

Access *in* London

A guide for those who have problems getting around, including wheelchair users, elderly people and families with buggies

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The artwork used in this edition was drawn and developed by Nigel Betts to whom we are greatly indebted.

We are also grateful for the contribution over many years from Alan Wyatt in setting-up and maintaining our websites, and, more recently, to our patient proofreaders, Bernie Maycock and Lindy Shaw.

Dedication

We have dedicated this project and the guidebook, to the many past members of PHSP, both disabled and able-bodied, without whom this series of guides would never have been researched or produced.

In the years since the early 1970s, some have passed on, and we remember their inspiration, determination and patience. We hope that they will be happy to be associated for ever with a project that aims to break down barriers, and to provide information which enables people to live fulfilled lives.

The other guides in this series which are currently in print are:

Access in Israel and the Palestinian Authority (2000)

Access to Football Grounds (2003), and

Access in Paris (2008)

All can be obtained from;

39 Bradley Gardens, West Ealing, London W13 8HE, UK

or via **gordon.couch@virgin.net**

The pdfs for both Paris and London can be downloaded from:

www.accessinlondon.org or www.accessinparis.org

where you will also find some updated information.

The earlier ones (now out of print) covered:

Brittany, Jersey, the Loire Valley, the Channel Ports, and Norway.

The very first one (in 1971) was to Slough.

We would be grateful if you would publicise the existence of these guides, and emphasise to people that information should be both collected and presented by those who understand its significance - and not just by those filling-in tick boxes.

The guide is based on based on visits carried out between 2011 and 2013 by members of Pauline Hephaistos Survey Projects (PHSP). This group of researchers, reporters and visitors always includes a variety of people, some able-bodied, some wheelchair users and some disabled walkers.

Over the years PHSP has produced more than twenty access guides, and this is the fifth edition of the London one.

Our approach is to describe the barriers to access as accurately as we can, based on a visit. We allow the reader to decide about the practicality of going there.

The name is a bit of a mouthful.

Pauline arises from St Paul, and some of us come from a Christian group attached to St Paul's School in London.

The **Hephaistos** part of the name arises from the Greek god who was the smithy and the equivalent of Vulcan in Roman mythology. He was a son of Zeus, who was foolish enough to defend his mother, Hera, during some major family row. Zeus kicked Hephaistos off Mount Olympus and, after a long fall, he landed at the bottom and broke his leg.

In frescoes he is shown with one leg facing one way and the other turned through 90°. Hence, he has been adopted by some as the Greek god for disabled people and gave his name to a pioneering school near Reading which a number of the group attended before its closure in 1986.

We are indebted to the Trustees of the PHSP Charitable Trust, David Aubrey, Isabel Baggott and Mukesh Patel, and to:

- Naomi Chant, and various members of the Park Information Service for information about the Lee Valley Park; and
- James Grant for help with information about TfLs provisions and plans.

This guide was first published in 1984, and then in 1989, 1996 and 2003.

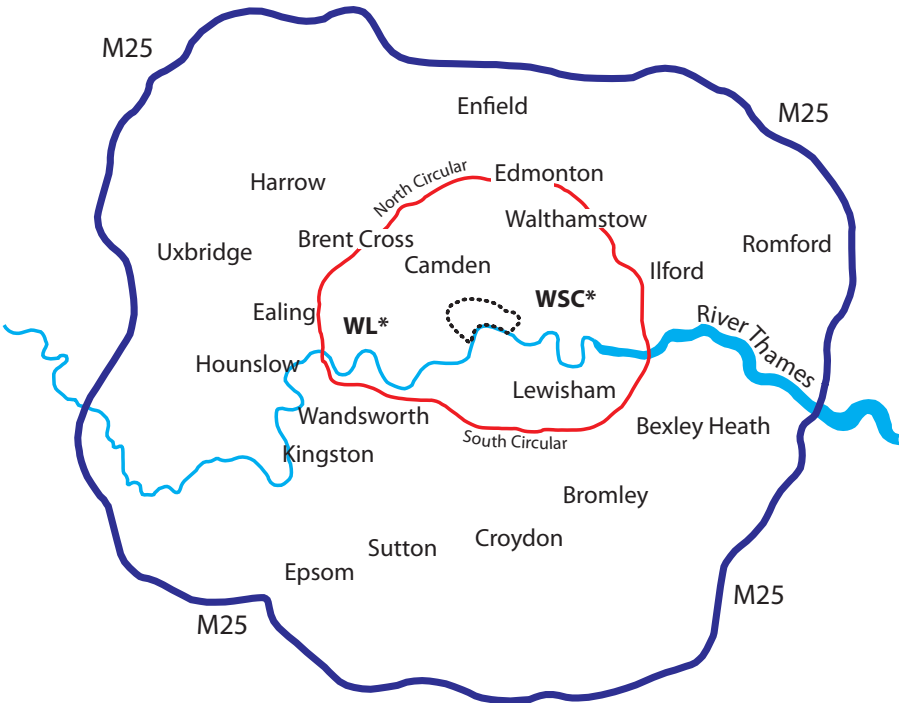
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Part of the Design Criteria diagram is adapted from *Designing for the Disabled* by Selwyn Goldsmith, with the kind permission of the publishers RIBA Publications Ltd.

Ring Roads

showing the River Thames
and out-of-town *Shopmobility* sites



WL* Shepherds Bush (Westfield London)

WCS** Stratford (Westfield Stratford City)

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Abbreviations

which are used throughout the book to shorten the length of the text

AA	Automobile Association
AD	Anno Domini, the year as defined in the Christian Era, and called by some the Common Era
AHL	Action on Hearing Loss
BB	blue badge for parking concessions. A Europe-wide scheme. Widened here in the guide to include any parking for marked out disabled people
BC	the year Before Christ, called by some Before the Common Era
BCF	baby change facilities
BO	box office
BSL	British sign language
BT	British Telecoms
C	Centigrade (degrees of temperature)
CAE	Centre for Accessible Environments
CBL	City Business Library
cm	centimetres
CP	car park
CPZ	controlled parking zone
CS	commentary spot on a map/plan for an audioguide
D	door width (cm)
D, ST	the door width and side transfer distance in toilets (cm)
D,W,L	the door width, cabin width, and length in a lift (cm)
DAR	Dial-a-Ride
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
<i>DisEnq</i>	telephone number for enquiries by disabled people
DLF	Disabled Living Foundation
DLO	Disability Liaison Officer
DLR	Docklands Light Railway
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
ENAT	European Network for Accessible Tourism
ETB	English Tourist Board
Ext	extension
F	Fahrenheit (degrees of temperature)
FAQs	frequently asked questions

FC	Football Club
GA	General admission
GF	ground floor
GFB	ground floor bedroom
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
h	hour/s
H&C	Hammersmith and City (underground line)
HRP	Historic Royal Palaces
IDAG	Independent Disability Advisory Group for TfL
JLE	Jubilee Line Extension (from Westminster to Stratford)
L	length (cm)
LGF	lower ground floor
LTB	London Tourist Board
M	management or administration telephone number
m	metres (similar to yards)
M25	the orbital motorway going right round Greater London
Middx	Middlesex
MSCP	multi-storey car park
NAS	National Accessible Scheme
NAT	near accessible transport, referring to accommodation
NCP	National Car Parks
NE, NW	northeast and northwest
NHS	National Health Service
NKS	RADAR National Key Scheme
NR	National Rail
O	London <i>Overground</i> (rail network)
ORNC	Old Royal Naval College
PA	personal assistant/carer/friend
PFCU	primarily for car users, referring to accommodation
PHSP	Pauline Hephaistos Survey Projects
R	tube stations where portable ramps are available
RAC	Royal Automobile Club
RADAR	Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
RC	Roman Catholic
RCJ	Royal Courts of Justice
<i>RecM</i>	recorded message
RFH	Royal Festival Hall
RNIB	Royal National Institute of Blind People
RNID	Royal National Institute for Deaf People

SE, SW	southeast and southwest
SFTG	Step-free tube guide (available from TfL)
SIM	subscriber identification module (used in mobile phones)
SNC	Special Needs Coordinator
SOLT	Society of London Theatre
ST	side transfer space (cm) alongside a toilet
SWL	safe working load, which is the weight limit for a lift
Tel	Telephone number
TfA	Transport for all
TFA	Tourism for all
TfL	Transport for London
UG	London Underground (the tube)
UGCP	underground car park
UGF	upper ground floor
V&A	Victoria and Albert
VC	very central, referring to accommodation
VCS	Victoria Coach Station
W	width (cm)
WHS	World Heritage Site
WW	Wellcome Wing (in the Science Museum)
YHA	Youth Hostels Association
YH	Youth Hostel
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

16thC, 19thC etc are used for 16th century, 19th century etc.

Mathematical abbreviations

>	greater than
<	less than
≈	approximately
+	steps up (or more than)
-	steps down (or attached to a floor number in a building, indicating level)

Foreword

It's a changed world

We have found that attitudes (and facilities) have changed substantially since the earlier editions of our guides, generally for the better. While there is still some way to go, particularly in connection with the question of accessible transport, people seemed increasingly aware of disability issues and of people's rights to access.

The implementation of the UK Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), has encouraged change, but its existence is a somewhat mixed blessing. Some management now takes the line "Well, we've fulfilled our statutory requirements" with the implication that it is pointless to expect something more.

It is increasingly common for people to provide facilities without the slightest idea of the how or the why. We bumped into a classic illustration of this while updating the guide. When seeing/measuring accessible toilets, we frequently found that the side transfer space was blocked by one or more, sometimes quite heavy, bins. When we drew the facility manager's attention to this and explained why the space had been provided, the most common reaction was "I had no idea how that space was used".

We now have mainly able-bodied access officers, access auditors, and contract commissioners relating to access issues. Their brief is to ensure that the provisions are 'in compliance' rather than to understand what is going on.

In addition, buildings and facilities are largely looked at in isolation (see comments below).

We are disappointed by the way that the major organisations responsible for buildings have gone about both researching and presenting access information.

This is particularly associated with the 'business model' relating to access information. People are promoting the (myth, in our view) that the reason for making places fully accessible is because there's money in it.

In our view, access, and information about it should be provided because it is a human right for people with disabilities, not because there is money to be made.

ENAT recently commented that “the profit argument is a (primitive) means to capture business people’s attention and not much more. Once they have pricked up their ears you have to explain the whole story and convince them to change their mindset and their way of working, otherwise they will never succeed and customers will be disappointed - or worse.

The tourism authorities may have been seduced by their own rhetoric to some extent and it is important to note that where there are “success stories” they tend to have strong element of ‘social’ motivation behind them.”

In addition, the ability to digitise data, and to share it via the internet, has had a profound effect on information provision. Although there is much more of it, standards relating to its collection and presentation, seem to have dropped significantly.

Websites present access information in a wide variety of ways with highly variable standards AND it is becoming much more difficult to speak to a human being if you have a query.

The funding for agencies like *Artsline* and *Tripscope* has been withdrawn, so the specialist advice provided by disabled people is not available.

Our view, based on extensive experience, is that:

- the internet has provided quick and easy links between poor quality information, where access is often assessed and described by (well meaning) able-bodied people and not by disabled people;
- internet information rarely has a date attached to it, saying when it was collected; it also rarely says what standards the providers were working to;
- transport information has been largely ‘mainstreamed’ and is thus provided by able-bodied people reading from a computer screen. Although they may be well meaning, it is not the same as that provided from the experience of a disabled person.

Nearly all the available information looks at individual facilities/venues. There is almost no attempt to integrate and combine practical advice on accommodation, and getting around, with that about access to the sights and places of interest.

Even professional-style organisations like *Tourism for all* (in the UK) and the *European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT)*, don't attempt to apply high and consistent standards to their information nor to ensure the integration mentioned above.

They simply make links to what is there, irrespective of who put it on the web, or when it was posted, and are promoting what we have described above as the 'business model'.

Another mistake is something which has increasingly happened since our last edition was published ten years ago. That is to try to integrate all the specialist information needed by people with mobility difficulties with that needed by those who are hearing or visually impaired or who maybe have learning difficulties.

This means increasingly that the research and assessment is made, and the information input, by an able-bodied person, almost certainly without direct experience of what is needed.

It seems to us that this has been the result of a well intended, but misguided, "tick box" mentality. Many of the boxes are ticked by able-bodied people, without the insights of a disabled person.

We appreciate that it's much easier to cover everyone's special needs in one document or in one place, even though the outcome may be quite confusing (because of the volume of different data included).

However, just because it's easier, doesn't make it right.

Far too little of the information is provided by those who experience the relevant challenges.

We think that information for people with visual and/or hearing impairment and for those who may be, or be with, people on the autistic spectrum, should be provided under different headings and probably in clearly different documents, either online or printed, and be provided by those with the relevant experience.

The information is of great importance, but is better supplied separately.

There is now an 'orthodox' mantra that disability is not just about wheelchairs.

While it is, of course, true that disability is not just about wheelchairs - it never has been - the mantra is being translated into, "*We don't need to do any more for wheelchair users, nor do we need to mention physical access first.*"

It seems to have been forgotten that wheelchair access facilities are good for families with baby buggies and for disabled walkers, and that good wheelchair access doesn't just help a small minority it helps the world in general.

We have put some examples on our website under the heading [Methodology](#) where we compare our (PHSP) information, collected by those with relevant experience, and other information provided (often with goodwill) by those who do NOT have it, but who are ticking boxes and/or just running a database.

We are disappointed by the largely incomprehensible descriptions of access provided in the 'access guide' database of *DisabledGo*. We find their write-ups/database presentations to be unhelpful, and they seem to be more of an 'access audit' than an 'access guide'.

We present some comparisons between our write-ups and those of *DisabledGo* on the [Methodology](#) page of our website for you to make your own assessment.

In the guide, we have tried to be objective by describing what the barriers are, where they are, and how (if possible) to get around them. This approach allows people to make up their own mind as to whether or not a visit is practicable, or on how much help they might need. We have included many places where a real effort has been made to overcome barriers.

[Do bear in mind, however, that inclusion in the guide doesn't imply accessibility, and what we're doing is to describe the places listed including any barriers to access.](#)

We assume that this book will be used in conjunction with other guides and information. In particular we recommend the Eyewitness travel guide to London published by Dorling Kindersley. This contains an area by area account and uses illustrations and cut-aways which often clarify access. Readers may well have their own favourite travel guide publisher.

In addition a good street plan is essential, and if you're driving into central London, we recommend the Blue Badge User Guide. We appreciate the expense involved in buying other books and maps, but there's really no way round it.