and uneven floor surfaces. Please note the spiral staircases are narrow and the lighting levels are low.



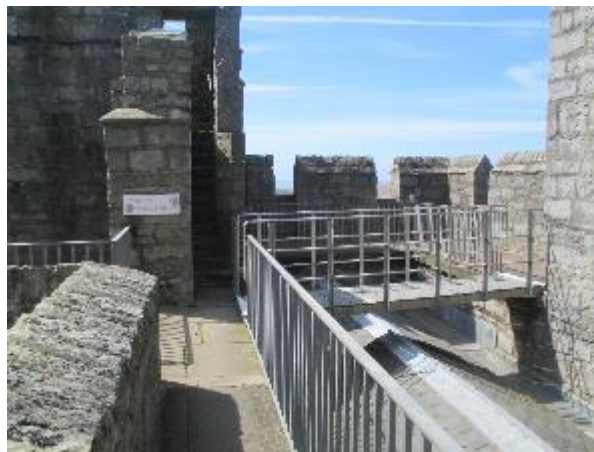
Main spiral staircase



The Ramparts

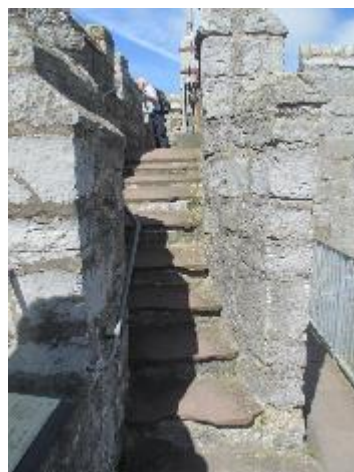
The upper ramparts (wall walks) enable visitors to explore the castle from height and have a level walkway across. The wall walks lead to a second spiral staircase which leads back down to the interior of the castle and into the period dressed rooms. From the ramparts visitors can choose to climb 5 steps to an exhibition room, or a further 32 steps to the flag tower (the highest point).

Please note the Castle is very tall, and some visitors find looking over the top can set off vertigo or they become anxious. If you feel unwell please speak to the member of our team stationed on the ramparts.



Rampart Wall Walks

There are 100 steps from the ground floor to the flag tower – the highest point of the Castle. Many visitors choose not to climb all the way to the top, preferring to stop at the upper rampart (wall walk) level!



Set of steps to the highest point

Route Down

To visit the period dressed rooms there is a second spiral staircase which leads down. There are 32 spiral staircase steps to reach the Medieval Banqueting Hall. There is a handrail. The route is one way.

Once in the interior of the Castle keep there are no more spiral staircases. There are a number of dressed rooms and ante-chambers to explore. Each room has one or two large steps in/out. To exit the Castle visitors should proceed down the main prison stairwell, which has a hand rail (39 steps), through the Presence Chamber and down the courtyard steps which has a hand rail (18 steps).



Central stairwell – ‘The Prison Stairwell’

Alternative Access to the Castle Interior (no spiral staircase)

If you do not wish to use the spiral staircase please advise the member of staff on duty in the courtyard and they will show you the alternative routes.

Visitors can choose to enter the Castle interior via the main stairwell (known as the ‘prison stairwell’ – see image above), which is wider and has a handrail. There are 39 steps on the prison stairwell to the Medieval Banqueting Hall. Visitors using this route will not reach the ramparts, and will remain in the interior of the Castle keep.

Visitors can also access the Castle interior using the kitchen stairwell which leads to the Presence Chamber and onto the other period dressed rooms. There are 18 steps with a handrail (see image below).



Steps leading from or to the Presence Chamber

Inner Bailey

Visitors can explore the inner bailey of the Castle, which is a grassed area around the Castle keep. The inner bailey is approached via stepped and ramped access. The inner bailey is approximately 200 metres long.



The Inner Bailey – level grassed area with ramped access over remains of gaol house wall



Visitors who are Blind, Partially Blind or have Sight Loss

Castle Rushen has low lighting levels throughout the interior and the floor surfaces vary. The period dressed rooms have rush-work floor coverings, which are uneven in some places.

The Castle's historic steps vary in size and can become slippery when wet or when the weather is damp. There are white edge markings on most of the stairwells. There are steps of varying size into and out of most rooms.

On some sections of the upper rampart wall walks there are no railings between the wall walks and a roof on the level below.

Owing to these issues, visitors with sight loss may find it helpful to have a companion with them to explore the Castle. Alternatively we can offer an accompanied tour or a descriptive tour for visitors. To discuss your requirements please email enquiries@mnh.im.

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

Torches are available from reception.

Visitors who are Deaf or have Hearing Loss

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

The film is subtitled.

There is written interpretation.

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

Guided tours can be arranged. To discuss your requirements please email enquiries@mnh.im.

Visitors who have Learning or Sensory Difficulties

Castle Rushen is an imposing fortress built from huge blocks of limestone. The spiral staircases are narrow, built to keep out invading armies and the lighting levels are low. The building is very old, which can make some people feel frightened. The Castle is very tall, and some visitors find looking over the top can set off vertigo or make them anxious.

A number of the rooms in Castle Rushen are dressed in period styles – from medieval furniture and replica food to dressed mannequins. There are sounds and noises used in some of the rooms to create atmosphere.



Manx National Heritage
Eiraght Ashoonagh Vannin

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

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

Torches 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 Castle Rushen and are encouraged to explore and have fun.

Castle Rushen is an historic property and as such we ask parents to keep a close eye on young children. Please take extra care when climbing up and down spiral staircases, walking the ramparts and admiring the view from the highest point.

Sound, music and life-sized models are used throughout the castle as an interpretative tool and to create atmosphere. This combined with the sheer scale of the historic building can mean a visit to Castle Rushen can be scary and disorientating to younger visitors. We offer torches as often shining a light in a scary corner can help dispel the fears.

To protect our collections, food and drink are not to be consumed inside the castle keep (main building), but picnics are encouraged in the castle grounds. There are benches and picnic tables.

All Manx National Heritage sites support and welcome breastfeeding mothers.

You are welcome to leave your buggy in the castle entrance area.

Baby changing facilities are available in the female and male toilets, located 100 metres from the main entrance.

5 Toilets

Castle Rushen has two larger toilet cubicles with turning space for visitors using wheelchairs, one within the male toilet block and one within the female toilet block. There is level access to all toilets, which are located 100 metres from the main entrance way. There is a steep downward incline leading to the toilet block.

Please note there is another publicly accessible toilet at the Costa coffee shop outside the main entrance of the Castle and a large accessible toilet at the Castletown Town Hall (5 minute walk – 150 metres) which is open 24 hours a day.



Tarmacked ramped incline leading to the toilet block

Entrance to toilet block



Both the male and female toilet blocks contain changing facilities for babies and toddlers.



Main toilet block

Female accessible toilet cubicle with turning space and hand rails

The female toilet block has an inward opening door. Within the block there is a clearly marked accessible cubicle with outward opening door and sliding bolt. Further details:

- Left hand lateral transfer space.
- There are wall mounted rails.
- There is a drop down rail on the transfer side.
- There is a lower level sink with lever mixer tap.
- There is no functional emergency alarm available.
- Disposal facilities are available in the cubicle.
- There is a mirror in the cubicle.
- There are paper towels.
- Tiled floor, good colour contrast to walls.
- Good overhead lighting.
- Baby change facilities are located outside the accessible cubicle.



Male accessible toilet cubicle with turning space and hand rails

The male toilet block has an inward opening door. Within the block there is a clearly marked accessible cubicle with inward opening door and sliding bolt. Further details:

- Left hand lateral transfer space.
- There are wall mounted rails.
- There is a drop down rail on the transfer side.
- There is a lower level sink with lever mixer tap.
- There is no functional emergency alarm available.
- Disposal facilities are available in the cubicle.
- There is a mirror in the cubicle.
- There are paper towels.
- Tiled floor, good colour contrast to walls.
- Good overhead lighting.

- Baby change facilities are located outside the accessible cubicle.



Male Accessible Toilet Cubicle

6 Gift Shop

Our Gift Shop is located at the entrance to the Castle.

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.

7 Coffee Shop

Outside the Castle entrance is Costa, a coffee shop to serve Castle Rushen and Castletown. The coffee shop is a joint enterprise between Manx National Heritage and an Isle of Man based Costa Franchisee.

The Manx Museum and National Trust have invested in the building using its charitable funds in order to secure the future of the two hundred year old heritage property which has previously served as soldiers' married quarters, a military library, a customs office, a police store and latterly as the town's social security office. The acquisition has also ensured the protection of the view from Castle Rushen whilst bringing the vacant property back into sustainable use.

Costa has level access for customers using wheel chairs and an accessible toilet.



Costa outside Castle Rushen which helps to support the heritage of the Island

8 Future Plans

The Castle Rushen team receive customer service and disability 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 Champion Katie King on 01624 648023, Katie.king@mnh.im.

Contact Information

Address:	Castle Rushen, Castle Street, Castletown. IM9 1LD
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Website:	www.manxnationalheritage.im
Email:	enquiries@mnh.im
Opening hours:	<i>Please see our website for up-to-date opening hours</i>