
A review: Sam from Leeds July 2025

“We stayed at Gitcombe Retreat for one week at the start of July. Our eldest son is 19, he has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and is a powered wheelchair user; our younger son is 15 and loves his sport. It is always a challenge to find accessible holiday accommodation that works for us as a family, but this worked really well. The views from the balcony and the patio are sensational and we loved having use of the pools and the tennis court on site; the beds were incredibly comfortable and the bathrooms luxurious. Emma kindly arranged to take delivery of the mobility equipment we needed to hire and fitted the mattress raiser for us before we arrived; Peter invested in some new threshold ramps to make sure that there was wheelchair access to the balcony. There was a refreshing willingness and determination to make this work. We very much hope to be back!”

Accessibility at Gitcombe Retreat – A Note for Our Guests, (improved access information)

At Gitcombe Estate, we believe everyone deserves the chance to enjoy the magic of a luxurious countryside escape — to relax in beautiful surroundings, reconnect with loved ones, and take a deep breath of that fresh Devon air.

Gitcombe Retreat, one of our most popular properties, has been thoughtfully designed with comfort, flow, and accessibility in mind. The *VisitEngland Rated Level 1 & 2 (M1/M2)* — (suitable for older and less mobile guests, and those with limited mobility who may require assistance or use a wheelchair part-time), is effectively being replaced by improved access information. So this is what we have set about to do.

Recently, we welcomed a quadriplegic guest and their family, who kindly shared valuable feedback. In response, we’ve created this updated accessibility guide — balancing transparency with warmth, so you can feel confident about what’s available and where a little extra planning might be needed.

✨ What Makes Gitcombe Retreat So Special:

- **Step-free access** from the paved car parking space to the front door
- **Wide internal doorways**, smooth floors, and excellent circulation space throughout the ground floor
- **Spacious open-plan living/dining/kitchen area**
- **Ground floor bedroom** with en-suite wet room-style bathroom
- **Two threshold ramps** provided for wheelchair access to the outdoor terrace

- **Zip-and-link beds** available to suit different guest needs
- **Accessible EV charging point** and hardstanding parking right beside the property
- **Stunning wrap-around balcony** and outdoor seating area with countryside views

We're proud that many guests with a variety of physical needs have had relaxing, enjoyable stays here — and we're committed to continually improving where we can.

Honest Details & Considerations

We want to help you decide if Gitcombe Retreat is a good fit for your individual access needs. Here's a full and honest outline of what to expect:

Access to the Estate

- The Gitcombe Estate is approached via **narrow Devon lanes**, typical of this part of the countryside. If you're not a fan of tight corners, we've got an **alternative route** available here: [Travel Directions](#)
- Totnes is the **nearest mainline train station**. Public transport is limited, but the friendly community bus service "**Bob the Bus**" offers **ramped wheelchair access**: [Bob the Bus](#)

Parking & Entrance

- Most of the estate driveway is tarmac, but the **final approach to Gitcombe Retreat is a steep gravel section**. Wheelchair Adapted Vehicles (WAVs) *can* manage it, but please note the **camber and loose surface may be challenging** for some.
- **Dedicated hardstanding parking** and EV charging are directly outside the Retreat, with a **paved, gently sloping path** to the front door — completely step-free.

Inside the Retreat – Ground Floor

- Entry is into a level **lobby** via a step-free threshold. 99cm
- Sliding doors lead to a **cloakroom WC**, 89 cm and the main **open-plan living/kitchen/dining area**.
- The ground floor has **hard, smooth floors** and **step-free movement** throughout.
- A **ground floor double bedroom** is accessed directly from the kitchen area. 90cm
 - The bed has space beneath for use with a **mobile hoist**, and a **powered mattress elevator** can be fitted if needed.
 - **Profiling beds are not available** but mobility aids can be **hired locally** and delivered in advance (e.g. via **Mobility Hire**).<https://mobilityhire.com/>
- The bedroom's **en-suite wet room** features:
 - Entrance 89 cm
 - Level access shower
 - Fixed grab rail to the left of the toilet (when seated)

- Wall-mounted grab rail in the shower
- Push-button flush positioned behind the toilet seat
- A shower stool is available

Outdoor Areas

- **Two threshold ramps** are available to provide access from the living area to the **wrap-around balcony and outdoor seating**.
- Step-free access to the **patio and dining area** below the Retreat is possible by using the **gravel path** that runs beneath the balcony — but please note the **gravel and gradient** may pose challenges for some wheelchairs users who may need some assistance

▼ Lower Ground Floor

- **Internal access** to the lower floor is via **two flights of wooden stairs** with a handrail.
- The lower ground floor includes **three additional bedrooms**, a bathroom, and a utility room.
- Each bedroom has a **single step up from the patio** and a threshold to negotiate at the door. A long ramp is available to access the lower ground bedrooms from the patio.

Around the Estate & Local Area

- The estate is built on **sloping terrain**, which means there are some **unavoidable gradients** to reach facilities such as the swimming pools, tennis court, and children's play area. Please feel free to get in touch for more detailed information or photos.

Nearby Beaches

- **Blackpool Sands** now has a boardwalk that allows wheelchair users to access the beach with family and friends. (Please note: **no blue badge parking** currently available.)
- At **Slapton Sands**, flood defences block any sea view from the promenade for wheelchair users at the west end.

Town Access & Changing Places Toilets

- **Dartmouth** has **blue badge parking**, accessible routes along the waterfront, and a fantastic modern arts centre — **The Flavel** — that's fully wheelchair accessible.
- **Totnes and Kingsbridge** offer charm in abundance but do have **steep streets and narrow pavements** that can make navigation tricky.
- Local **Changing Places facilities** can currently be found at:
 - **Brixham Central Car Park**
 - **Paignton Zoo**
 - **Paignton Library and Information Centre**

- (A new facility is also proposed for **Royal Avenue Gardens** in Dartmouth.)

♥ Your Comfort, Your Choice

We understand that everyone's needs are unique. If you're thinking of booking and have any questions — big or small — please don't hesitate to **call or email us**. We're happy to send extra details, measurements, or photos to help you plan ahead.

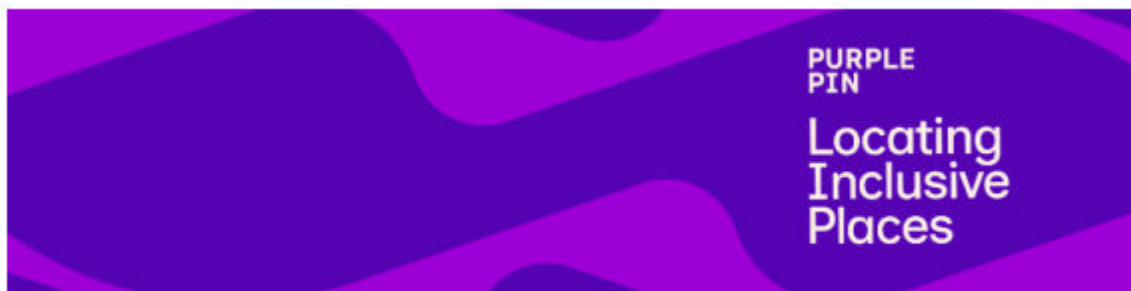
Gitcombe Retreat is a luxurious, peaceful haven — and we're always working to make it as inclusive as possible. With the right planning and support, it could be just the escape you're looking for.

With warmth and welcome,
Emma and the Gitcombe Team 🌸

stay@gitcombe.co.uk

Thank you to Purple Pin for collaborating with Gitcombe on providing the above information

<https://www.purplepin.co.uk/>



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These are short term and long term recommendations from the guest on what we can do to improve things – This is not for guests to see:

Finger post signage visible from the lower driveway directing visitors to the accessible/blue badge parking space alongside the Retreat would be helpful and reassuring (especially upon arrival for first time visitors).

Wheelchair Adapted Vehicles (WAVs) can be carrying a lot of weight and might not be highly powered. Wheelchair users can be nervous passengers. The gravel surface combined with the gradient and camber of the approach to the parking space should be accurately described. Tarmac rather than gravel would make access for WAVs and wheelchairs much easier and safer.

Many wheelchair users will be unable to access the patio along the gravel driveway. A strip of tarmac (or alternative firm and stable surface) needs to be provided to allow wheelchair users to make use of the patio area.

A lever operated flush, with the lever on the open side (away from the wall) would be easier for most disabled people to operate. If or when this toilet is next due for refurbishment, you could consider installing a wash-dry toilet (such as a [Closomat](#)) - this allows for much greater independence for visitors with more complex physical disabilities.

A drop down grab rail should be installed on the other side of the toilet. This will help ambulant disabled users as well as wheelchair users with transfers to and from the toilet.

Information by Sam Yates

[Gitcombe Retreat Access Information July 2025.docx](#)

Photos:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/it2e8g7ujot3gi5ojkqr6/ABwZbKbJKicOiQvgpEp3Sx0?rlkey=1qxolo62rk2l6xkmbs1w6wwm6&st=hn8j11u3&dl=0>