



# Mercat Tours

## Access Statement



(Exterior façade of Mercat Tours office on Blair Street)



## Access Statement

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This Access Statement does not contain personal opinions as to our suitability for those with access needs. It aims to describe accurately the facilities and services that we offer all our visitors.

If you require any further information, about specific access or need advice on planning your visit, please contact us, we are happy to discuss your needs and offer assistance where possible.

### **Contact us:**

Mercat Tours, 28 Blair Street, Edinburgh EH1 1QR

### **Office hours of operation:**

April – October, Monday to Sunday 9am – 10pm

November - March, 12pm-10pm

Telephone: +44 (0)131 225 5445

Email: [info@mercattours.com](mailto:info@mercattours.com)

WhatsApp Chat: +44 (0)750 013 9575

Website: [www.mercattours.com](http://www.mercattours.com)

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## Welcome

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Mercat Tours is situated in the heart of Edinburgh's medieval Old Town. We are a five-star history and ghost tour company, and have maintained this prestigious award from Visit Scotland since 2007, achieving some of the highest scores among Scottish attractions.

We have won numerous industry awards since we began operating in the Old Town in 1985 and are a proudly BCorp company.

Our tours are performed by live guide, called Storytellers, using storytelling skills. We explore the closes and courtyards of the Royal Mile, as well as the Blair Street Underground Vaults, Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace, and the Canongate Kirkyard.

We continually review tour content and enhance experiences in line with visitor feedback. The most recent innovation being the addition of sound and scent. Crafting immersive multi-sensory walking tours that combine traditional storytelling with authentic sounds and scents from Edinburgh's rich history.

Our office is located at 28 Blair Street, and tours begin at the Mercat Cross, near St Giles' Cathedral.





(Blair Street Offices)



(Mercat Cross tour start point)

We operate tours all year round except the 25th of December, Christmas Day. We have guaranteed departures even in poor weather.

You can purchase tickets online at [mercattours.com](http://mercattours.com), at our office, on Blair Street, or at the Mercat Cross. We have a complimentary carer ticket policy in operation.

This document will detail accessibility information for getting to us, booking tickets, tours, accessibility aids, and public toilets.

## Travelling to us

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For full details and directions on how to reach us, please see our website [www.mercattours.com](http://www.mercattours.com) and click the '[Contact Us](#)' tab.

### **Train:**

The nearest railway station is Edinburgh Waverley, which is approximately 300 meters away or a 5-10 minute walk.

Taxis are available from outside the station on Market Street and Waverley Bridge. The Market Street rank can be reached using lifts if required. Full station facilities and information about accessibility can be found at [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk).

### **Bus:**

There are frequent bus services which stop near our office and departure point. The nearest bus stops are:

- North Bridge (for services 3, 5, 7, 8, 14, 30, 31, 33, 35, 37, 45, 47, 49, Perrymans 51 / 52 and First Bus X95)
- George IV Bridge (for services 23, 27, 41, 42).

Bus stops on North Bridge and George IV Bridge have shelters and seating.

Lothian Buses are wheelchair accessible. Information about accessibility and further information on bus services, times and fares can be found at [www.lothianbuses.com](http://www.lothianbuses.com).

## Tram:

The closest tram stop is St Andrew Square, which is approximately 850 metres away.



(Exterior of a tram at St Andrew Square stop)

To get to Mercat Tours' meeting point, the Mercat Cross, get off the tram at the stop 'St. Andrew Square', and head towards Prince's Street. Head down Waverley Bridge, and then up Cockburn Street. Turn right at the top of Cockburn Street to reach the Royal Mile. Head towards St Giles cathedral, until you see the Mercat Cross. Be aware that Cockburn Street can be steep in parts. It has a maximum gradient of 1:14.

All trams feature:

- Low entrances.
- High visibility handrails.
- Two dedicated wheelchair/buggy spaces per tram.
- Dedicated disabled priority seats.

- Passenger alert buttons signposted in Braille for blind and partially sighted tram users.

For more information on tram accessibility visit:

<http://edinburghtrams.com/community/tram-access>

### **Taxi:**

Central Taxis offer accessible taxis and can be contacted on +44 (0)131 229 2468

### **Car:**

There is pay and display on-street car parking available on Blair Street, which is closest to our office the Mercat Cross tour meeting point. There are approximately 10 spaces. There are no parking charges after 6.30pm, daily.

There are no assigned disabled parking bays on Blair Street, but Blue Badge holders can park in public bays without time limit or charge.

There is a pay and display ticket machine on Blair Street, 5 meters from the entrance to the Mercat Tours office. You can also pay using Ringo, by phone or mobile app. Instructions are located on the ticket machine.

The Blair Street curbs vary from 15cm to 26cm in depth. There are dropped curbs at the top of Blair Street. The surface of the street is cobbled and very uneven in places, which are potential trip hazards.





(Uneven cobbled surface on Blair Street)

There is no parking at the tour start point, the Mercat Cross, although you may be able to drop off guests briefly and park elsewhere.

The route to the tour start point (the Mercat Cross) and office (on Blair Street) are primarily cobbled and paved.



## Booking tickets

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You can book tickets online at [mercattours.com](http://mercattours.com), or in person at our office or at the Mercat Cross. We operate a cashless business and accept most major credit or debit cards.

Our office and the Vaults Museum can be found at 28 Blair Street.

For tour times, please see the [tour timetable](#) on our [website](#), [www.mercattours.com](http://www.mercattours.com)

Our hours of operation are: 12pm-10pm November through March, and 9am-10pm April through October.

## Accessing the site

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Access to the office is via Blair Street through two sets of double manual doors. The first is a black door which is 50cm wide when opened halfway, or 104cm when fully open. This door is fully open when the office is open.

The second door is a manual, windowed door which is 53cm wide when opened halfway, or 111cm when fully open.

The reception area is located at street level. It is step free but with a lip of 7cm on the right side of the main entrance door. The floor surface is stone slab and wooden floor.

There are windows on three out of four sides of the main entrance area, providing natural light. There are also ceiling spotlights which provide additional lighting. There is LED lighting in the reception area. There is no background music.

The reception area is made up of a long, curved desk and a gift shop. The booking desk is to the left of the entrance. There are two chairs with armrests available in the gift shop area, adjacent to the booking desk. The desk varies from 76cm to 130cm high. This area is 108cm-138cm wide.

There is no glass divider between the reception and ticket sales. We have an induction loop installed.

The Mercat Cross is situated in the High Street on a wide area of pavement beside St Giles' Cathedral, which can be reached from the North Bridge by walking up a slight incline or from George IV Bridge down a slight decline.

There are stone bollards at the edge of the paved area, approximately 45cm high.

The Mercat Tours Support Team is clearly identifiable with Mercat-branded waistcoats, jackets, umbrellas, and name badges.



(Mercat Tours Support Team wearing Mercat-branded uniform)

The Mercat Cross is staffed from 1pm-8pm November through March, and 10am-8:30pm April through October.



Our support team can assist guests with questions, advice or sales. They have printed leaflets with tour information that you may take.

We are a cashless business, but accept credit and debit cards at both locations.



## Tours

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For tour times, please see the [tour timetable](#) on our [website, www.mercattours.com](http://www.mercattours.com)

All our tours start at the Mercat Cross. This is an eight-sided monument, topped with a unicorn, located next to St Giles Cathedral. What3words location: [again.tell.remain](#)



(The Mercat Cross located next to St Giles Cathedral)

The group size is capped at 18 people for all tours, except for our Whisky Tour & Tasting, which is capped at 16.

All our tours explore the closes and courtyards of old Edinburgh. The duration varies depending on the tour.



(An example of a close in Edinburgh)

Our 3 most readily accessible tours are [Secrets of Edinburgh's Royal Mile](#), [Witches: Trial & Truth](#), and [Ghostly Tales of Edinburgh's Royal Mile](#). These all stay entirely aboveground. The tour routes vary as guides adapt the tour to external circumstances, group needs and time.

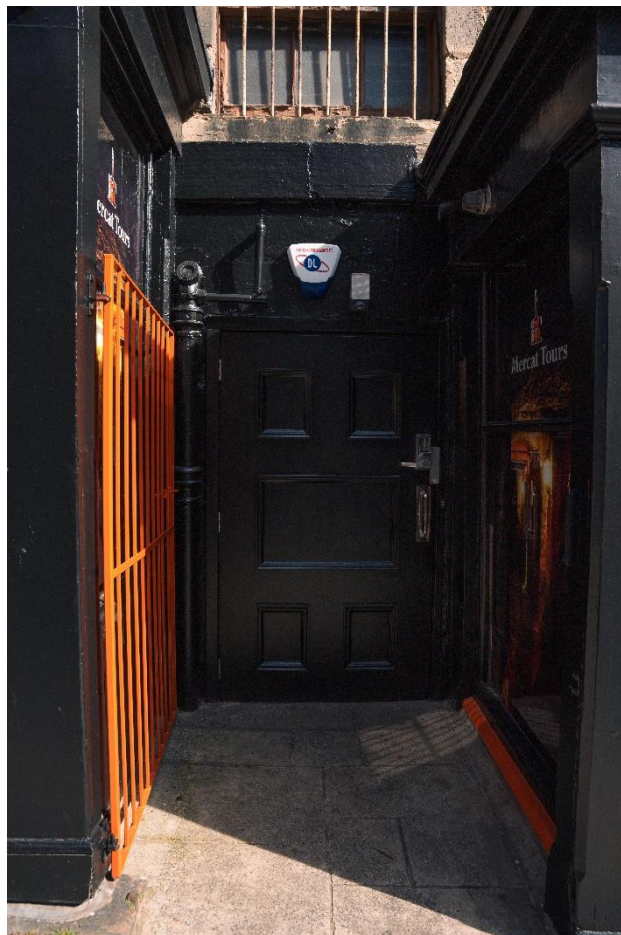
For tour times, please see the [tour timetable](#) on our [website](#), [www.mercattours.com](http://www.mercattours.com)

The Old Town is comprised mainly of cobbled streets, paved areas and steep slopes. Curbs can be uneven in places. Where there are particular hazards or weather issues, the guide will give the group due warning and guidance, or avoid completely.



Guides can devise wheelchair accessible routes in the Old Town. They can also devise routes which avoid steep slopes and stepped areas. If guests have particular needs in this respect, they should make the guide aware before the start of the tour as the guides are trained and happy to help.

If the tour includes the underground vaults, these are accessed through a door 109cm wide. There is automatic lighting above the entrance which is triggered each time the door is opened.



(Black door used to access the vaults)

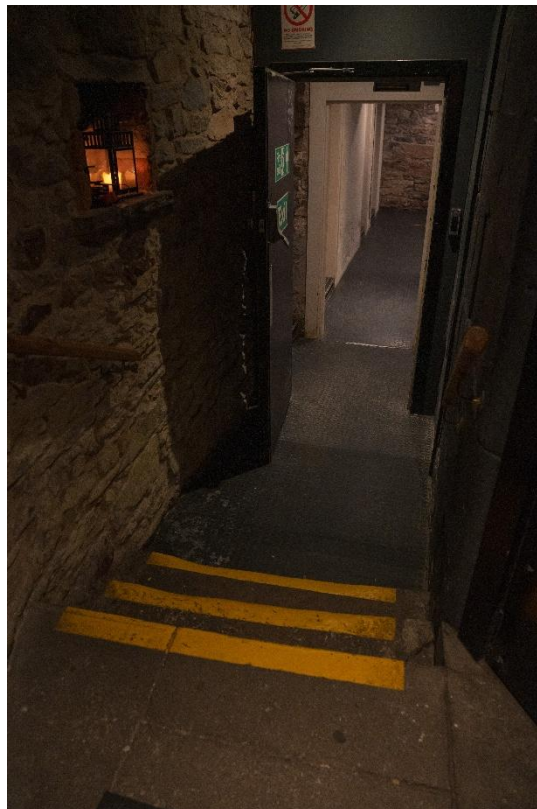
The vaults are not wheelchair accessible. However, an interactive audio-visual display in the Vaults Museum is designed specifically for guests with mobility or sensory needs.

You can step into the depths of Edinburgh’s past—no stairs required. See the section titled ‘Vaults Museum’ for more information.

If a guest is able to walk with assistance, we can provide storage for equipment for the duration of the tour. The guide will also allow for more time to allow safe descent into, and ascent from, the underground vaults.

The route to the vaults is through 2 doorways, each at least 80cm wide, and down 4 sets of steps.

There are three steps in the main upper corridor area, with handrails to the left and right. Each step is 16cm high.



(Three steps in the main upper corridor area)



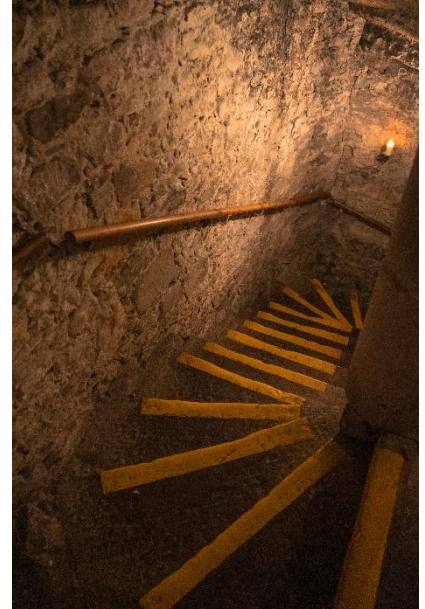
Next, there a set of 12 steps, which are curved with a handrail to the left (image 1). Then, two steps which are straight, with handrails on both sides (image 2). And finally, a set of 15 steps, which are curved with a handrail to the left (image 3).



(Image 1)



(Image 2)



(Image 3)

The stairwell is 109cm wide. The steps are relatively even in size. Each step is painted with yellow paint to increase visibility. On reaching the lower corridor within the underground vaults, it becomes significantly darker and can take a few moments for eyes to adjust.

The vaults at this point are 100cm wide.





(The vaults at this point are 100cm wide)

Throughout the vaults, the floor is hard earth and uneven. Where there are particular hazards, including a hard earthen ramp, the guide will use extra light to improve visibility. There are LED lights and burning candles at strategic points on the route.

Although the majority of doorways in the vaults are wide (approximately 127 to 137cm wide), there is one narrow point where the pathway is only 58cm wide.

There is no background music. There is no interpretation in the underground vaults or Megget's Cellar.

The visit to the vaults can be anywhere from thirty minutes long, depending on the focus of the tour. Guests may request to leave the vaults at any point, for any reason, by asking their tour guide.

Guests who require additional light to provide a more comfortable experience may use their phone torch.

Selected tours include a visit to Megget's Cellar. This room is accessed via the same steps as the underground vaults.

The Megget's Cellar is accessed through a door that is 76cm wide. The floor is stone slab and can be uneven in places. There is bench seating, chairs, and stools available around wooden tables.



(The Megget's Cellar)



The vaults are exited using the same steps used to enter, then down a hallway that is 133cm wide. The exit doors, situated in the reception area, are located at street level.

## Accessibility Aids on Tours

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Guides are trained to adapt tours for those with particular needs, in order to provide the fullest possible experience. They can discuss all needs before the tour and respond according to personal preferences in terms of delivery.

The guide can adapt the overground tour route to suit wheelchair users. The guide will include more descriptions for those who are sight impaired. The guide will ensure that they are in the right position to communicate with those deaf or hard of hearing.

The guide wears a microphone and utilises an audio system. The live tour is transmitted through TourTalk devices to ensure guests on the tour can hear the content being delivered, especially during busy times. We also supply reusable headphones. The equipment is sanitised after every use.

We also offer hearing devices designed specifically for hearing aids, though the headphones also work with most hearing aids.

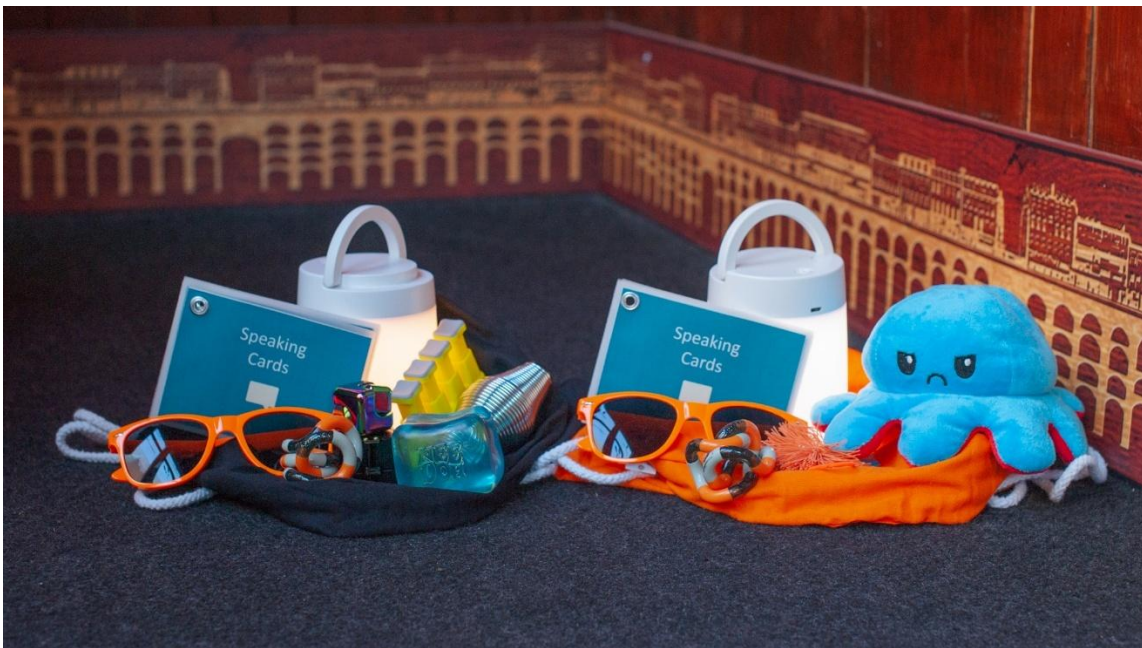
Portable stools, which double as walking aids, can be provided upon request.

Sensory bags are also available to borrow. These are designed to enhance focus and promote relaxation during cognitively demanding tasks. They can be particularly beneficial for



individuals with sensory processing differences, such as autistic individuals or those with ADHD.

Sensory bags include sunglasses, a lantern, fidget toys and speaking cards. There are different bags designed for children and for adults.



(Sensory bags with example contents)

If you would like to borrow a portable stool or sensory bag, please email [info@mercattours.com](mailto:info@mercattours.com) before your tour.



## Vaults Museum

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Select tours visit the Vaults Museum. The Vaults Museum is located at ground level via our office entrance at 28 Blair Street. Directions are detailed in the 'Booking Tickets' section.

After the reception entrance, the Vaults Museum is accessed through a doorway 81cm wide.

The Vaults Museum contains interactive displays, information and interpretation boards, and a Touch Table where guests can see and touch artefacts from the Blair Street Underground Vaults. The Touch Table is 74cm high.



(Touch table in the Vaults Museum)

The Vaults Museum also hosts an interactive audio-visual experience. This features a first-person guided tour, led by a Storyteller guide. It is designed specifically for those with

claustrophobia, mobility or sensory needs, or guests who wish to leave the vaults at any point during the tour.

The audio-visual display consists of a 106cm screen and a 16mm button interface. The buttons are 16mm in diameter and slightly raised. There are eight numbered buttons, seven to navigate the tour experience and one stop button.



(The Vaults Revealed Audio-Visual display)

There is space for wheelchairs in front of the audio-visual display and further portable seating can be provided upon request. Our Support Team is on site to provide any additional aid.

There is bench seating available in the Vaults Museum, without arms. There is approximately 142cm of clear floor space around the seating area, with one narrow point of 97cm.



(Bench seating in the Vaults Museum)

Lighting is overhead and comprises of 11 LED spotlights on two tram lines. There is also additional lighting in the display cabinets to highlight artefacts. There is no background noise apart from the audio-visual presentation and an interactive display.

Guides remain in the Vaults Museum at the end of the tour to answer questions or provide further information or guidance. To exit the building, guests leave through the street-level door in our reception area.



## Public Toilets

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There is one public toilet on site. This is not an accessible toilet. There is one step up, at a height of 15cm, and two doors at 73cm and 62cm wide.

The nearest accessible toilets can be found at Starbucks or Radisson Blu Hotel, which are 100 and 160 metres away, respectively.

The nearest changing places toilet is at Edinburgh Waverley Station, which is 300 metres away.

## Additional Information

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Trained assistance dogs are welcome on all tours and in the Blair Street Underground Vaults. Water will be made available upon request.

Further information on our tours can be found on our website at [mercattours.com/accessibility](https://mercattours.com/accessibility). There, you will find an AccessAble visual guide, Mercat's Accessibility video, links to Euan's Guide reviews, further information, and more.

## Feedback

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If you would like to provide us with any feedback on this Access Statement, we welcome your comments. We are interested to learn if there is any information we may have missed that would be needed.

Please email us: [info@mercattours.com](mailto:info@mercattours.com) or telephone +44 (0) 131 225 5445, or speak to a member of our team when you visit Mercat Tours.



## Contact Details

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Our address is Mercat Tours Limited, 28 Blair Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1QR.

Our telephone number 0131 225 5445, or from outside the UK + 44 131 225 5445.

**Address:** 28 Blair Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1QR, Scotland

**Telephone:** +44 (0) 131 225 5445 / 07500139575

**Email:** info@mercattours.com

**Website:** www.mercattours.com

### **Our hours of operation are:**

12pm-10pm November through March

9am-10pm April through October

Local disabled access information can be found at

[www.euansguide.com](http://www.euansguide.com)

If we have not covered your access requirements in this document, please contact us and we will be happy to discuss your needs and offer assistance where we can.