WHITCHURCH SILK

HAMPSHIRE ENGLAND

Our illustrated access statement

Welcome to Whitchurch Silk Mill, a working, living piece of Britain's silk story.

We want everyone to enjoy their visit here, and this guide is designed to help you plan your visit comfortably and confidently.

If you'd like assistance at any point during your visit, just let us know; we're here to make your time at the Mill as enjoyable and comfortable as possible.

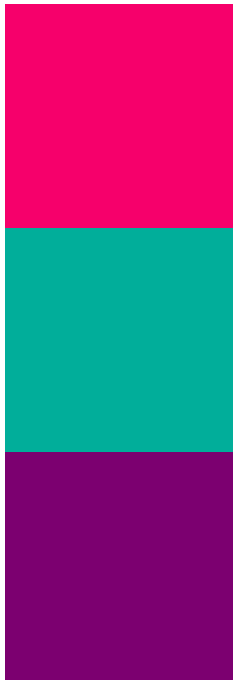
We hope this guide helps you plan your visit and understand what to expect as you move around our historic building and outdoor spaces.

Last reviewed 23.7.2026

CONTENTS: HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

How to use this guide

This guide is colour-coded, as follows:



The magenta pages (5 to 8) are about what we mean by access – our definition, our commitment and what we are doing to eliminate barriers.

The turquoise pages (9 to 33) are an illustrated guide to getting around the Mill, highlighting areas where some of our visitors may find access difficult.

The dark purple pages (34 to 37) are about our commitment to continuously improving access to collections, learning and communication.

WHAT WE MEAN BY ACCESS

What we mean by access

We recognise there are barriers to access at all levels of Whitchurch Silk Mill. However, we believe that all people have a fundamental right to engage with, use, and enjoy the Mill.

We define access as the ability to do something when physical, cultural, social, financial, intellectual, psychological, and emotional barriers are removed or reduced.

We are always improving the ways visitors can experience the Mill, from interpretation in different formats to one-to-one support from our team.
We will review the access policy regularly to ensure it is in line with, or exceeds, national guidelines and standards.

Our commitment to accessibility

Whitchurch Silk Mill aims to provide the widest possible access to its site, collections and services, enabling people across the community to enjoy the Mill.

It is Whitchurch Silk Mill Trust's policy to treat all fairly and equally.

We aim to build accessibility into everything we do to develop and improve the Mill, committing to continuous improvement as our resources permit.

Our commitment to accessibility extends to all, including staff, volunteers, work placements, and visitors.

We support ongoing Access training for staff and volunteers.

Eliminating barriers to accessibility

Physical: to enable people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate every part of the Mill.

Sensory: to enable visitors with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy the Mill's buildings and collections.

Intellectual: to ensure interpretation caters for a variety of learning styles.

Cultural: to consider the needs of people for whom English is not a first language.

Attitudinal and emotional: to ensure the Mill environment is welcoming to visitors.

Financial: When reviewing admission charges, consider the ability to pay.

PHYSICAL AND SENSORY ACCESS TO THE MILL BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

Access to the Mill

The Mill dates back to 1815. Although its age brings character – original floors, some narrow staircases and timber beams – it also brings some limitations. We'll guide you through these clearly to ensure everyone can enjoy the sights, sounds and stories of the Mill.

Parts of our historic buildings have limited physical access; however, we work hard to ensure the collections themselves remain accessible.

The following pages are an illustrated guide to getting around the Mill and its grounds, highlighting areas where some of our visitors with physical and sensory challenges may find access more difficult.

Accessing the Mill and its Grounds

This guide describes our site and facilities as clearly as possible, allowing you to decide what works best for you.

Whitchurch Silk Mill is located in the rural town of Whitchurch, Hampshire, seven miles from Andover. The Mill is an exciting place where you can explore silk production, from its history and how it is woven, to the Mill's current projects. It is on a level site next to the River Test.

The Silk Mill is a member of the Quality Assurance Scheme.

Hearing support

A fixed hearing induction loop is installed at Reception in the shop to support visitors who use hearing aids.

We also have a portable induction loop available for talks, tours and group sessions. If you would like to use it, please just ask a member of the team – we're always happy to help.

Outdoor seating

We provide a range of outdoor seating to suit different levels of mobility.

- Plastic café chairs, with or without arms
- Movable bench seating at the back of the Mill, which can be repositioned to create more space or flexible access
- Wooden armchairs with arms on both sides, designed to offer extra support when lowering or raising yourself

These seating options can be rearranged by visitors or with assistance from our helpful team.

General description

- The Mill has three floors, with an accessible lift to the upper floors. Our café and shop are in a separate building on the ground floor, which also serves as the Mill's entrance.
- Our outdoor paths and car park are surfaced with Breedon Golden Amber gravel, which provides a smooth, firm, and even finish. This creates a stable walking surface and a comfortable route for wheelchair users and pushchairs.
- Allow 1.5 hours for your visit or, if part of a group, 2.5 hours.
- We have a wheelchair available to borrow free of charge.
- The Mill is alive with the gentle hum of historic machinery. When our looms or other equipment are running, noise levels increase – sometimes significantly. If you are sensitive to noise, please take care and feel free to ask a member of our team for support or guidance. Ear defenders are available on request when the machinery is running.
- The ground floor shop sells silk giftware, accessories and other items.
- The café sells light lunches and cakes, as well as tea, coffee and other soft drinks.
- There are two audio installations and one silent video (with subtitles).
- Groups of 20 can pre-book a guided tour.
- Trained assistance dogs are welcome.
- Clear signage can be found throughout the grounds.

We look forward to welcoming you. If you have any queries or require any assistance, please call 01256 892065.

Getting to the Mill

Public transport

- Bus: the Andover to Basingstoke bus (76) stops in Bell Street, 0.25 miles from the Mill.
- Train: Whitchurch Railway Station is just over 0.5 miles away (a 10-to-15-minute walk), down a steep hill to the Mill.

By car and bicycle

- The Mill has two car parking spaces reserved exclusively for drivers and passengers with disabilities.
- The tarmacked public car park next to the Mill is free and has 31 spaces – two of these are for drivers and passengers with disabilities.
- (pictured left) From the car park, there is a 25m paved path and a wooden-boarded bridge leading into the Silk Mill reception.
- Another car park can be found in Bell Street. This is also free, located about 0.25 miles from the Mill. It has a Radar lavatory and 83 parking spaces; some tarmac and some gravel.
- There are several bicycle stands in the Mill's onsite car park.

Getting to the Mill – through main entrance

1. Space for disabled drivers
2. The surface is Breedon Golden Amber, providing a stable and comfortable approach. There is also a path of granite sets.
3. The front door (not automatic)
4. Crossing the threshold

The Mill Shop and Café main entrance. None of the doors on site are assisted, except for the lift doors.

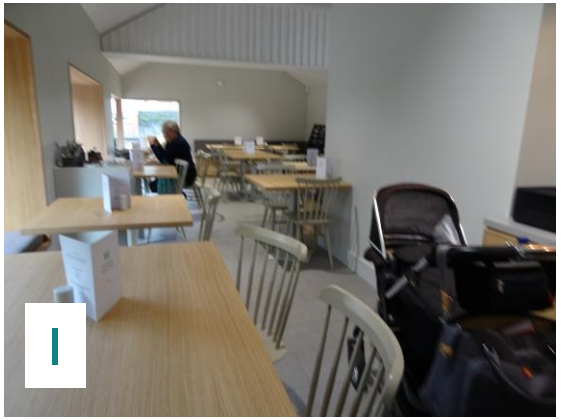
Getting to the Mill – from the public car park

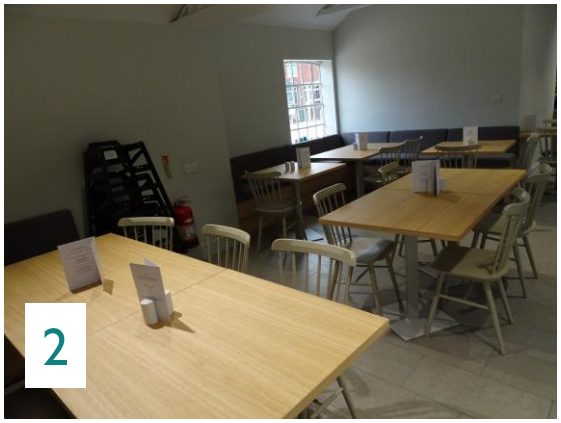
The entrance to the Mill Shop and Café from the public car park

1. Through the gate
2. How wide the gate is
3. Across the bridge
4. The entrance

Inside the Welcome Building

The Shop and Café have a flat, level tiled floor. The main toilets are in this building.



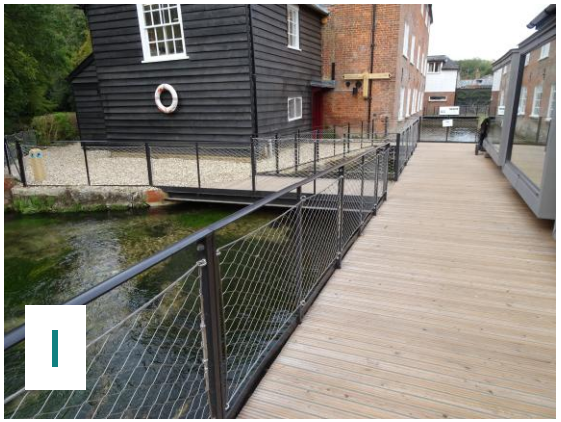


1. The café
2. High chairs BS:EN 14988

3. Main door to the toilets
4. Accessible toilet

5. Going out towards the Mill building
6. As above

From the Welcome Building to the Mill

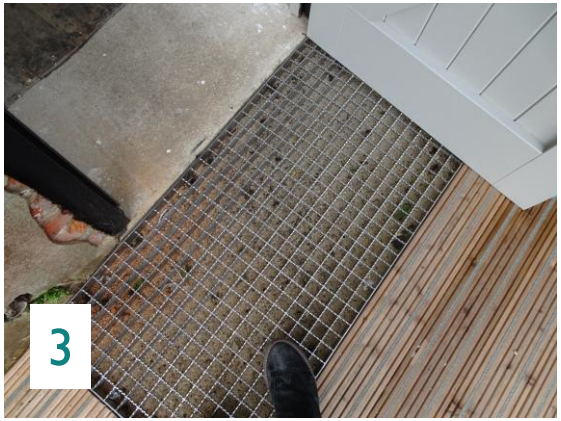


1. The wooden path is flat and level
2. The café's outdoor chairs

3. Towards the Mill entrance
4. Pathway to the entrance

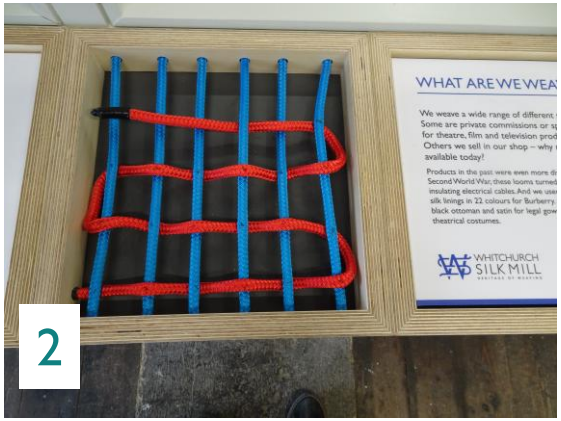
5. The surface of the pathway
6. There is a small lip up to the wooden boardwalk

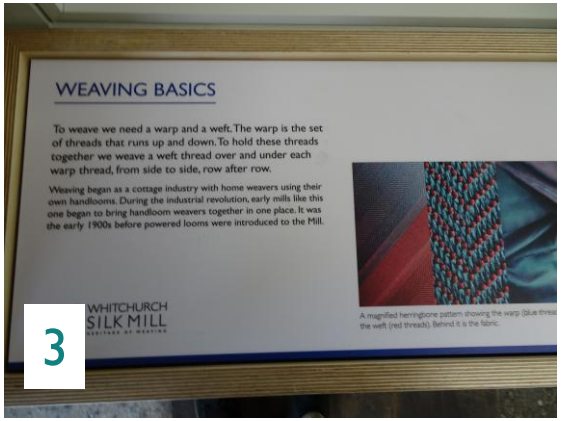
Entering the Silk Mill



There is a grating in front of the doorway to be aware of, but this is unlikely to cause a significant issue for those using wheelchairs. The door opens outwards and is not assisted.

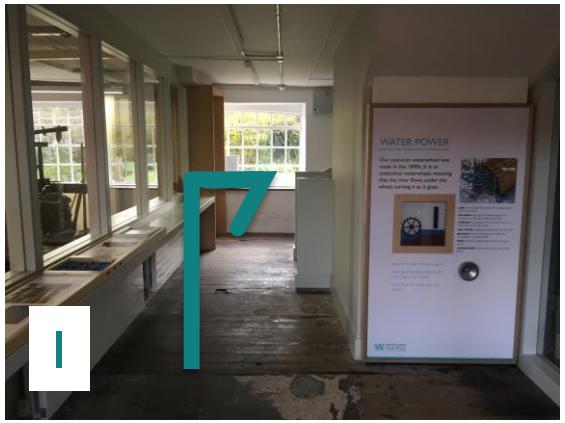
Display signage





There are many information boards and interactive displays around the Mill. Some of the interactive displays require some strength to operate and are not operable by young children. There are two audio installations.

Getting to the top floor by lift

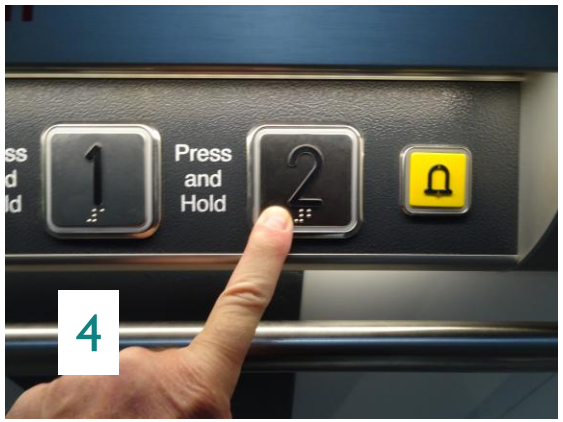


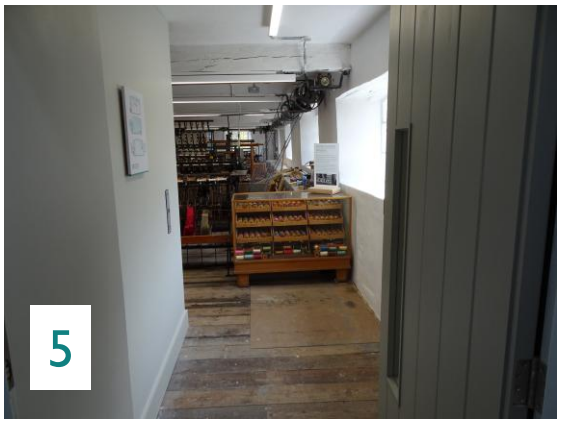
The self-guided tour takes you from the ground floor to the second floor, then back to the first.

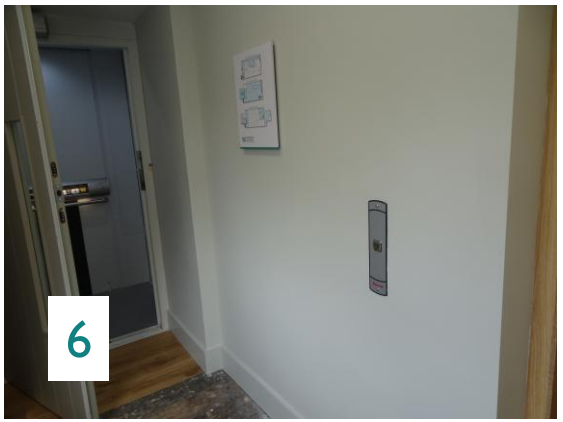
The lift is on the far side of the Mill, to the rear of the building. Our team can support you in using the lift, from directing you to its location to guiding you in its operation if required.

1. The lift is on the far side of the Mill, just around the corner.
2. The call button for the lift can be found on the low wall beside the stairs.
3. The lift door opens automatically.

Getting to the top floor by lift

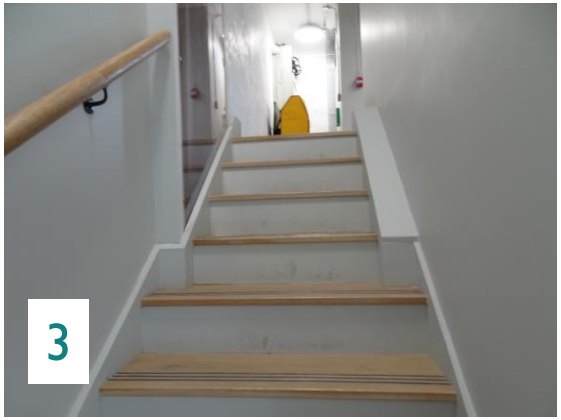






4. The floor number button must be pressed and held for the duration of the journey.
5. Exiting the lift is simple.
6. The lift door will automatically close behind you.

Getting to the top floor by stairs

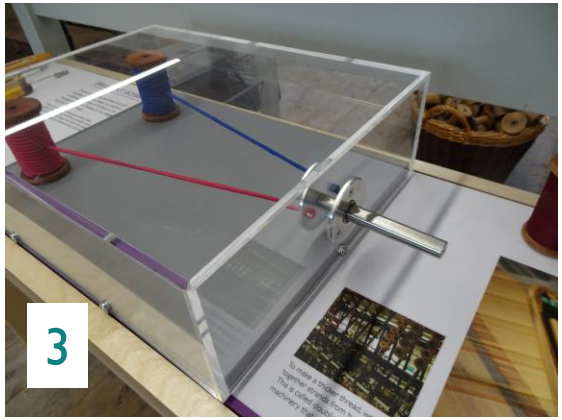


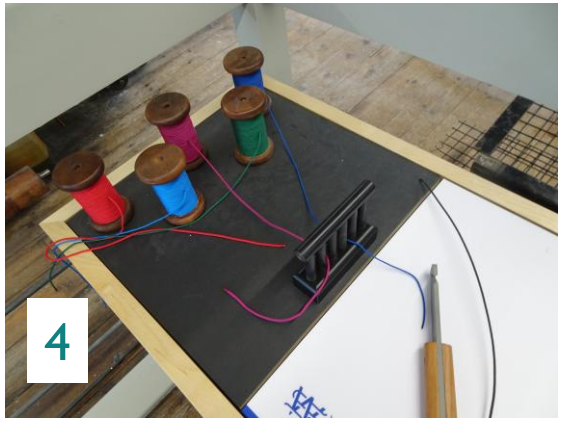
The self-guided tour takes you from the ground floor to the second floor.

1. Some of the Mill floors are uneven, due to their 200+ year age!
2. The stairs are quite steep.
3. The stairs have robust handrails. As the self-guided tour is one-way, you shouldn't meet anyone going the other way on the stairs.

On the top floor

The floors in the Mill are quite uneven.





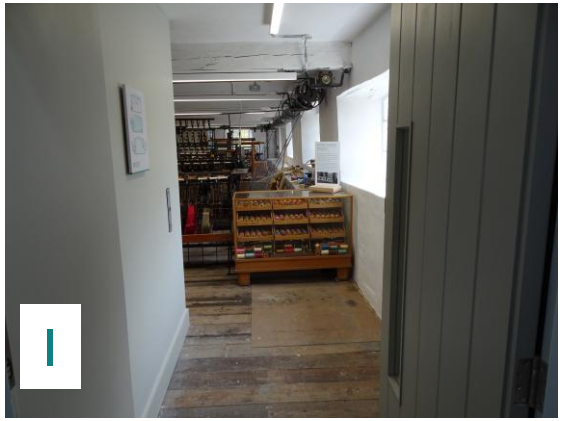
1. The top floor is spacious
2. There are activities for children

3. & 4. Some of the activities require strength or dexterity.

5. There is an audio display on this floor

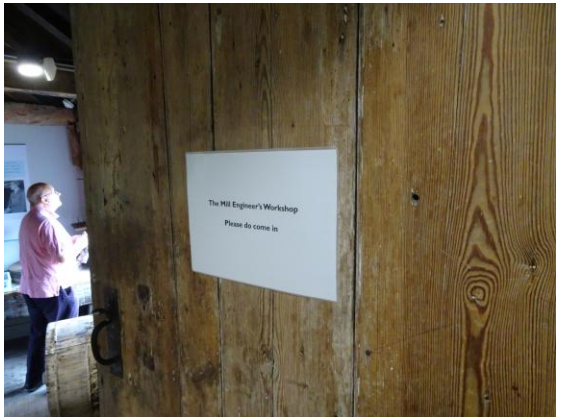
Exiting the top floor

After the top floor, the self-guided tour takes you from the second floor to the first (middle) floor.



1. Lift users should return to the lift and head down.
2. If using the stairs, be aware that these are quite narrow (seen here from the bottom).

On the middle floor



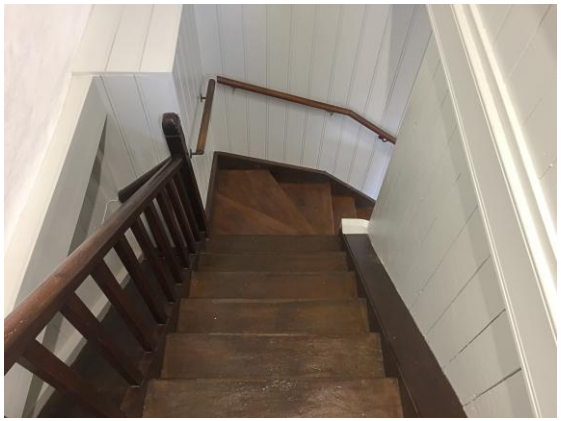
Whether you come down the lift or use the stairs, you will see the Mill Engineer's Workshop on your left.

The Mill Engineer's Workshop can be viewed through the door from the hallway. It is not currently accessible to visitors, due to its flexing floorboards.

On the middle floor

1. This floor houses three areas – a silk archive space, a product finishing space and a Creative in Residence space.
2. As with the rest of the Mill, the floors are uneven.
3. There is an accessible toilet on this floor.
4. Our Activity Space, where talks and workshops are held.

Leaving the middle floor



The stairs back to the ground floor are quite narrow and twist around to the right. There is a handrail on the left.

Back on the ground floor

1. If you use the stairs, you will find yourself at the other end of the Weaving Shed. The second audio installation is here.
2. If you use the lift, you will need to return through the entrance door, moving back across the front of the Mill…
3. … and then in through the red door.

Through the red door

There is a small step down into the other end of the Weaving Shed.

Going onto Frog Island

1. Either come out of the Frog Island door
2. Or the Accessible Exit

3. There's a step down from the Frog Island door
4. Pathway around the side of the Mill

5. Frog Island is pathway and grass
6. As above

Exiting the Mill

Exit by going back into the Shop and Café, where you will also find visitor toilets and exits to Winchester Street and Winchester Road Car Park.

ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS, LEARNING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Access to collections

The Mill Team is committed to increasing public access to the collections and information, and increasing knowledge and understanding of Whitchurch Silk Mill's heritage.

We provide varied access to the collections, including displays, object handling, publications, and events.

To increase access to collections not on display, we are developing resources, including social media series, digital exhibitions, and YouTube videos that detail our processes, techniques, and heritage.

We provide levels of information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities. We ensure that the presentation and labelling of displays respect diverse backgrounds.

Access to learning

Whitchurch Silk Mill provides learning opportunities for diverse audiences and abilities, tailoring our offering to the needs of specific groups.

We provide educational programmes for our displays to interpret the collections for people from a range of backgrounds and abilities.

We develop partnerships with a range of educational and community organisations to ensure that our activities continue to cater for the widest possible audiences.

Access to communication

We promote the Mill's activities and events through accessible communication channels, using audio and visual tools such as subtitles, voice recordings and alt text.

We provide publicity material on request in alternative formats for a range of needs and languages.

We evaluate all our services and projects to ensure they comply with this policy, and we will consult users and non-users on all new developments.

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