

An Access Guide to The Ironbridge Gorge Museums



www.ironbridge.org.uk

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How to use this book

This booklet will help you to plan a visit to the Ironbridge Gorge Museums.

Pages five to eleven describe a brief history of the different museums and gives you an idea about what there is to see. Pages fourteen to seventeen contain prices, opening hours, parking, public transport advice and the minimum period of time we think you will need to visit each museum. The final section advises on the facilities and more detailed access at each of the museums.

For information on all aspects of the museums call the Ironbridge Tourist Information Centre at 01952 884 391 (fax 01952 884 391), email tic@ironbridge.org.uk, or visit www.ironbridge.org.uk/plan_your_visit/access/

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Please get in touch

We would welcome your feedback on how useful this Access Guide is for you. If you have any suggestions that you think would make it easier to use, or for improving access within the museums themselves, we would like to hear from you. Please call 01952 435 900 if you have any queries or write to The Ironbridge Gorge Museums, Coalbrookdale, Telford, Shropshire TF8 7DQ.

As well as the information here, a more detailed Access Guide is available for Blists Hill Victorian Town - the largest of the museum sites. Request a copy from the reception desk at Blists Hill when you visit, or by post from the Ironbridge Tourist Information Centre - call 01952 884 391, write to the address above or email tic@ironbridge.org.uk.

About the Ironbridge Gorge Museums

Rarely do people and places come together with the power to change the world. But such an event happened here, almost 300 years ago, in Shropshire's beautiful Ironbridge Gorge.

In 1709 Abraham Darby I - God-fearing Quaker and master of the local ironworks - perfected a way to use coke, rather than charcoal, to smelt iron. The abundance of iron unleashed the country's natural inventiveness; soon the discovery would fuel Britain's Industrial Revolution, and help power the largest empire on earth. By the time his grandson, Abraham Darby III had completed the world's first Iron Bridge, there were new industries springing up throughout the valley and fiery furnaces burning long into the night. But nature has since reclaimed her riverbanks and with its beauty restored, the Gorge is now a World Heritage Site: home to a most fascinating collection of ten family friendly museums, packed with fun and exciting things to do. Absolutely no one should miss a visit to this the 'most extraordinary district in the world'.

A World Heritage Site

At the **Museum of The Gorge** you see the bigger picture: the why, the how, the who and the when? Housed in a Gothic-style warehouse beside the River Severn, it uses film to explain the area's significance, and why, as a World Heritage Site, it ranks alongside the Pyramids and the Taj Mahal in its importance in world history. The museum also contains a giant scale model showing how the Gorge looked in 1796.

A Lively Recreation of Victorian Life

What was it really like to live in Victorian England? Here at **Blists Hill Victorian Town** you'll find the answer. Enter a different world filled with people in costume going about their daily life. Footprints of the past dot the landscape with original industrial monuments such as the Hay Inclined Plane and Blast Furnaces. Fascinating for visitors of all ages, the fifty two (52) acre site is a bustling recreation of an entire Victorian town, and uses proper pounds, shillings and pence for its transactions.

Visit the Pub, the Shops, the School, the Drapers, the Doctor's Surgery, the Chemist and Grocer and see what's going on in their workshops and factories; ask the locals what they're doing; during school holidays try some of the trades for yourself. In summer, there's a working Victorian fairground, and there are fun events such as weddings to attend. Give yourself two to three hours to truly savour its delights.

The Celebration of Invention

By contrast, **Enginuity**, our newest museum, looks forward to the future rather than back to the past. It's a hands-on, get stuck-in, have-a-go sort of place, with an incredible collection of interactive machinery. Test your reactions against the speed and accuracy of a robot; generate power from water; pull a locomotive by hand. Whether you're young or old, this is your chance to discover the true spirit of Ironbridge; it lies within us all.

The Great Iron Bridge

Our forbears may have invented heavy industry, but in stark contrast to many of today's industrial projects, they never forgot the power of elegance or the importance of beauty. Nowhere is this more artfully expressed than in the graceful lines and soaring arches of the world's first cast **Iron Bridge**. As the enduring symbol of our Industrial Revolution, it will stay in your memory forever. A display showing the history of the Bridge can be found in the adjoining **Tollhouse**.

The Art of Victorian Industry

Three of our museums celebrate the power, beauty and sheer diversity of products that the Industrial Revolution suddenly made possible: everything from cooking pots and flat irons to magnificent ceramics for royalty.

The mighty **Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron** celebrates the importance of the early iron industry and also houses a collection of fine art castings, including statues, benches, tables, plaques, fire surrounds and other works of art. There's also a small display on the history of the Aga, the famous ovens that are still made here in the Gorge. And nearby, too, is Abraham Darby's original **Old Furnace**, the heart of the Gorge, and the place where it all began.

The village of Jackfield was once the world centre of the tile industry, and the **Jackfield Tile Museum**, set in an immense Victorian factory, celebrates the decorative tiles that once graced the Empire. Room after room is filled with beautiful displays and room settings such as the pub, the tube station and the butchers. On certain days, visitors can watch staff from the Craven Dunnill Company manufacture tiles or even create your own at regularly held workshops. At the adjacent Fusion see contemporary Designers and Makers in action.

Across the river from Jackfield you'll find the **Coalport China Museum**, home to the famous firm until 1926 and filled with the finest examples of their work. The factory's unusual buildings, set in an attractive canal-side location, also contain colourful displays depicting a history of china-making as well as demonstration workshops where, during school holidays, you'll be able to have a go yourself. To celebrate the Beijing Olympics, Coalport will host activities inspired by China throughout the year.

Ironmasters' Homes

The Darby family's historic homes - **Rosehill House** and **Dale House** - are collectively known as the **Darby Houses**. See family objects, papers, plans and pictures which dot the rooms and give you a very real sense of how the family lived, as well as worked. Don't miss out on dressing up in Quaker costume at Rosehill House.

A Time Capsule

Few places are as evocative as the **Broseley Pipeworks**. This abandoned factory once made millions of clay pipes - the kind that people smoked tobacco with - and exported them across the world. Now it sits deserted (except of course for you: the fascinated visitor), as though the workforce have just left a few minutes before you arrived. You may even imagine the whiff of tobacco still hanging in the air.

Going Underground

Amongst the oldest tourist attractions is the **Tar Tunnel**, where miners digging in 1787 struck a spring of natural bitumen, a black treacle-like substance. The eerie brick-lined tunnel was a great curiosity in the eighteenth century and bitumen still oozes from its walls today. Do you dare to walk its two hundred (200) yard length - even with the hard hat supplied?

Special Events, Workshops and Exhibitions

Throughout the year there are a number of special events and activities during most school holidays. You can join in hands-on workshops at Coalport China Museum, decorate a tile at Jackfield Tile Museum or join in design and make activities at Eginuity. The Coalbrookdale Gallery also hosts exhibitions during the year (weekdays only). For a full list of what's on call 01952 884 391 or visit our website at www.ironbridge.org.uk.

Three hundred (300) years ago the Industrial Revolution was born in Coalbrookdale, Shropshire. In 1709 Abraham Darby perfected the secret of smelting iron with coke rather than charcoal in the Old Furnace. In time this meant that iron could be produced as fast as coal could be mined, not just as fast as trees could grow. During 2009 this world-changing discovery will be celebrated throughout the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. From the fascinating 'Coalbrookdale 300' exhibition of artists' reactions to the Industrial Revolution to thrilling hot metal events at Blists Hill Victorian Town. Visit www.ironbridge.org.uk for details.

How to get there

Take junction four (Jct 4) from the M fifty-four (M54) and follow brown signs for Ironbridge Gorge. The ten museums are in an area of about six square miles and you will need transport to travel between them. There are three routes into the Ironbridge Gorge. Take one of the following:

Blists Hill Museums

For Blists Hill Victorian Town, Coalport China Museum and Tar Tunnel.

Ironbridge Museums

For the Iron Bridge & Tollhouse, Museum of The Gorge, Jackfield Tile Museum and Broseley Pipeworks.

Coalbrookdale Museums

For Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Darby Houses and Enginuity.

Tickets

Visitors who are registered disabled have a fifty percent (50%) discount on the entry prices. A companion is also welcome to visit at a 50% discount. All the museums have individual admission rates, but the economical way of visiting is to buy a Passport ticket. Passports offer unlimited daytime entry to all ten museums for twelve months from the date of purchase. You are welcome to make one visit to any of the museums you have missed during this year, at any time in the future. Additional costs apply for some events and activities. The Passport is not valid for entry at evening events or at Blists Hill Victorian Town on Victorian Christmas Weekends.

Call 01952 884 391 or visit the website at www.ironbridge.org.uk for ticket prices.

Individual museum admission prices & Group visits

Please telephone 01952 884 391 for information on individual museum discounted entry prices and for group visit prices and arrangements.

Opening Hours

Museums are open seven days a week, ten a.m. to five p.m. Some museums close or reduce their hours November to March inclusive. Call 01952 884 391 for winter opening. Broseley Pipeworks is open one p.m. to five p.m., eighteenth of May to twenty-seventh of September inclusive. All museums close twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of December and New Year's Day. The Visitor Information Centre at the Iron Bridge Tollhouse is open nine a.m. weekdays, ten a.m. weekends.

Parking

For visitors with disabilities parking is free and at most museums is available in marked bays close to the entrances. The Pay & Display car parks at the Iron Bridge and Museum of The Gorge sites are free to Orange/Blue badge holders.

Public Transport

Telford Central Railway Station is five miles north of Ironbridge. For rail information call 08457 484 950. For all bus services in the Telford area call Telford Travelink on 01952 200 005.

The Gorge Connect shuttle bus connects most sites Weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays, Easter to October inclusive and is free to Museum Passport holders. Cycle hire is available at Jackfield Tile Museum.

Average visit times

Blists Hill Victorian Town

Two to three hours

Enginuity

Two hours

Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron

One hour and thirty minutes

Jackfield Tile Museum

One hour and thirty minutes

Coalport China Museum

One hour and thirty minutes

Iron Bridge and Tollhouse

Thirty minutes

Museum of The Gorge

Forty-five minutes

Darby Houses

One hour

Broseley Pipeworks

One hour


Tar Tunnel

Twenty minutes

YHA Accommodation

The two youth hostels (YHA) in the Ironbridge Gorge at Coalport and Coalbrookdale both offer comfortable, en-suite, accessible accommodation. In the newly refurbished Coalbrookdale YHA there is a fully accessible family suite. For further information and booking details contact the YHA direct at 01952 588 755.

How easy is Access?

The following pages describe access to individual museums in more detail. To help you we have assessed individual museum facilities and graded them for physical accessibility. Asterisks in a box, like this one  are printed alongside the facilities headings in this guide and indicate the ease of use.



Three asterisks means the facility is suitable for an unaccompanied wheelchair user and can be visited without assistance.



Two asterisks means the facility is suitable for an accompanied wheelchair user and access and facilities will need the assistance of an experienced companion.



One asterisk means access and facilities are suitable only for those who can walk.

Overview of Access

Visitors with physical disabilities

All the museums welcome visitors with disabilities, and most of what the museums have to offer can be enjoyed and experienced by everyone. Some individual museums present certain challenges to those with mobility problems and they are clearly indicated in this guide. Wheelchairs are available on loan from all museum sites, though we regret they cannot be booked in advance.

Visitors with hearing impairment

Blists Hill Victorian Town has an induction loop installed in the Printers in the Upper Town. There is also an induction loop in the auditorium at the Museum of The Gorge. Please switch your hearing aid to 'T' position to use the loop.

Visitors with visual impairment

One of the great joys of visiting many of the museums is to experience the noises and smells of the exhibits. Few objects are in glass cases. The invitation is to touch and experience. Many of the exhibits at Blists Hill Victorian Town are staffed by demonstrators who are happy to give very full descriptions of their role and can provide the opportunity to touch items. Please make yourself known to demonstrators when you visit. A few of the museums are unsuitable for visitors with visual impairment and bringing a sighted companion with you will make it a more rewarding experience.

Overview of facilities



Guide dogs are welcome at all the museums. Other dogs are not permitted except at Blists Hill Victorian Town where they must be kept on a lead. Water bowls are provided at most staffed areas.



The majority of the Museum's refreshment facilities are fully accessible. There are cafés for tea, coffee and snacks at Blists Hill Victorian Town, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron and Jackfield Tile Museum. Blists Hill Victorian Town has several cafés and restaurants and Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron coffee shop serves a selection of hot food. Thick-handled cutlery, special needs crockery and non-slip mats are available in all cafés and restaurants. Please ask for these to be provided.



Most of the museums have fully accessible toilets except the Tar Tunnel, Broseley Pipeworks, Darby Houses and the Iron Bridge Tollhouse, however they do have accessible toilets nearby. All facilities are unisex and indicated by a wheelchair symbol. Toilets in the town of Ironbridge require a RADAR key.



Some of the museums have a busy calendar of events, exhibitions and workshops. Please call 01952 884 391 prior to your visit to find out about what's on, or visit www.ironbridge.org.uk.

Blists Hill Victorian Town Access

A steep hill splits this fifty acre site into the Upper Town and the Lower Town. Site maps are given free when you buy a ticket to the museum. A separate, more detailed free Access Guide is also available at the entrance to the Town. For a detailed Access Guide prior to your visit call the museum's entrance desk on 01952 601 023 or the Tourist Information Centre in Ironbridge on 01952 884 391.

Car Park

Tarmac. Eleven designated parking spaces.

Entrance Building

Steps, or a twenty metre long ramp (one in sixteen), both with handrails. Level within the entrance café, toilet and souvenir shop.

Entrance Toilets

Available at car park level and entrance café level and fully accessible with side transfer and support rails. There is a parent and baby room with disposal facilities on the car park level.

Physical Access in the Town

The authentic Victorian shale road surfaces can sometimes be muddy and uneven and only part of the Town has footpaths. Most buildings are accessible with level access or ramps, but some have difficult kerbs and most pathways have cast iron edges. After the Sawmill and Drapers the land begins to slope steeply and wheelchair users are not advised to go beyond this point without a companion. We recommend returning to the car, exiting the museum and driving six hundred yards downhill to the staff car park, entering the lower part of the Town from here. Please arrange this with the entrance staff on your arrival so that we can contact the Duty Officer to unlock the lower entrance gates.

Visual impairment

A delightful experience including many sounds and smells, with history being demonstrated by staff who are always willing to fully explain their roles and provide objects to be handled. Do make yourself known to demonstrators who are happy to help.

Hearing impairment

There is an induction loop in the Printers in the Upper Town. Hearing Aid users can switch their aids to the 'T' position to hear about this exhibit.

Refreshments

The Hot Metal Café at the entrance has level access and there are some moveable seats and a lower service counter. The New Inn pub further into the museum in the Upper Town should be approached from the rear entrance (through the garden), up a two metre ramp (one in ten) into rooms on the ground floor which have level access. The old bar counters are high. The upstairs Club Room serves food but is only accessible by steps. Hot meals can be served on the ground floor for those who cannot access upstairs. The Forest Glen Refreshment Pavilion in the Lower Town has level access, moveable chairs and a fairly low and accessible service counter. All catering outlets have special cutlery and crockery available on request.

Toilets

Toilets at the entrance and at the Forest Glen Refreshment Pavilion in the Lower Town are fully accessible, with support rails and space for sideways transfer. There are no accessible toilets in the New Inn Pub in the Upper Town.

Coalport China Museum Access

Car Park

Firm tarmac surface with dropped curb. Five designated parking spaces.

Physical Access

The ground floor shop and galleries are accessed via steps or a ramp (six metres, one in ten); this floor is level except for an internal ramp to first floor gallery (one in eight). A lift provides access from the shop to the first floor galleries and the basement galleries below; a staircase also serves these areas. The display kiln exit from the basement galleries provides level access to the outside courtyard and workshops all of which have level or ramp access. The courtyard and lower galleries can also be accessed down a slope through an external side gate which can be opened by reception staff on request if the lift is out of service.

Visual impairment

Demonstrators explain how pottery is made and decorated and provide many items and objects to touch.

Refreshments

There is a Café at the Coalport Youth Hostel, directly opposite Coalport China Museum, which is open weekends and Shropshire school holidays from 10am to 4pm for light meals, snacks and hot and cold drinks. During other times the Hot Metal Café at Blists Hill Victorian Town entrance is approximately three minutes drive away and it can be used with or without a museum ticket. There is also a good choice of pubs nearby, please ask at Reception for information.

Toilets

Toilets are in the lower yard and there is one accessible toilet with side transfer and support rails.

Jackfield Tile Museum Access

Car Park

The site has been undergoing major refurbishment, and un-surfaced car park areas create difficulties for those with mobility impairment. A designated parking space is available directly outside the main entrance.

Physical Access

This museum has lifts to all galleries. Either steps or a ramp give access to the main entrance doors, from the yard, opening into the shop, café, museum entrance and ground floor gallery. From the ground floor gallery a small wheelchair lift gives access to view the mosaic hallway. To reach the first floor galleries without using the stairs return to the entrance desk and use the adjacent main lift. There is another small wheelchair lift at the end of the first floor galleries which descends to exit outside into the yard. Alternatively retrace your route to the main lift and exit from the shop.

Visual impairment

Tactile displays are at hand throughout the museum and tile workshops are available for all abilities. (Please note additional charges apply to take part in workshops).

Refreshments

Fully accessible café serving drinks and snacks, in the entrance area, with moveable chairs.

Toilets

Situated in the yard area across from the main museum building and fully accessible with side transfer and support rails.

Tar Tunnel Access

Accessible down a steep flight of steps from the road or via the canal towpath from Coalport China Museum, which is uneven and often muddy. Access into the small shop fronting the Tunnel is by steps only. The Tar Tunnel itself can be accessed by a ramp, please ask the receptionist for advice, either at the Tar Tunnel or before you visit, at Coalport China Museum. The Tunnel has a muddy shale surface underfoot, and cast iron rails laid down the centre. The roof is very low in places and the hard hats provided must be worn. Limited parking is available on the opposite side of the road, adjacent to the Shakespeare Inn, (with a shale surface).

Museum of The Gorge Access

Car Park

Local authority Pay and Display car park with tarmac surfaces. Three designated parking spaces. free to Blue Badge holders and coaches.

Physical Access

The approach to the museum entrance is over hard surfaces either by steps or by ramp (one in twelve). The exhibition area is level and fully accessible.

Refreshments

No refreshments in the museum but the town of Ironbridge has many cafés, restaurants and pubs alongside the wharfage and in the town square.

Toilets

Accessible toilets with side transfer and support rails are situated on the car park about twenty-two metres away from the museum entrance, entry is by RADAR key with ramp access to a level area with an outward opening door.

Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron and Old Furnace Access

Car Park

Firm tarmac surface with dropped curbs opposite the main entrance.

Physical Access

The Museum of Iron is on three level floors with an accessible lift. The Old Furnace is an industrial monument opposite the museum and housed inside a cover building, situated at the end of a long tarmac path ending in a steep ramp. Access to the upper viewing platform is by steps only.

Visual impairment

Exhibits in the Museum of Iron include tactile decorative ironwork which provides interest for visually impaired visitors. There is limited interest for severely visually impaired visitors in the Old Furnace.

Refreshments

Fully accessible coffee shop on the ground floor of the museum serving snacks and light lunches, with moveable chairs. Special cutlery and crockery is available on request.

Toilets

An accessible toilet is situated off the car park next to the Museum of Iron.

Darby Houses Access

Car Park *

Limited to a few spaces at Rosehill House for use only by visitors with disabilities. The surface is slightly uneven brick pavements. Otherwise parking is at the Museum of Iron car park, about two hundred and fifty yards downhill, from here visitors make their way up a steep footpath (one in eight).

Physical Access **

Rosehill House has two floors open to the public. Only the ground floor is accessible to wheelchair users. On request the receptionist can make easier access through a side door off the car park. The upper floor is only accessible by stairs. Dale House has the ground floor open to the public and this is fully accessible through the front door by a ramp (one in twelve). There are firm shale paths between the two houses.

Visual impairment

The galleries and rooms on the upper floor of Rosehill House display family effects, which are explained with large print labels.

Refreshments

There are no refreshments at Rosehill House or Dale House but the Museum of Iron coffee shop is nearby.

Toilets

No disabled toilets but a fully accessible toilet is situated off the Museum of Iron car park. There is one female toilet at Rosehill with nappy changing facilities, open by request.

Iron Bridge and Tollhouse Access

Car Park

There are local authority Pay and Display car parks on either side of the Iron Bridge, with five designated spaces free to Orange/Blue Badge holders on both.

Physical Access

From the Station car park there is a five metre ramp (one in seven) with a tarmac surface leading to a ten centimetre kerb onto a tarmac path which gives access to the Iron Bridge and Tollhouse. From the opposite car park in Ironbridge Square there is about one hundred metres of mixed tarmac and paving varying in level, (between one in ten and one in twelve). The Iron Bridge has quite a steep slope (one in eight) to its crest, and a firm surface. There is a defined footpath on each side with a ten centimetre cast-iron kerb, but no dropped curbs. The Iron Bridge is in the guardianship of English Heritage, not the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

Inside the Tollhouse is the Ironbridge Tourist Information Centre. There is a seven centimetre step up and a five centimetre step down at the entrance door. The small shop and ground floor information point is accessible to wheelchair users. The upper floor houses an exhibition with graphic panels and is only accessible by stairs. A full colour booklet of the exhibition is available at the desk.

Refreshments

The town of Ironbridge has many cafés, restaurants and pubs.

Toilets

Situated in Ironbridge Square and fully accessible with side transfer and support rails. They are about thirty metres from the designated parking spaces. The approach is by a tarmac slope (one in twenty), with a wide door locked by RADAR key. Outward opening with a fairly strong spring.

Enginuity Access

Car Park

Four designated parking spaces in the courtyard outside the entrance or in the Museum of Iron car park opposite. From the Museum of Iron car park firm tarmac with level walkway to Enginuity, across a road.

Physical Access

Level entrance from firm tarmac courtyard. Enginuity is mainly on the ground floor with an additional mezzanine level accessible via a wheelchair lift, alternatively access is via a flight of steps. The Engine Shop next door is accessible from the ground floor via a ramp.

Visual impairment

Tactile hands-on displays. Staff are on hand to demonstrate ideas and experiments and assist visitors.

Refreshments

Vending machines serve drinks, sweets and crisps. Fully accessible coffee shop in the Museum of Iron across the road serving drinks and light lunches. Moveable chairs and special cutlery and crockery available on request.

Toilets

Separate accessible toilet with side transfer and support rails off the ground floor. Separate parent and child toilet and baby changing room. A second accessible toilet is available off the ground floor adjacent to a room marked 'Invent-a-Den'.

Broseley Pipeworks Access

Car Park

One designated parking space on a rough gravelled surface. Limited on road parking just outside the car park entrance.

Physical Access

The museum has been preserved to maintain the original nature of the buildings and it is not suitable for those with impaired mobility because of uneven floors, narrow corridors and steep steps.

Refreshments

There are no refreshments here. The centre of Broseley town has a café and pubs.

Toilets

Male and female toilets but no accessible toilet.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the generous support received towards facilities for visitors with disabilities, particularly from the following organisations:

Abbey National Charitable Trust.

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The Lady Forester Trust.

The Moores Family Charity Foundation.

National Power.

New Carers Training, Shropshire.

Telford College of Arts & Technology.

Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council.