

Wildlife Walk – 1½ miles

Calke Park and Abbey

As well as a grand Baroque mansion with a large natural history collection, Calke has secret walled gardens and 600 acres of parkland, much of which is a National Nature Reserve. The park is a rich and varied landscape of grassland, ponds and wood pasture – one of the rarest habitats in Europe. You'll also find majestic veteran trees and some great 'bug'-watching sites. There are no public roads at Calke so it is perfect for a peaceful walk.

Getting here...

Bike: National Cycle Network traffic-free route 5 ml away. See www.sustrans.org.uk

Buses/Rail: no.69/A Derby-Swadlincote bus (passing close to Derby), alight Ticknall, then 1½ ml walk through park to house. Burton-on-Trent is 10 ml away

Road: 10 ml south of Derby on A514 at Ticknall. M42/A42 exit 13 and A50 Derby South

Map & grid ref: OS Landranger 128: SK367226; Postcode: DE73 7LE

Facilities: Shop, parking (accessible), accessible WC, restaurant

Contact us: 01332 863822 or email: calkeabbey@nationaltrust.org.uk

Points of interest

- Wood pasture:** This is a rare habitat found in ancient parkland which has open structured woodland. The area around the trees is grazed and this benefits wildlife including many grassland flowers and fungi. The ancient trees support a huge diversity of insects and rare fungi such as the oak polypore. Calke has some of the oldest trees in Europe including one oak that is over 1,000 years old. The ancient trees provide an 'island' habitat for species that have survived since the last Ice Age.
- Flora:** Plant life in the woods include yellow archangel and bluebells, with the grasslands supporting plants like self-heal and sheep's sorrel in the summer.
- Birds:** Birds of prey such as hobby, buzzard and occasionally red kite. Tree holes provide nesting sites for many woodland birds including great spotted and green woodpecker, tree creeper, nuthatch, starling and tits.
- Animals:** Over half the UK's 16 bat species have been recorded here, including the serotine, a rarity in this area. The rough grassland is home to field vole, shrew and wood mouse. Weasels and stoats are sometimes seen too. Badgers live in the woodland. Livestock includes longhorn cattle, mule and Portland sheep (an ancient and rare breed - both sexes have impressive horns).
- Insects:** Calke is Britain's 10th best site for invertebrates living on dead wood, and host to over 350 beetles including the wasp beetle that mimics a wasp in order to avoid being preyed upon.



Fallow deer inhabit the estate and are distinguished by their white spots. See males locking horns, calling females and scent-marking during the autumn rut.

David Slade



This male azure damselfly is one of many that can be seen around the ponds at Calke. Others include the common blue and blue-tailed damselfly, and brown hawker dragonfly.

Andy Callow



When Calke became a National Nature Reserve in 2006, there was a competition to name its oldest tree. Now known as the 'Old Man of Calke', this ancient oak is over 1,000 years old, but still grows healthily.

David Slade

Distance, terrain and accessibility

This circular walk is 1½ ml (2½ km) and has stepped and stoned paths, kissing gates and a stile. Enquire at property for more accessible routes.

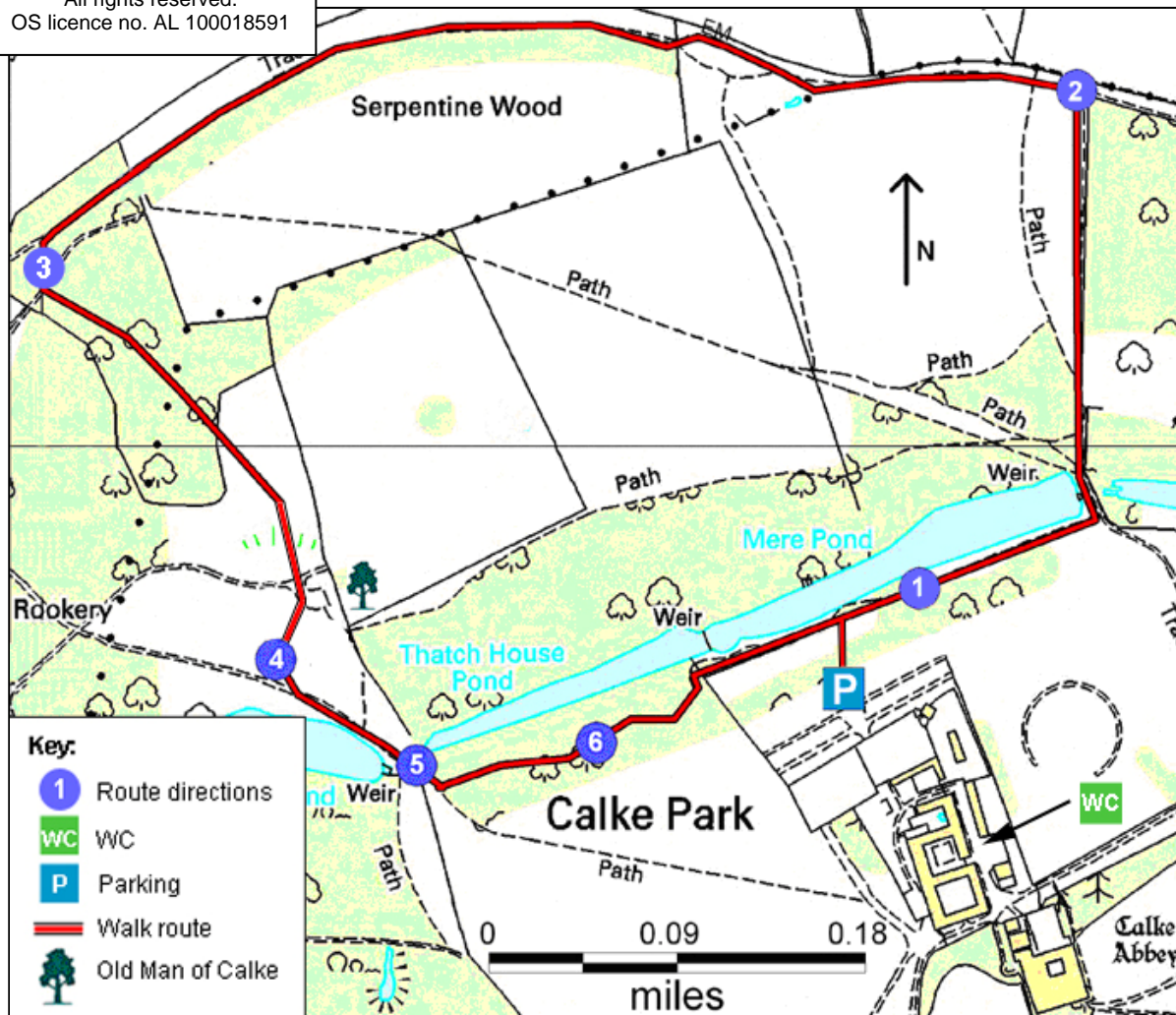
Route and directions

1. Begin at the main overflow car park and walk down the steps to the ponds. Look for dragonflies in the summer. Turn right and follow the deer fencing to the top of the hill, until it meets the old park boundary wall.
2. Turn left away from the deer fence and follow the path near the wall through the parkland and then along through the Serpentine Wood. This is a good place to see bluebells in spring. Also look for signs of badgers (paths, tracks and diggings).
3. Go through the kissing gate and follow the woodland path, which bears round to the left.
4. Come out of the wood into the Fisherman's car park. The oldest tree in the park, The Old Man of Calke, is a short way beyond the car park through the wooden gate.
5. Follow the stepped path down from the car park to Betty's Pond and go between the two ponds, then ascend the steps over the stile. A number of Calke's ancient trees (some over 400 years old) can be seen around Betty's Pond.

Veteran trees sometimes have hollow trunks which can be seen when the main trunk has broken and/or 'opened'. Trees become hollow through a natural process of decay, not because they are dying, but to increase their stability (an empty vessel is more stable). Also notice the piles of dead wood around the estate that provide an important habitat for insects.

6. Follow the line of horse chestnuts all the way back to the starting car park.

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'In just a short walk there is a lot to see – a keen eye and quiet foot will be rewarded, but just the sight of the majestic ancient oaks will take your breath away. Look closely for invertebrates in summer'

Carl Hawke, NT Nature Conservation Adviser, East Midlands

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