

This access statement does not contain personal opinions as to our suitability for those with access needs, but aims to accurately describe the facilities and services that we offer all our guests/visitors.

## **Access Statement for The Lodge**

### **Introduction**

The Lodge nature reserve is situated near Sandy, Bedfordshire, and as the RSPB's UK headquarters is sometimes known as the 'home of the RSPB'. You can explore its attractive woodland and heaths along 5 miles (8 km) of trails, visit the beautifully managed gardens, Iron Age banks and ditches on Galley Hill, or watch woodland birds from the hide. The accessible toilets and picnic area are at ground level, and the ground-floor Gatehouse shop is accessed by a short ramp. There is disabled parking near to the hide, and in the Gatehouse car park.

Whilst parts of the nature trail are steeply undulating, with stepped sections, there are other extensive sections of hard sand paths on the level, with one hide suitable for wheelchair and pushchair access. Further details about the reserve and what you can see and do can be found on our website

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/t/thelodge/index.aspx>

We look forward to welcoming you. If you have any queries or require any assistance please phone 01767 693333 or email [TheLodgeReserve@rspb.org.uk](mailto:TheLodgeReserve@rspb.org.uk).

### **Pre-Arrival**

- For a map and directions of how to reach us please see the 'How to get here' section on our website, which has a link for sat navs. Alternatively, you can plan your journey by public transport or car using [www.transportdirect.info](http://www.transportdirect.info); simply enter your postcode and ours, which is SG19 2DL to get directions.
- The nearest railway station is Sandy, which is 0.9 miles (1.4 km) away. Taxis are not readily available at the station. If you require an accessible taxi you can book this in advance.

- The main road leading to the Gatehouse entrance has a pavement. There are alternative entrances for pedestrians and cyclists at the bottom of the hill near the railway station.
- An easy to read map and large print guide are available.
- The reserve is open from 7am-9pm (or sunset when earlier). The Gatehouse shop is open from 9am-5pm on weekdays and 10am-5pm at weekends and Bank Holidays.
- We welcome registered assistance dogs (please do not be offended if we ask for evidence of registration). No other dogs are permitted on the nature trails, except the public bridleway.

### **Car Parking Facilities and Arrival**

- There are 2 clearly signed blue badge parking spaces situated 50m from the Gatehouse shop entrance.
- The car park, with 60 spaces, is adjacent to the Gatehouse shop and a short walk to the entrance. Non-members: £5 per motor vehicle. Members, and those just visiting the shop, can park for free. Please obtain a ticket from the ticket machine in the visitors car park and display it in your vehicle.
- The car park surface is compacted stone. Level concrete paths lead to the Gatehouse shop and toilets. The car park is lit at night.
- The entrance to the Gatehouse shop is 925mm wide. It is accessed by a 1:12 ramp, 600mm high and 1200mm wide. There is a handrail on one side.

### **Bus service**

- The 188 Centrebus runs between Hitchin and Sandy. It stops just inside the entrance to The Lodge nature reserve, outside the shop.
- There are 5 buses each way, Monday to Saturday (except bank holidays).
- Ours is the stop between Potton (Bricklayers Arms) and Sandy (Rail Station).
- For more information, see [www.centrebus.com](http://www.centrebus.com) or ring Centrebus on 0844 357 6520.

## Nature Trails

- The reserve has a mix of different types of paths that are both flat and undulating where walks can be enjoyed. Some are steep, with steps.
- All trails are clearly signposted.
- Several trails can be followed:
- The trail from the Gatehouse to the hide covers 0.5 km (0.3 miles) each way, and can take 15 mins to complete at a gentle pace. The path is flat and has a level compacted sand surface. While generally good, the path can become rutted or soft after very heavy rain or snow. There is one self-closing accessible gate between the Gatehouse and the hide.
- The trail around the old heath covers 1.3 km (0.8 miles), and can take 45 mins to complete at a gentle pace. It has two steep sections, one with steps. It has uneven cobbles and tree roots on the bridleway section, and an uneven compacted sand surface along the remainder.
- The trail around the new heath to Galley Hill covers 2.8km (1.7 miles) and can take 90 mins to complete at a gentle pace. Galley Hill can be reached along flat sections with an uneven compacted sand surface. Other sections of the loop are uneven and undulating, but there are no steps.
- The Sandy Ridge trail covers 2km (1.25 miles) and takes about 60 mins to complete. It has two steep sections, one with steps, and has an uneven compacted sand surface.
- The Quarry trail covers 1.7km (1.1 miles) and can take about 60 mins to complete. It is steeply undulating throughout with many steep steps, uneven compacted sand surfaces and tree roots.
- There is enough space along most routes for 2 wheelchairs to pass.
- There are viewpoints along each of the trails but no shelters except for the hide.
- Seating is available at every viewpoint and at intervals of approx 300m/ 1000ft. A variety of seating is available. On the trail from the Gatehouse to the hide and around the gardens there are wooden bench seats with back support and arms. On the other trails there are rustic wooden benches, most without back support or arms.

- Information boards giving details of the wildlife to be found are available along the trails. These vary in size but all have large print and illustrations. .
- All information boards can be read from a child's eye/seated position.
- Staff are always on hand to help with information in the shop, and the information kiosk is open in the car park most weekends / bank holidays and during the main school holidays.
- A map of the trails, with accessible routes shown, is available as a leaflet at the Gatehouse shop reception desk or the information kiosk in the car park, alternatively can be downloaded from [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

### **Viewing Facilities**

- There is one hide at the reserve. It is accessed by a wooden ramp, netted with chickenwire. It is 1100mm wide, with handrails both sides. The gradient of the ramp is 1:20, and there are platforms half way and outside the hide door.
- The entrance is 790mm wide. The door handle is set at 1150mm, and there is a horizontal rail on the outside for closing the door.
- This is a family oriented hide with light moveable seats without arms. All windows are wheelchair accessible.
- Viewing slots are 800mm from the floor. The flaps are lightweight wood which folds inwards, and are secured by turn buttons.

### **Public Toilets**

- Public toilets are located along a short concrete path near the Gatehouse shop with a 1:35 ramp leading to the unisex accessible toilet, which is open to all and described below:
- A light, easy open door 850mm/33.5ins wide.
- 500mm/19.5ins transfer space to the left of the toilet, when facing the toilet.
- Toilet height is 460mm/18ins.
- Vertical rails on left of toilet, and on right of basin.
- Horizontal rails: a hinged one to the left of the toilet, and a fixed one on the side wall right of the toilet.

- Handrails, toilet and washbasin are white.
- A flashing light when the fire alarm sounds.
- An emergency alarm pull cord.
- Well lit with automatic fluorescent tube overhead lighting.
- Quarry slip tile flooring.
- Lever tap on the sink.
- There are baby changing tables in the gents and ladies toilets.

### **Catering**

- The nearest places to have a seated meal are located in Sandy, 0.5 miles/1 km from the reserve.
- In the ground floor of the Gatehouse shop you can buy hot and cold drinks and a bite to eat, such as sandwiches, wraps, salads, cakes, crisps, biscuits, ice creams and chocolate.

### **Shop**

- The main entrance to the shop and reception is situated on the ground floor of the Gatehouse at the top of a 1:12 ramp.
- There is step free, level access throughout.
- The floor surface is carpet-tiled throughout.
- The area is evenly and well lit with overhead lighting from halogen spotlights.
- A pen and pad of paper are available at the counter.
- Staff can give assistance and read out any literature if required.
- Wheelchairs can be borrowed (free of charge) for use on the reserve.
- Binoculars are available for borrowing - we ask for a donation. A form of security is required as deposit.
- The shop has an excellent range of binoculars and telescopes, books, bird food and gifts. Guided walks and events can also be booked here.

### **Picnic Area**

- There is a picnic area on the lawn immediately next to the Gatehouse shop.
- The lawn is cut short and level, but is uneven in places
- There are 9 picnic tables and benches at the picnic area, 5 with space for a wheelchair user.
- Snacks and drinks are available at the shop; however, visitors are free to bring their own refreshments with them for picnics.

### **Additional Information**

- A wheelchair is available to borrow at the Gatehouse shop.
- A water bowl is available at the Gatehouse shop for dogs.

### **Contact Information**

Address (Inc postcode): RSPB The Lodge nature reserve Gatehouse shop The Lodge Sandy Bedfordshire SG19 2DL

Telephone: 01767 693333

Email: [TheLodgeReserve@rspb.org.uk](mailto:TheLodgeReserve@rspb.org.uk)

Website: [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

Grid Reference: TL191485

Hours Of Operation: The reserve is open from 7am-9pm (or sunset when earlier). The Gatehouse shop is open from 9am-5pm on weekdays and 10am-5pm at weekends and Bank Holidays.