

Know Before You Go: Accessibility at Hancock Shaker Village (2023)

Welcome! Hancock Shaker Village is a historic site dedicated to the inspiring legacy of the Shakers, who lived here for more than 170 years and strove to make their world a perfect place for everyone.

We want all visitors to feel welcome at Village, which the Shakers called the City of Peace. In our *Know Before You Go* guide, you'll find information to help make your visit as barrier-free as possible. Please contact us if you have questions or needs not addressed in this guide. And please, share your feedback; it helps us to help you and others.

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GETTING AROUND

The main historic site encompasses about 30 acres and includes 20 historic buildings, about 10 of which have some level of physical accessibility. Due to the limited access, visitors who use a wheelchair are not charged admission.

Parking

Designated accessible spaces are located in the main parking lot and in the Leadership Lot. Passengers may also be dropped off in the bus drop-off area. Because of the size of the property, parking spaces (even accessible ones) are quite a distance from building entrances. The distances from accessible spaces to the Visitor Center are as follows:

- Main parking lot to Visitor Center—approx. 400 feet
- Leadership parking lot to Visitor Center—approx. 280 feet
- Bus/Passenger drop-off to Visitor Center—approx. 280 feet

Pathways and ground surfaces

The Village has many different pathway surfaces:

- **Asphalt paths** lead from the parking lot to the Visitor Center. One of these paths is fully accessible. The pathway does have a slope.
- A **stone courtyard** and a **wooden walkway** greet visitors outside the Visitor Center.
- **Wooden boardwalks** serve as the pathways to and from the Visitor Center into the center of the Village. The grade of this area of the Village is flat.
- **Gravel-and-dirt roads** serve as the pathways from the center of the Village to the farm, to the far end of the Village, and as access across Route 20. Some areas of these roads have a slope. These roads become muddy during and after rain. These roads are primarily used by pedestrians, although they are used by maintenance and farm staff and are the official roads for emergency vehicles.
- Part of the Village is located across Route 20, a busy state highway. To get to that area, visitors use a **paved crosswalk**. Once across the highway, the ground is covered with **grass with an occasional paving stone**. There are no marked paths.

Building & trail accessibility

Modern Buildings

The Visitor Center, including the store (Shaker Mercantile) and the café, are accessible, although assistance may be needed in opening the doors.

Historic Buildings

The Village has 20 historic Shaker buildings. About half of these buildings are accessible on the main level. The terrain to get to some of these buildings can be difficult to navigate. There are no elevators at the Village. The following list details specific accessibility issues at each building (note: an audio tour of the Village is available; see p. 4 for details):

Historic buildings accessible to visitors in wheelchairs

- **Garden Tool Shed** (stone ramp on east side of building)
- **Brick Poultry House** (wooden ramp on north side of building)
- **Round Stone Barn** (wooden ramp on north side of main level; banked/earthen ramp for upper level; earthen ramp for manure level)
- **Dairy Ell** (ground level entrance from Round Stone Barn and from barnyard)
- **Tannery** (upper level for woodworking: wooden ramp. Lower level for blacksmithing: earthen ramp)
- **Brick Garage** (accessible through main door)
- **Discovery Barn** (ground level entrance)
- **Trustees' Office** (metal ramp to front door)
- **Horse Barn** (ground-level entrance)

Historic buildings not accessible to visitors in wheelchairs

- **Laundry and Machine Shop** (wooden and stone steps with no railing)
- **Ministry Wash House** (stone steps with no handrail)
- **Brick Dwelling** (stone steps with handrail)
- **Brethren's Shop** (stone steps with handrail)
- **Privy** (historic; not functioning) (stone steps to view; no entrance for anyone)
- **Sisters' Dairy & Weave Shop** (stone steps with handrail)
- **Ice House** (one step into main part of building; step down into lower part)
- **Hired Men's Shop** (stone step with no handrail on south side; wooden steps with handrail on north side)
- **Schoolhouse** (stone steps, no handrail)
- **Ministry Shop** (stone steps with handrail)
- **Meetinghouse** (stone steps with handrail)

Farm & Forest Trail

The Village's Farm and Forest Trail is a **one-mile loop trail** that winds through pastureland and forests adjacent to the historic village. Along the trail, visitors will encounter illustrated interpretive panels that highlight the historical, environmental, social, cultural, and natural significance of this special area. The trail is open during the Village's regular hours and included in general admission. The trail surface can be somewhat uneven in certain areas. Accessing the trail on the west side requires users to cross grassy terrain. The South Family Trail, a branch of the Farm and Forest Trail, provides access to the South Family site, which includes foundations of a large barn. This trail is narrower than the Farm and Forest trail and has a less even grade.

Wheelchair Availability

A limited number of medium-grade wheelchairs is available to borrow in the Visitor Center on a first-come, first-served basis. Visitors who arrive with their own wheelchair or motorized mobility device receive free admission to the Village.

If you use a wheelchair but are mobile, you may leave your wheelchair outside any building and explore inside on foot.

PROGRAMS

Daily talks and demonstrations

Throughout the day the Village offers various talks and programs, some of which take place indoors in inaccessible spaces. With advance notice, many of these programs can be moved outside for the benefit of guests with limited mobility (weather permitting). Please speak to a staff person to request this service. A half-hour advance notice is appreciated.

After-hours or private events

If you plan to visit the Village for a special program or private event after hours and have questions about accessibility, please contact our Events Manager at 413-443-0188 x117 to make sure your needs will be met during the event.

VISUAL, AUDIO, AND SENSORY NEEDS

Visual assistance

A LARGE PRINT MAP IS AVAILABLE AT THE VISITOR CENTER.

AUDIO TOURS are currently unavailable. We hope to have these accessible again by fall 2023.

Sign language interpretation

Sign language interpretation is available by advance request. Please contact the Director of Education at 413-443-0188 x213 to arrange interpretation.

Sensory cautions and opportunities

Noise. Certain areas of the Village can be loud. **Mid-afternoon feeding** time in the barn can elicit a lot of noise from our animals. Like people, the animals do settle down after their hunger has been satisfied. If you have questions about the feeding schedule, please ask our staff. Other noisy spots include the **Blacksmith Shop** (hammering on metal), the **Laundry & Machine Shop** during a turbine demonstration (water rushing, belts turning, woodworking equipment in use). The Village also rings the **Dwelling bell** several times during the day. On occasion, a bell is rung in the **schoolhouse**.

Quiet. Quiet or less populated spaces at the Village include the **Trustees' Office and Store** and the **buildings north of Route 20**. Closer to the entrance, **The Believers' Room**, which adjoins the café area, is usually a quiet spot with tables and comfortable seating.

Tactile opportunities. Tactile opportunities are available throughout the Village but especially in the **Discovery Barn**.

ANIMALS

Hancock's animals

We are a working farm with cows, goats, sheep, pigs, donkeys, chickens, ducks, and cats. Our animals can be found in the **Dairy Ell of the Round Stone Barn**, in the **pastures**, in the **barnyard**, and in several **outbuildings in the barnyard**. During special events, our farm animals are also exhibited in the center of the Round Stone Barn. Our cats roam a bit further afield. Chickens (hens and roosters) wander freely in the barnyard and sometimes beyond.

Service dogs

Service dogs are welcome anywhere in the Village that the public is permitted to go. However, service dog handlers are advised that Village farm animals are not accustomed to visiting animals, especially dogs.

To ensure the safety of our livestock, as well as the service animal/handler team, and to provide safe and comfortable experiences for all our visitors, we ask service animal handlers to observe the following guidelines for your animal:

- must be on a leash and under its handler's control at all times
- must be housebroken
- must not pose a direct threat to the health and safety of Village animals, visitors, staff, volunteers, or collections.

After a visitor with a service animal has checked in, visitor services staff will alert farm and education services staff, via radio, that a non-Village animal is visiting the property. For bio-security needs, Village farm staff reserve the right to meet with you before you enter the barn or barnyard to discuss any potential concerns or issues.

Note that if any of these guidelines are not followed, Village staff may ask you to remove your animal from the property.

Pets

For the safety and comfort of our livestock and to provide safe and comfortable experiences for all our visitors, pets are not allowed in the historic village. This policy also protects pets from becoming overwhelmed or injured in an environment with which they are unfamiliar.

Pets, accompanied by their owners/handlers, are welcome in the Village's picnic area, located near Shaker Mercantile (the Village store). Please do not leave your pet in the car on hot days. Plan ahead and make sure you have made suitable arrangements for your furry or feathered friend before visiting. Pittsfield has several animal care facilities located near the Village. A quick Google search is sure to provide you with a reputable animal caregiver!

AMENITIES/NECESSITIES

Restrooms

Restrooms, including gender-neutral restrooms, are located in the Visitor Center, the café building, the Discovery Barn, and the Brick Privy. All Village restrooms are fully accessible or include accessible stalls. All restrooms except those in the café building have changing tables.

Dining

BB's Hot Spot is accessible. For questions about the menu or ingredients, please contact the Café directly at bestbitehotspot@gmail.com OR 413-854-4999.

Shopping

Our store, Shaker Mercantile, is accessible. Staff are happy to assist with any shopping needs.

Water Fountains

Water fountains are located in the Visitor Center and The Believer's Room (adjoining the café).

QUESTIONS?

If you still have questions, please feel free to contact us at info@hancockshakervillage.org or 413-443-0188 x0.