

# Access *in* Paris

A guide for those who have problems getting around,  
including elderly people and families with buggies

*By Gordon Couch and Adam O'Boyle*

*Research and survey work carried out by  
Access Project (Pauline Hephaistos Survey Projects)*

## Dedication

We have dedicated this project and guidebook to past members of the group, both disabled and able-bodied, without whom this series of guides would never have been produced. In the years since the early 1970s, some have passed on, and we remember their inspiration, determination and patience. We hope that they will be happy to be associated for ever with a project that aims to break down barriers, and to provide information which enables people to live more fulfilling lives.

### **The other guides in this series are:**

*Access in London (2003)*

*Access in Israel and the Palestinian Authority (2000)*

and together with a LARGE PRINT version of *Access in Paris* can be obtained from:

**Access Project,  
39 Bradley Gardens, West Ealing,  
London W13 8HE, UK**

*websites: [www.accessproject-phsp.org](http://www.accessproject-phsp.org)*

*[www.accessinparis.org](http://www.accessinparis.org)*

*[www.accessinlondon.org](http://www.accessinlondon.org)*

*[www.accessinisrael.org](http://www.accessinisrael.org)*

*where you will find updated information.*

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**The guide is based on survey work carried out between 2005 and 2007** by members of Pauline Hephaistos Survey Projects (PHSP). This group of researchers, reporters and visitors always includes a variety of people, some able-bodied, some wheelchair users and some disabled walkers. We come from several schools, universities and colleges; from a group called The Pauline Meetings in London, and from Greenford High School. Several are past pupils of the Hephaistos School near Reading or of Lord Mayor Treloar College in Alton in Hampshire. Some of the group are of post-student age and working in a variety of jobs.

**Over the years PHSP has produced more than twenty access guides, and this is the fourth edition of the Paris one. Our approach is to describe the barriers to access as accurately as we can, and to allow the reader to decide about the practicality of making a visit.**

The name is a bit of a mouthful.

Pauline arises from St Paul, and some of us come from a Christian group attached to St Paul's School in London. The Hephaistos part of the name arises from the Greek god who was the smithy and the equivalent of Vulcan in Roman mythology. He was a son of Zeus, who was foolish enough to defend his mother, Hera, during some major family row. Zeus kicked Hephaistos off Mount Olympus and, after a long fall, he landed at the bottom and broke his leg. In frescoes he is shown with one leg facing one way and the other turned through 90°. Hence, he has been adopted by some as the Greek god for disabled people and gave his name to a pioneering school near Reading which a number of the group attended before its closure in 1986.

This guide was first published in 1974, and then in 1985 and 1993.

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*Design Considerations* diagram adapted from *Designing for the Disabled* by Selwyn Goldsmith with the kind permission of the publishers RIBA Publications Ltd

The artwork used in this edition was drawn and developed by Nigel Betts to whom we are greatly indebted.

# Acknowledgements

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- ensuring that the necessary financial basis was secure, for which we are particularly grateful to the trustees of the PHSP Charitable Trust, to past members and friends of the group who have contributed by regular giving, and to the charitable trusts who have sponsored or supported us;
- careful preparation and planning of what was to be visited, ensuring that the surveyors were well briefed about what to look for;
- undertaking the practical research, by visit, mainly during the summers of 2005 and 2006, with a little bit of tidying-up in 2007;
- writing, proof reading, editing, preparing diagrams and symbols and the host of meticulous and time-consuming activities that are necessary in putting together the text of such a guide;
- publishing, distribution and publicity.

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# Abbreviations

A	Autoroute (French motorway)
APF	Association des Paralysés de France
arr	arrondissement
ATM	automatic teller machine (for getting cash)
ave	avenue
BAA	British Airports Authority
BB	Blue Badge (for parking)
blvd	boulevard
BP	boîte postale (post office box number)
CDG	Charles de Gaulle Airport (at Roissy)
cm	centimetre/s
CP	car park
D	door width (cm)
DLF	Disabled Living Foundation
EHIC	European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)
FGTO	French Government Tourist Office
GF	ground floor (rez de chaussée)
H	height (cm)
HR	handrail
km	kilometre/s
L	length (cm) for example of a lift
LGF	lower ground floor (basement)
m	metre/s
MeV	Mobile-en-Ville (a French disability organisation)
PHSP	Pauline Hephaistos Survey Projects
pl	place/square
RADAR	Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
RATP	Réseau Autonome du Transport Parisien
RER	Réseau Express Régional (suburban railway, including an underground network)
RN	Route nationale (main road in France)
SNCF	Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (French railways)
ST	sideways transfer to a toilet seat (cm)
Textphone	a phone with a typewriter to enable deaf and mute people to communicate
TGV	Train à Grande Vitesse (high speed train)
UGCP	underground car park
W	width (cm) for example of a lift
<b>- Steps down + Steps up &gt; more than &lt; less than ~ approximately</b>	

15thC = fifteenth century / 16thC = sixteenth century (etc)

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# Foreword

These guides have been around for more than thirty years, and date from experiences in the 1970s. Facilities for disabled people were virtually non-existent, and places were 'accessible' more by accident than design. Our group of relatively intrepid travellers could overcome almost any of the barriers put in our way as we were young enough and strong enough to be able to get up flights of steps. The suggestion that we should write guidebooks came from the disabled members of the group who said "It's been bloody difficult, but we've managed, why don't we write a guidebook for others?".

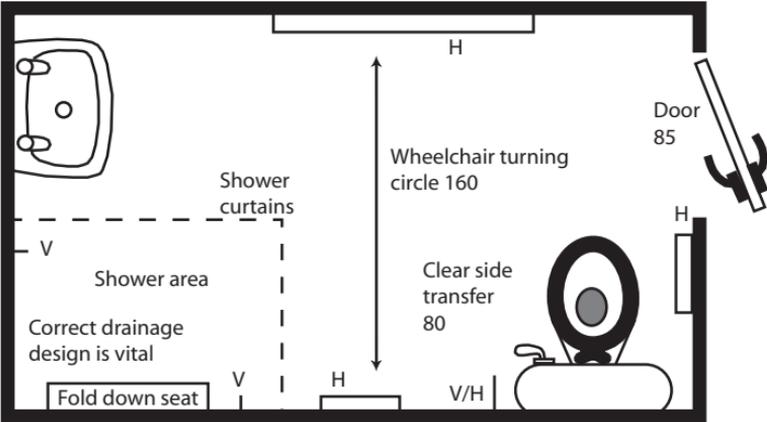
**Broadly, our approach is to provide accurate descriptive material in a format where general background, travelling, accommodation, getting around, and 'access' to shops, sights and places of interest are all integrated in one guidebook. Crucially we describe the barriers to places that have difficult access so that people can make up their own mind about the practicality of a visit.**

What is slightly disappointing is that this approach has not been copied. While it is true that much more information can be gleaned from websites and by making direct enquiries, the quality of much of it is poor and/or it is presented in a very complicated way. It is rarely inter-related to link accommodation, getting around and physical access to facilities.

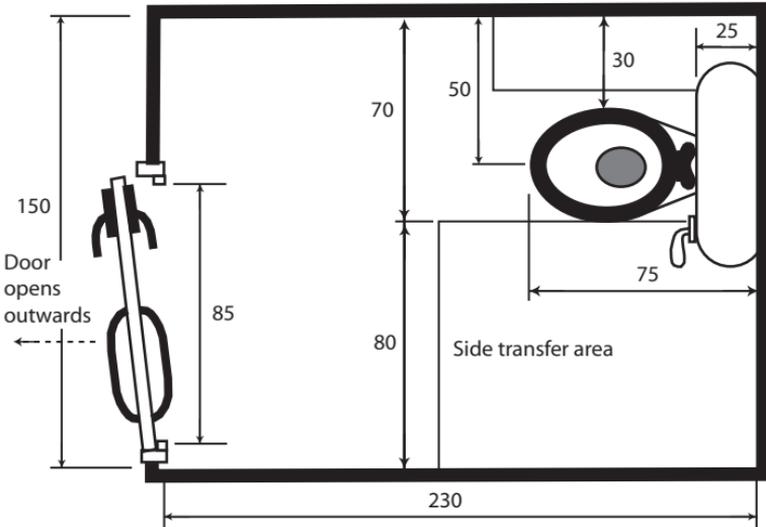
Access concerns more than just the built environment and facilities which is largely what our guides describe. It is also concerned with attitudes and training issues surrounding disability awareness and with providing equality of opportunity. These, however, cannot be accurately assessed during the relatively brief visits made by our surveyors.

Sadly, many of the current rather grand initiatives around, some of which are European-wide, are not grounded in the reality of the experience of disabled people. They are driven by the (so-called) market, rather than by concepts which arise from peoples' human rights. Hotels, for example, may be made more 'accessible' because the owners hope to make a bigger profit - and that in our view is much too limited an objective. Design improvements are also made because the regulations require it, but they are often not done with any depth of understanding.

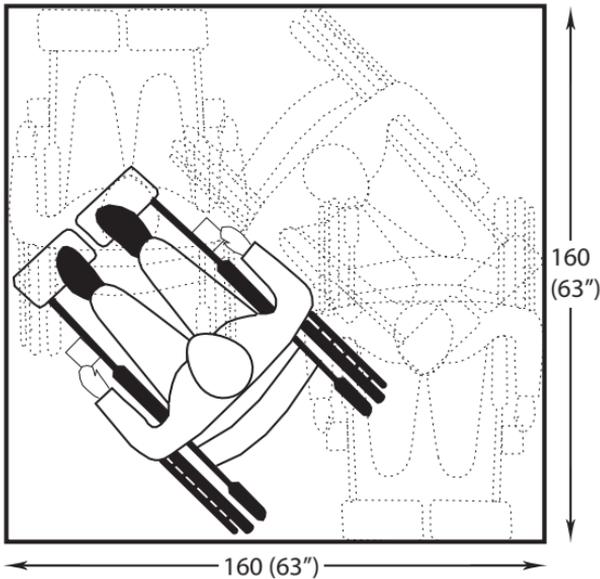
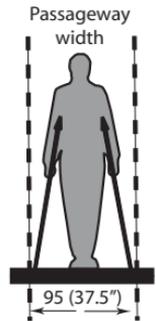
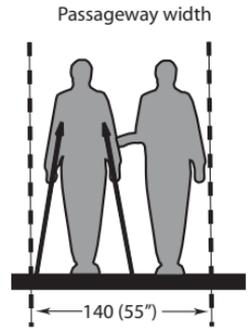
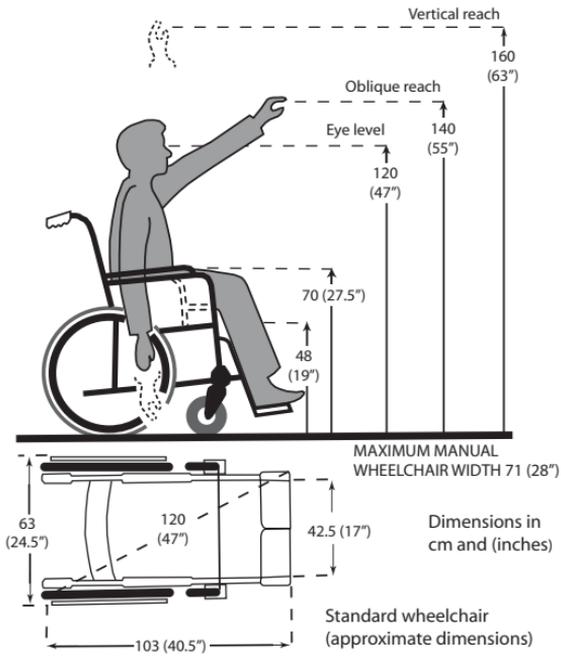
We include below a diagram which illustrates some of the design requirements of both a bathroom and a toilet suitable for a wheelchair user or disabled walker, which we developed for inclusion in the Israel guide. In that context, we commend the **Gateshead Access Panel** publication *Designing to enable* which discusses a great many of the issues in much greater detail, and has the unique approach of EXPLAINING WHY various provisions are needed.



Overall dimensions 250 x 180 (150 cm min) (not drawn to scale)  
 H = horizontal grab bar  
 V = vertical grab bar  
 Dimensions in cm



**Bathroom and toilet layouts**



## Design considerations