

Planning your Visit and Frequently Asked Questions

On this page we've set out some notes and answers to Frequently Asked Questions about your visit to The Swallow Theatre.

If there's anything we've missed please don't hesitate to contact us on **01988 850368** or **info@swallowtheatre.co.uk**

On the day of the show we are usually busy with the performers and getting ready so we often cannot answer the phone or pick up messages, so it's best to contact as early as you can.

We want your visit to be as enjoyable as possible so we will do all we can to help you have a magical experience.

What performance spaces are there?

For 2023 most performances will take place inside the theatre auditorium.

We have two outdoor performances scheduled for summer 2023 – please see the separate FAQ about this.

For those who visited in 2021 or 2022, you may have seen our semi-outdoor garden marquee performance space. This structure is having a rest in 2023, and we hope it will return in 2024.

Outdoor performances

We have two outdoor performances scheduled for summer 2023 (Sense and Sensibility on Tuesday 13 June and Wednesday 14 June). If the weather is good these will be fully open air, and will take place on the front lawn of the theatre gardens.

Please bring your own garden chair or rug. There will be a few benches and chairs available if you are not able to bring your own. We can reserve these for people with special needs – please let us know in advance.

Places on the lawn are unreserved. Please be considerate of others if you have high-backed chairs, or umbrellas.

If the weather is bad the performance will take place indoors. The decision about whether the show moves into the auditorium or remains outdoors is the responsibility of, and at the sole discretion of, the venue operators, in consultation with the performers. If possible, we shall email all ticketholders at the point we make the decision to move the show indoors. If you have not been informed of this, please come along prepared for the show to take place outdoors.

When you book you will be asked to select seat(s) from the indoor seating plan. This is where you will sit if the show has to move indoors. If the show is outdoors, then places on the lawn are unreserved.

If the show takes place outdoors then you are welcome to bring a picnic to eat before the show or in the interval. Sorry but picnics are not allowed inside the auditorium.

Content warnings and recommended ages

We want to provide everyone with all the information they may need before deciding whether to come to see a show.

We provide a recommended age for each show. This is advisory information only, and it is up to the parent/guardian to decide whether the show will be suitable for a young person. Please call us if you would like more information. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

We also provide detailed content warnings for each show in a drop-down box.

Sometimes providing detailed information about topics that some people find distressing, or theatrical effects which can trigger reactions in some people, will give away aspects of the story or the effects used to create the magic and excitement of live theatre. We therefore provide the content information as a drop-down on each show page which you may access if you wish. Please be aware the information may contain spoilers.

The information we give is as provided to us by the producer of the show at the time of going on sale. Please note that shows do develop and evolve, and theatre is a live, and sometimes unpredictable, experience. We make every effort to provide information but the venue will not be held responsible if this information is incomplete or incorrect.

If you have specific concerns or would like further information about any show please contact us on 01988 850368 and we can discuss this with you.

How do I buy a ticket?

Tickets are available to purchase online from this website, and we highly recommend you purchase tickets in advance. You do not need to set up an account/login to use our online booking system. There is no additional booking fee – all costs are included as part of the stated ticket price.

If there are spare seats on the day, these will be available to buy on the door. We accept payment by cash and card.

The booking system will show you a seating plan. You can select your own allocated seat(s).

Tickets are emailed to you and should arrive very soon after your booking. If you do not receive them, please check your spam/junk folders. If the email is still not there, please email us on info@swallowtheatre.co.uk

Note, we are aware of an occasional problem for people with BTinternet and other BT-related email addresses. This is because these email servers completely block us and we have not yet been able to find a solution.

Why do we ask you not to leave a single seat when choosing from the plan?

We welcome everyone, including solo visitors, to the theatre. We try to make the experience for every visitor as good as possible, whether they come alone, or in a couple or a group.

When we ask you not to leave a single seat on the plan when you choose your seats, that's not because we don't want single people to attend.

It's because, to be financially viable, we need to sell as many tickets as possible for every performance. Some people only want to attend if they can sit with their friend/family. That's quite understandable – theatre is a shared experience and you may want to be able to hold hands with / giggle with / cry with / prod the ribs of the person you came with. Some people need to sit next to their partner/friend because they are also their carer.

It really helps us to sell the maximum number of tickets if we have blocks of seats (two or three together), rather than singles. It gives more options.

Once this becomes not possible, of course, please book to leave a single seat

Why do you ask for donations?

We have kept our ticket prices as low as we can to help make our events affordable for as many people as possible in these challenging times. Most ticket prices have been kept at the same rates as in 2022 and earlier.

However, costs are rising for the performers and for the venue.

The Swallow Theatre is an independent venue and receives no arts funding. Many of the performers who come here are also independent self-employed artists and do not benefit from Arts Council/Creative Scotland funding.

For those customers who feel they could pay more and help support the arts, we have the following ways you can help:-

- If you would like to support the performer of a particular show and would like to pay more for your ticket than the standard price, we offer the possibility to add more when you book your ticket. Any donation you add here will go into the pot of money attributed to this show, and split in accordance with our contract with this performer.
- If you are unable to attend the show, and are within the period for our refund policy to apply, you can if you wish donate the money rather than requesting a refund. Any donation made in this way will go into the pot of money attributed to this show, and split in accordance with our contract with this performer.
- At the checkout there is an opportunity to donate to The Swallow Theatre. If you donate here, the money will be retained by The Swallow Theatre and used to help with the general operating costs of the venue.
- Become a Friend – our Friends scheme is a great way to support the theatre on an annual basis, and also gives you access to benefits such as priority booking and a printed brochure mailed to your home.

Please feel no obligation at all to donate or pay extra for your tickets – your order is supporting the theatre and performers already. Thank you.

Please note that The Swallow Theatre is a private partnership, and donations are not eligible for Gift Aid. Full details are in our Terms and Conditions.

Tell me about your no quibble refund policy?

So that you can book your ticket in confidence and as soon as possible, we offer a no-quibble refund policy*.

If you or anyone in your group cannot attend, for any reason, and you email us at least **48 hours** before the performance start time, we shall provide you with a refund of the price you paid, less £1.50 per seat to cover the box office and payment card fees we will have already incurred.

If we as a venue have to cancel the performance ticketholders will be given a full refund including the box office and credit card fees which we still have to pay.

Please allow us 72 hours to process the refund, which will be made back to the card you used to make the payment. It can sometimes take a further 7-10 days for the money to arrive onto your bank/credit card statement.

* our refund policy does not apply to shows at the venue hosted by other organisations. As at January 2023 there are no shows which are excluded. Any exclusions are noted on the event description on our website.

How do I get to the theatre?

Please allow plenty of time for your journey. Except for music shows, latecomers cannot be admitted if the show has started.

Please do not rely on road signs. We do not have tourist brown signs as unfortunately they are too expensive for us to justify the cost. Road signs to villages are often blown around by the wind.

The theatre is tucked away down some narrow lanes – you can **download the directions here**. Please allow plenty of time to find us. Some satnavs take you down a farm track – this is not necessary and really not a good idea unless you have a 4×4. You can get to the theatre on proper roads (when we say “proper” we mean the rural definition, i.e. expect potholes and grass growing down the middle of the lane).

There is no public transport to the theatre, and the nearest bus stop is about 3 miles away.

You are welcome to arrive by bike, however please note that we do not have bike-racks or changing facilities.

Many people have successfully arranged taxis to drop them off and pick them up. Each event page on our website gives the expected running time of the show. A list of taxi firms in the area can be found at <https://walkthewhithornway.org/transport> - scroll down to the Mochrum/Whithorn/Isle of Whithorn sections.

Our postcode is **DG8 8DR**.

What3Words: ///waters.inches.spans

Where can I park?

Audience car parking is in the field opposite the theatre. If the weather has been wet for several days before the show the field can get a little muddy and slippery. On rare occasions small areas may be closed off – the rest of the field should be fine especially the higher parts. Over the last few years we have put down a large area of grass mesh which means that tyres should not get stuck in mud. Please drive slowly and carefully in the field.

Please park as close as possible to the next vehicle so that we can get everyone in.

It is then a short walk along the lane to the theatre site. The lane can also get muddy so we recommend stout and waterproof footwear. Please be aware of traffic.

In the dark you may wish to bring a torch as there are no street lights near the theatre – but there are excellent stars on a clear night!

Do you have disabled parking?

We have a small area of hardstanding disabled parking for two vehicles on the main theatre site, and you can also drop off people at the main gate. Please email or phone us in advance to let us know you need to park in the disabled spaces so that we can co-ordinate requirements.

What if I'm late? And can I come and go into the auditorium during the performance?

We are very sorry but for nearly all shows latecomers cannot be admitted once the performance has started.

For music events, latecomers may sometimes be allowed to enter during applause. For drama performances, latecomers cannot be admitted.

Please therefore allow plenty of time to get to the theatre, particular if you are not familiar with the route.

Once the show has started, we ask you to stay in your seat until the interval or end of the performance (we give the length of each performance on our website).

The reason for this is because there is only one audience door, and it leads directly onto the stage.

One of the joys of theatre is to be in a dedicated space, focussing on the performance, with a group of other people as a collective experience, and a cast of actors or musicians who are presenting that event uniquely and exclusively for the people in the room, all reacting off each other's responses to the show. In our opinion this is what makes live performance so special.

So that the atmosphere is not broken, and to be fair to the performers and the other audience members, we therefore have a no-latecomers, and no coming-and-going policy.

We are truly sorry that this policy may exclude some people with medical conditions and special needs. If we were able to, we would love to be able to offer some relaxed performances. Unfortunately, because of the tiny size of the venue, the limited number of performances of each show, and being an independent and unfunded venue, this is just not financially viable.

What is the ticket check procedure?

We ask guests to state the name of the person who booked the tickets. We shall check you off our list of expected attendees. We generally do not ask to see tickets, but please bring your ticket(s) with you, either printed or on your phone, in case of problems. Please note we do not have public WiFi at the theatre, and mobile signal is poor, so please download your ticket in advance.

The site will be open from 45 minutes before the performance start time.

We ask you to be here at least 15 minutes before the performance time.

Until the auditorium opens you can wait in the Sumner Room foyer/bar area or in the garden. We call people into the auditorium approximately 10 minutes before the start of the performance.

What should I bring?

Please keep your belongings to a minimum, and keep them with you at all times.

We do not have cloakroom facilities.

You may like to bring with you: a cushion, a rug, insect repellent, sun cream, sun hat/sun visor, and a torch. It could get very cold, so please bring suitable clothing. The lane between the car park and the theatre can be muddy so please wear suitable footwear.

Unless the show specifically invites you to bring a picnic, please do not bring picnics into the theatre site. You are welcome to eat a picnic in the car park. There are several beautiful beaches a short drive away.

Dogs are not allowed on the theatre site, except for assistance dogs – please notify us in advance.

Phones, cameras and photography

Please turn your phone completely off, or to flight mode, before entering the auditorium. Given the small space, if a phone is able to receive signals (even if it is switched to silent) then it can interfere with our sound equipment and generate a buzzing sound on the stage.

Please do not take photos or videos during the performance. This can be disruptive to the performers and to other audience members.

We usually take photographs and videos of performances in an unobtrusive way. We try not to publish identifiable images of audience members but please see our terms and conditions for full details about filming and photography.

Will I be able to buy pre-show and interval refreshments?

We offer a limited selection of refreshments including wine, locally brewed Five Kingdoms beer, luxury soft drinks, Fairtrade filter coffee, tea and hot chocolate, biscuits and Cream o' Galloway ice

cream.

You are welcome to take a drink from the bar into the auditorium: please ask for a compostable disposable cup. We ask that no glass or china is taken into the theatre auditorium.

We compost all our paper and corn-starch cups and lids on site.

Please unwrap any sweets or biscuits you want to take into the auditorium in advance – wrappers can be very loud when they crinkle, and it's a very small space, so we'll all hear it.

We accept payment by contactless card and by cash. Receipts will not be issued: if you require a receipt let the server know and one will be emailed to you in the 72 hours following the show.

Only drinks purchased from us are to be consumed on the theatre site – by buying a drink from us you are helping support the theatre. You are welcome to bring your own water bottle.

Is the bar open after the show?

The bar will be open after most shows and you are welcome to stay on for a while. Many shows are followed by an optional Q&A with the performer or writer. These always offer fascinating insights into the play and are usually held in the bar.

Do you have toilets?

We have two audience toilets, both unisex. One is a large cubicle with wide access and grip handles.

Wash basins are located within each cubicle and paper towels are provided.

Hand sanitiser is available.

We regularly check the toilets but should they not be acceptable, please let us know.

Accessibility information

There is a small amount of blue-badge parking. This is about 25 metres from the theatre auditorium, with step-free access (includes a slope).

There is sloped access into the foyer/bar.

Wheelchair spaces are available in the auditorium, and seats which are step-free, and close to the front for those with vision/hearing requirements. We hold back row B for this purpose until most

other seats are sold. After this, these accessible seats become available to anyone who wishes to purchase a ticket.

There is a large toilet cubicle with grab rails.

Assistance dogs are permitted if they are working/harnessed. Please let us know in advance that you need to bring a dog.

If you have any particular needs to enable you to attend a performance please do phone us on 01988 850368. We shall make every effort to try to help you.

What are the social distancing and COVID rules?

Wearing face coverings is not mandatory in venues in Scotland. However, if you would like to do so, you are very welcome to wear a face covering.

Social distancing is no longer a legal requirement in Scotland. If the Scottish Government reintroduces social distancing, we shall of course comply, and we shall contact ticketholders if changes need to be made.

We have undertaken a full COVID-19 risk assessment, in addition to our normal operating risk assessments.

We were part of the See It Safely scheme organised by Society Of London Theatre & UK Theatre, and also supported by the Federation of Scottish Theatre, when this scheme was operating. This means we pledged to follow the latest Government and industry COVID-19 guidelines as well as additional requirements set by the scheme. We lodged our Covid risk assessment with the scheme and agreed to spot-checks.

To keep you safe, we clean the venue before every performance and regularly disinfecting.

Please use the hand sanitiser provided around the site.

The theatre is a converted byre. Pre-COVID we used to close all the air vents and run the heating so it was quite cosy, but now we shall have all the air vents open and keep the theatre doors open as much as possible, so the space is well ventilated. It could get chilly so please wear warm clothing and consider bringing a rug.

If you (or any of your group) develop show any symptoms of a respiratory infection such as coronavirus, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to carry out normal activities, please do not attend.

If you feel ill and you will not be able to use your ticket, and it is more than 48 hours before the performance start time, you can use our no-quibble refund (please see the FAQ above). You are also welcome to pass your ticket to someone else to use instead.

If you become unwell after your theatre visit and display COVID-19 symptoms, follow the instructions at [NHSinform.scot](https://www.nhs.uk/inform-scot).

What if I only wish to attend if there is social distancing?

We totally understand that some people may not yet feel comfortable about sitting next to someone they don't know, and some people may only be willing to attend the theatre if their seat will be socially distanced. We respect this, and if we were able to, we would love to be able to offer some socially-distanced performances. Unfortunately, because of the tiny size of the venue, the limited number of performances of each show, and being an independent and unfunded venue, this is just not financially viable.

However, if on the day of the performance there are tickets left, we would consider making some tickets available as socially-distanced seats.

If this is of interest, please email us and let us know a telephone number and how long you need to get here, and if socially-distanced seats are available at the last minute we shall contact you.

The garden

You are welcome to enjoy the theatre garden. Please note that after wet weather there is a large pond so young children and vulnerable people should be looked after. Watch out for uneven ground.

Our address is 'Moss Park' and in Scots the word 'moss' means bog. We are surrounded by cattle fields. And we have a nature pond. So we do tend to have a few midges flying around on warm still nights. They are a bit annoying but they don't bite much. We recommend you put on some of your favourite anti-insect repellent before visiting.

We run the garden as much as possible on an organic and wildlife friendly basis.

We deliberately allow some areas of grass to grow long and wild.

Overall the site is approximately 3 acres. We have lots of plans for the space, which if we are honest, are beyond our current time availability, budget and skill level! But they give us immense pleasure and we hope regular visitors will enjoy following our progress.

Current projects (and their fancy names) include:-

- 'The long border' – straight ahead as you go onto the front lawn from the entrance, this used to be an area of rough grass and wildflowers. We are slowly converting it to a herbaceous border.
- 'The white garden' – the tiny triangle on your left as you enter the main gate. The plan is for an area of white flowers which will look magical at dusk. Several more plants have been added over the last couple of years but it needs more work.
- 'The field' – the paddock behind the car park now has ~~four~~ (three, one died) fruit trees and more are planned. We are mowing more of the field each year in preparation for planting.
- 'The road border' – the little strip between the car park and the site entrance. We've planted this with low-growing evergreen flowering ground cover but the ferns still dominate.
- 'The mound' – the tangle of shrubs and trees on the left on the path down to the theatre. We have a plan, but it will take a lot of effort to get this how we want.
- 'The rain garden' – we'd love to convert the (not-always-a) pond into a rain garden. This is a concept of an area of ground that looks good in both drought and flood, and contains plants designed to cope with both.