

Access Guide to The Great Laxey Wheel & Mines Trail

Manx National Heritage recognises that historic countryside properties can present difficulties for people with disabilities. We have prepared an access guides for the Great Laxey Wheel site 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 outdoor environment at the site.

Introduction

The Great Laxey Wheel is the largest surviving working water wheel of its kind in the world. Designed by the Victorian engineer, Robert Casement, the wheel was built in 1854 to pump water from the Glen Mooar part of the 'Great Laxey Mines' industrial complex. The impressive 22m (72.5 feet) diameter structure found immediate popularity and has remained one of the Island's most dramatic tourist attractions for over 150 years.

The Great Laxey Wheel and Mines Trail is an open air site situated in the Glen Mooar Valley. The site itself consists of the Lady Isabella (the Great Laxey Wheel), the mines trail and access to the old mine adit. There is limited access to visitors using wheelchairs to the site, although there is a network of paths to be explored. Visitors using wheelchairs may require assistance due to the uneven nature of the paths. The use of motorised scooters is permitted, but caution should be exercised on the uneven ground. Please see the mobility impairment section for more detailed information.

The Great Laxey Wheel and Mines Trail is usually open seasonally (Easter – October). It 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).

We have an accessible ticket office and shop at the arrival point. Snacks and water can be purchased at the shop, and picnics are encouraged.

There are two accessible toilets on site.

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 the Great Laxey Wheel & Mines Trail

The Great Laxey Wheel site is located in the Glen Mooar Valley in the village of Laxey in the East of the Island. It is an open air site.



The Great Laxey Wheel



Map of the Great Laxey Wheel Site

By car:

There is a public car park on site. There are no marked disabled parking spaces. The car park surface is tarmacked and has a moderate upward incline.



Laxey Wheel Car Park

On foot:

The Great Laxey Wheel site can be accessed from the main village via pedestrian pavements. It is a 10-15 minute walk from the centre of the village. The Laxey Wheel is situated at the top of a steep tarmacked hill, Wheel Hill. It is approximately 50 metres from the base of the hill to the pay barrier.



Wheel Hill

Access to the car park is via a cattle grid with pedestrian access at the side.



Entrance to the Laxey Wheel Car Park

There is alternative access on foot to the Laxey Wheel via a series of countryside pathways leading from Laxey Village. For more photographs detailing walking routes to the Wheel please see the 'By Coach' section.

By bus:

Laxey is on the main Douglas to Ramsey bus route. Journey time from Douglas takes approximately 25 minutes. There are bus stops along the main road and the Laxey Wheel is a 10-15 minute walk away. The route is mostly on the level until you reach the base of Wheel Hill.

The route to the Laxey Wheel is wheelchair and buggy accessible via the main road route, although the pavements are narrow in places.

For more detailed information and a timetable please see

<https://www.iombusandrail.im/timetables-and-routes/bus-timetables/>

By tram:

Laxey Village is also serviced by the historic Manx Electric Railway – from both Ramsey and Douglas.

By coach:

There are two designated coach parking areas near to the Laxey Wheel, on Ham and Egg Terrace. Please note it is a steep 5-10 minute walk to the Laxey Wheel from the coach parking areas. Please see photos below:

Coach Park 1 – Ham and Egg Terrace

Coach parking is available at the entrance to Ham and Egg Terrace. It is a 5-10 minute walk to the base of Wheel Hill. There is a road route and a glen route to Wheel Hill.



Coach Park 1



Road Route to the Laxey Wheel

Coach Park 2 – Near to bottom of Wheel Hill (200 metres from the Wheel)

There is a second coach park nearer to the base of Wheel Hill. It is a 5 minute walk to the Laxey Wheel via a glen or via the road. For the glen route there is a stepped bridge, uneven paths and a steep incline. Either route includes a steep incline on Wheel Hill.

Please see images below for more information on the routes:



Coach Park 2



Pedestrian route to Laxey Wheel via glen (1)



Pedestrian route to Laxey Wheel via glen – note there are three steps off the bridge, see below (2)



Pedestrian route to Laxey Wheel via glen (3)



Pedestrian route to Laxey Wheel via glen (4)



Pedestrian route to Laxey Wheel via glen, showing steep incline and gravel path (5)



Pedestrian route to Laxey Wheel via glen, showing join onto Wheel Hill (6)



Pedestrian route to Laxey Wheel via glen, road walk to Laxey Wheel up Wheel Hill (7)

Alternative walking routes to Laxey Wheel from Coach Park 2



Showing road route – 200 metres to the Laxey Wheel via a steep incline

Alternative walking routes to Laxey Wheel from Coach Park 1 or Coach Park 2

At the base of Wheel Hill is another glen route to the Laxey Wheel. It is a steep incline with an uneven path which can become slippery in wet weather. At the end of the glen is a set of 28 uneven steps which lead to the Laxey Wheel car park. There is a hand rail. The route is 100 metres. The route avoids pedestrians having to walk on the road.



Pedestrian glen entrance from the base of Wheel Hill (1)



Pedestrian glen entrance from the base Wheel Hill (2)



Pedestrian glen entrance from the base of Wheel Hill, showing 28 uneven steps and handrail (3)

2 Entrance Area

Access to the Great Laxey Wheel site is through the visitor hub.



Laxey Wheel Visitor Hub



There is level access to the visitor hub.



Ticket Desk

Inside the visitor welcome hub is a medium height counter. There is an induction hearing loop fitted.

The floor is on the level. The floor covering is vinyl.

The visitor hub is staffed at all time, and our team are happy to help.

All well behaved dogs on a short lead are welcome on site and a water bowl is available at the entrance kiosk, please ask.

The visitor hub also has a shop.

To access the Laxey Wheel site visitors pass through the visitor hub and out a set of double doors. This is on the level.

The area is tarmac.



3 Access for Disabled Visitors

The Great Laxey Wheel 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 the entrance kiosk, please ask.

Visitors who use Wheelchairs or have Limited Mobility

The Great Laxey Wheel is an open air site. There is limited access to the site for visitors using wheelchairs, although there are networks of paths to explore. Visitors using wheelchairs may require assistance due to the uneven nature of the ground and should note a number of the paths have steep inclines. Motorised scooters are permitted, but caution should be exercised on the uneven ground.

Please find full details of the outdoor landscape and pathways below.

The Great Laxey Wheel Grounds

The first entrance way to the Great Laxey Wheel site is level with a tarmac covering, leading to gravel paths.



Laxey Wheel Entrance – showing tarmac leading to gravel paths

The Great Laxey Wheel

The Laxey Wheel itself can be accessed by two different routes from the main entrance. One route is via a wooden bridge leading to a set of nine steps with hand rail, and then a second set of seven steps with hand rail. It is approximately 100 metres from the main entrance.



Wooden bridge to base of Laxey Wheel

Steps at base of Laxey Wheel



Second set of steps at base of Laxey Wheel

Once the two sets of steps have been ascended there are a further 96 steps to reach the viewing platform at the top of the Wheel.



Steps leading to Laxey Wheel lower platform (21 steps)



Spiral steps leading to top viewing platform (75 steps)

An alternative route to access the base of the wheel is via a gravel path that leads to another wooden bridge. This route is level, but wheelchair users may require assistance due to the uneven nature of the path. The route is 50 metres from the main entrance.



Wooden bridge leading to base of the Wheel

Once at the base of the Wheel there is an archway which leads under the wheel to a concreted area. This is on level ground.



Archway under the Wheel



Concrete area under the Wheel and T Rocker

The Old Mine Adit

From the Great Laxey Wheel main entrance there is a compacted gravel path that leads to the old mine adit entrance. The mine adit can still be accessed by visitors. The path is uneven and rough in places, and there is a moderate incline about 150 metres into the route. The route is wheelchair and motorised scooter accessible, although users may require assistance due to the uneven nature of the paths. The path is on a gently rising slope and it is approximately 200 metres to the adit entrance. The route can also become muddy and slippery when wet.



Path leading to Old Mine Adit



Path leading to Old Mine Adit, showing the uneven path and moderate incline

Entrance to the Old Mine Adit



Once at the entrance it is possible to venture inside the Old Mine Adit – hard hats will be provided and must be worn. The route is level and stretches for approximately 20 metres.

The tunnel is narrow and there is not room for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre once inside.



Inside the Old Mine Adit

The Mines Trail

The Great Laxey Wheel is situated in the Glen Mooar Valley and there are two walks to explore around the site. These walks are called the Mines Trail.

The first walk is to the left hand side of the site and is the gentler of the two walks. This first walk is close to the base of the Laxey Wheel and is reached by ascending 20 country path steps. The walk takes in points of industrial archaeological interest along the way – including the T-rocker, the wheel cistern, the machine house and engine house. The walk is up a gentle slope and is a grassed and gravel uneven path. The walk takes approximately 10-15 minutes.



Steps leading to Mines Trail



Steps leading to Mines Trail



Mines Trail Path (gentle route)

The second Mines Trail walk is to the right hand side of the site and is a steeper walk. It is accessed by a stepped countryside path and is a steep walk. The steps and path can become slippery and muddy when wet. The walk through the Glen Mooar Valley also takes in points of industrial archaeological interest and leads to the Compressor House. The walk to the Compressor House takes approximately 60 minutes and there are benches along the route.



Steps leading to the steeper Mines Trail (Glen Mooar Valley)



Steps leading to the steeper Mines Trail (Glen Mooar Valley)

Visitors who are Blind, Partially Blind or have Sight Loss

The Great Laxey Wheel and Mines Trail is an historic countryside environment in an open air site. The site can be explored by a network of compacted gravel paths, which are uneven in places. The paths can become muddy and slippery when wet. The route to the Laxey Wheel does include climbing steps (please see the mobility impaired section for details).

The Glen Mooar Valley is a beautiful countryside location with a glen, river, waterfall and plenty of natural history to explore.

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.

Visitors who are Deaf or have Hearing Loss

There is a hearing induction loop at the entrance barrier.

There is written interpretation on site.

A guide book to the site is available to purchase at the entrance kiosk, and a laminated map can be borrowed to aid orientation around the site. There are interpretation panels around the site to learn more about the history of the Great Laxey Wheel.

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 or call the Wheel team 861136.

Visitors who have Learning or Sensory Difficulties

The Great Laxey Wheel site is a fascinating place to explore. Visitors can climb to the top of the impressive Lady Isabella and enjoy the panoramic views of Laxey and beyond. There are beautiful walks through the stunning Glen Mooar Valley. Visitors can also explore the Old Mine Adit and discover more about the life of the miners who worked at the Great Laxey Mine complex.

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

Familiarisation tours for visitors with sensory difficulties can be arranged to help them explore the site. 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.

4 Young Children

Young children are very welcome at the Great Laxey Wheel and Mines Trail and are encouraged to explore and have fun. Intrepid explorers can climb to the top of the impressive Lady Isabella and enjoy the panoramic views of Laxey and beyond. Parents should note that there are 96 steps up a narrow spiral staircase to the top of the Wheel and it may set off vertigo for some visitors. It is important that children are supervised at all times when climbing to the top of the Wheel.

In addition to the Wheel there are beautiful countryside walks through the stunning Glen Mooar Valley and children might enjoy becoming nature explorers - hunting for mini beasts and flowers around the glen. Visitors can also explore the Old Mine Adit and discover more about the life of the miners who worked at the Great Laxey Mine complex.

Parent should note that the Great Laxey Wheel and Mines Trail has a river and waterfall running through it and caution should be exercised when exploring the site.

The countryside setting is the perfect location for a family picnic and we have picnic benches and a grassed area for this purpose.

There are baby changing facilities in the toilet block.

All Manx National Heritage sites supports and welcomes breastfeeding mothers.

All Children 12 years and under must be accompanied by an adult.

5 Toilets

The Laxey Wheel has two accessible toilets in a new toilet block. The toilets are on the level, and are approximately 25 metres from the entrance kiosk. There is a moderate slope with uneven surfaces leading from the entrance kiosk to the toilets. Please see the mobility impairment section for further details of the route.



Laxey Wheel Toilet Block

Toilet interior





Toilet interior

The toilet block has two accessible cubicles with baby changing facilities.

The toilet cubicles are accessed through an outward opening door. It is not power assisted.

The cubicle comprises a standard accessible toilet with:

- Right hand transfer space with double drop down rails
- Fixed hand rails to left side of the toilet
- Vertical hand rails above basin
- Low level basin with lever tap
- Emergency pull cord
- Full length mirror
- Good overhead lighting.
- Wall hanging baby changing mat

6 Future Plans

There is building work planned on this site in 2024. There will be additional hazards such as scaffolding on site.

The Great Laxey Wheel and Mines Trail 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.

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