

Comparing the PHSP London accommodation list with that from NAS information.
May 2014

The National Accessible Scheme (NAS) is used by Visit England - see <http://www.visitengland.org/busdev/accreditation/nas/>

To generate a London list we followed:

Open Britain → Places to go → Accessible hotels and B&Bs → Any property type and any mobility grading (uses the NAS symbols) → London

OpenBritain is claimed to be your one stop shop for accessible tourism in the UK providing a simple way to find accessible destinations and places to stay.

The NAS is said to be the only scheme that rates the accessibility of visitor accommodation throughout England.

We got a list of just 12 places in (Greater) London, several of which were only assessed as being suitable for “older and less mobile visitors”, and are not suitable for a wheelchair user.

We also followed:

Open Britain → Places to go → Accessible hotels and B&Bs → Accessible to an independent wheelchair user (uses the NAS symbols) → London

and the answer was:

“You are searching for Properties in London. Your search has been unsuccessful.”

This, of course, contrasts with the 80 places visited and described in *Access in London*, all of which are wheelchair accessible, with adapted rooms and a wheel-in shower (see the separate pdf).

Visit England say that “In a survey of disabled travellers, 62% said that the National Accessible Scheme would positively influence their decision to visit London.”
That rather destroys ones faith in ANY survey !! See the evidence below.

We note the use of the mantra “It’s not all about wheelchairs”.

It isn’t, we agree, but an NAS listing needs to lead to a realistic and helpful list of wheelchair accessible facilities, in addition to others.

Why not at least start with wheelchair accessibility, which makes things MUCH easier for a wide range of people ? AND provide a description of the facilities rather than a tick box list ?

Part of the problem is that some of the information in the very short list we found is just plain wrong, in particular that about the two Youth Hostels, and about the Tune Westminster Hotel. All three are included in *Access in London* as being fully wheelchair accessible - and one of them (incorrectly classified under the NAS) is probably the best value accessible place to stay in London.

Note that direct extracts from *Access in London* are included in red.

Copthorn Tara Hotel London

where access is described via a quite complicated ‘access statement’.

This is probably the only place on the list where we are content with the listing.

It had ten accessible rooms, with a variety of facilities, and is comprehensively described in *Access in London*

An entirely appropriate listing.

The Nadler Soho

a hotel which says it has ‘disabled facilities’

only by ringing the hotel could I discover that they have 2 accessible rooms (both on the GF) with a wet room bathroom. Both rooms have a double bed.

Mint Hotel, Tower of London now Doubletree by Hilton London

a hotel rated by the NAS as ‘suitable for older and less mobile people’.

only by ringing the hotel could I discover that they have 2 accessible rooms with a wet room bathroom.

SACO London - Holborn

Serviced apartments ‘suitable for older and less mobile people’.

The apartments have 3 steps at the entrance, and none have a wet room bathroom.

Tune Hotel Westminster

a hotel rated by the NAS as ‘suitable for older and less mobile people’.

Our visit provided some different information as follows:

55. Tune Hotel Westminster £/££

118-120 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7RW *Tel: 020 7633-9317*

e-mail: manager@westminster.tunehotels.com

Located on the corner with Baylis Road, and just by Lambeth North tube station (where there are steps). Step-free to reception and to the smallish lift (D80 L100 W115). **Four accessible rooms** all with a double bed. Two seen, both with good bathroom design, ST80+ and a wheel-in shower with well designed fold-down shower seat (H55) and plenty of fold-away supports. The shower had low level folding doors. There was a Costa Coffee shop next door.

The NAS list does not mention

56. Tune Hotel Liverpool Street £/££

13-15 Folgate Street, E1 6BX *Tel: 020 7456-0400*

e-mail: manager@liverpoolstreet.tunehotels.com

Located by the junction with Blossom Street. Folgate Street is cobbled, but the pavements are OK. +4 steps at the entrance, but there’s a step-free way in from Blossom Street, opposite the Water Poet pub where a platform stairlift bypasses +3. Intercom outside. There are **thirteen accessible rooms**, all on the GF, ten with double beds, and three with twins. In the room we saw the bathroom was well equipped, with ST 70+, and had a flexible shower curtain to go round the area with the fold-down seat (H55). The hotel has a large and quite attractive garden area, where you can sit outside and enjoy a coffee.

YHA London Central

rated by the NAS as ‘suitable for older and less mobile people’.

There’s a slightly more informative description below - which tends to illustrate the fact that the description was made by able-bodied people who don’t know what they are talking about.

50. London Central Youth Hostel £

104 Bolsover Street, W1W 5NU Tel: 0845 371-9154

website: www.yha.org.uk e-mail: londoncentral@yha.org.uk

A modern hostel with seven floors and 302 beds. Located between Clipstone Street and New Cavendish Street, and centrally placed some 600m to the north of Oxford Street. There are two BB spaces outside.

The 1 step at the entrance is bypassed by a ramp. The reception desk is to the left, in a large room with a bar/café, and computers/WiFi access. There is a GF **adapted toilet (D80 ST60)** nearby. There are **three accessible rooms** on the GF. **All have D80+ together with an en suite toilet and well equipped wheel-in shower with a fold-down seat.** The rooms have either 3 or 4 double bunk beds. In each room one of the lower beds is double size. To get to the other floors there is a lift (D80 W95 L140), which goes to all the floors. In the basement there is a large self catering kitchen area, where a section has lowered counter tops etc for chair users. Part of the room has a split level which is +5.

YHA London Thameside

rated by the NAS as 'suitable for older and less mobile people'.

THAT IS A DISGRACE, AS IT WAS PURPOSE BUILT FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND HAS SOME OF THE BEST VALUE FACILITIES IN LONDON, SEE BELOW

51. London Thameside Youth Hostel £ (almost NAT)

20 Salter Road, SE16 5PR Tel: 0845 371-9756

website: www.yha.org.uk e-mail: thameside@yha.org.uk

The hostel has a brilliant location near the river, just over 2km downstream from Tower Bridge. It has an accessible riverside pub/restaurant the *Old Salt Quay* about 100m away. It's about 750m from Canada Water underground station (which is accessible). You can get there using the 381 or C10 bus (getting off at Smith Close) or you can go along the canal. No on-site CP but plenty of parking on the roads nearby.

Flat to reception, restaurant and lounge/bar and a low-level pay-phone, although the main door has a security system with an intercom and buzzer to ensure that only hostel users can get in.

There is step-free access throughout via two lifts (D80 W105 L150), and the one slight hassle is that the breakfast room/restaurant has a split level, accessed as a mezzanine from the lift.

Six accessible bedrooms, two on each floor, which have two normal beds and one bunk-bed. Bathroom and toilet are en suite, with a sliding door. Flat access shower with hand rails and ST80+ to the padded seat with an adjustable back. Toilet with ST70+.

There is an **adapted toilet (D85 ST65)** on the GF, to the left as you enter the hostel.

The hostel has a policy of keeping the accessible rooms available for disabled visitors for as long as possible. However, since the facilities are such good value they are liable to get booked up, especially at peak times. The advice is therefore to book as early as is possible, and make your needs clear in relation to the accessible rooms so that they can be securely booked for you. We have stayed there in the past and been well looked after. It used to be known as the Rotherhithe YH, but has been renamed.

The other four properties on the NAS list were in the suburbs, and all had steps at the entrance. They were not, therefore of interest to us.

The conclusion which we come to is that the NAS is of virtually no value in London (a rather important destination) and includes some inaccurate information which would prevent a disabled visitor from finding low cost accessible accommodation.