

A walk through Kent's last deer park... 3 miles

Knole, Sevenoaks, Kent


Experience the history and wildlife of Kent's only remaining deer park, which has remained substantially unchanged since medieval times.

Start: Front gate of Knole house – grid ref: TQ542539 – map: OS Landranger 188

Getting here & facilities

By foot: the Greensand Way passes near the front of the house. Alternatively, walk from Sevenoaks town centre along Webb's Alley, following any of the pedestrian signposts marked 'Knole Park' on the high street





By bus: from surrounding area to Sevenoaks bus station; ¾ ml walk following pedestrian signposts for Knole Park

By train: Sevenoaks  1½ mls. From here walk into town and reach the park via Webb's Alley (see 'by foot' above)

By car: M25 exit J5 onto A21. Park entrance in Sevenoaks town centre off A225 Tonbridge road, opposite St Nicholas's church

Car park, restaurant, shop & WCs at Knole House (only when open). Guided park walks available most days during the open season. For more information contact us: 01732 462100 / knole@nationaltrust.org.uk / www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knole

Things to look out for...

-  **The Gallops:** running through the west of the park this valley, now called the Gallops, was formed by a river in prehistoric times. In medieval and Tudor times it was used for show hunts; visitors would place bets on which hound would reach the end of the Gallops first. Today you may still come across horses here (please take care).
-  **The 18th century tree nursery (point 6):** look closely and you will make out the grid planting pattern. At least some of the trees along Chestnut Walk, which you can see on point 5 of the walk, are likely to have come from here.
-  **Ant hills:** the bumps on the bank of the western side of the Gallops are nests made by yellow meadow ants and are an indicator of ground that has not been ploughed.
-  **Knole House:** the central buildings of the house date back to the 15th century. Often said to be the largest private house in Britain, it houses the fullest collection of Royal Stuart furniture in the world, one of England's two oldest portrait galleries and an extensive and very rare set of solid silver furniture.



Knole House is owned by the National Trust, but most of the park and all the deer remain the property of the Sackville family who have lived at Knole for over 400 years. Much of the house was either built or modified by Thomas Sackville in 1603-1608.

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This wartime anti-aircraft gun emplacement is close to part of the walk, but is very well concealed. It is one of many relics of Knole's wartime history; another is the metallated paths and roads (made from stone chippings mixed with tar) which criss-cross the park.

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Knole Park has been home to the same Fallow deer herd since at least the 15th century and home to some Japanese Sika deer since the 1890s. Please do not approach, pet or feed the deer: when they become tame, they are dangerous to visitors, particularly small children.

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This walk has been produced with the permission of Lord Sackville

Directions

1. From the front gate of the house, facing out, turn left onto the drive. Follow it round and leave it by the second footpath on the left to a steeply sloping metalled path, passing a brick dome on the left (picture 1).

Blue route (more accessible): turn left out of the main gate and follow the wall to the corner. Turn left again and follow the wall to the next corner, where there is a black grille. Take the path ahead, and slightly to the right, until you meet a metalled road. Now go on to point 4.

2. At the bottom of the slope turn left and walk along the floor of the valley. Just after you pass the second path on the right, take the path up to the left. A little further along the valley, ahead of this path, is a cedar tree (picture 2).
3. Continue up this little side-valley until you reach the top of the slope. Carry straight on, skirting a small wood on your right, and you will shortly arrive at a small road.
4. Turn right onto this road and then left onto another road. Follow it along, past woods and two branching roads on the right, until you come out onto a road running across.
5. Turn right and walk along this road for some time until the landscape opens up and there is a junction with a similar road which joins from the right.

Blue Route: to avoid a short but steep descent later, turn right up Broad Walk to go back to the house.

6. Continue straight ahead and then onto a path which hugs the fence on its left. Curve round to the right past some tall trees until you reach a gate.
7. Don't enter the gate, but take the steep path down into the bottom of the valley and then follow the line of the valley.

Terrain and accessibility

Approx. 3ml (5km) along a mixture of grassland and metalled paths, easy going and rarely steep. The last part of the walk may be muddy after rain. The alternative route in blue is approx. 2ml (3.8km) and avoids all steep slopes and soft ground. Allow about 2hrs either way. Dogs welcome on a lead.

Photos to guide you:



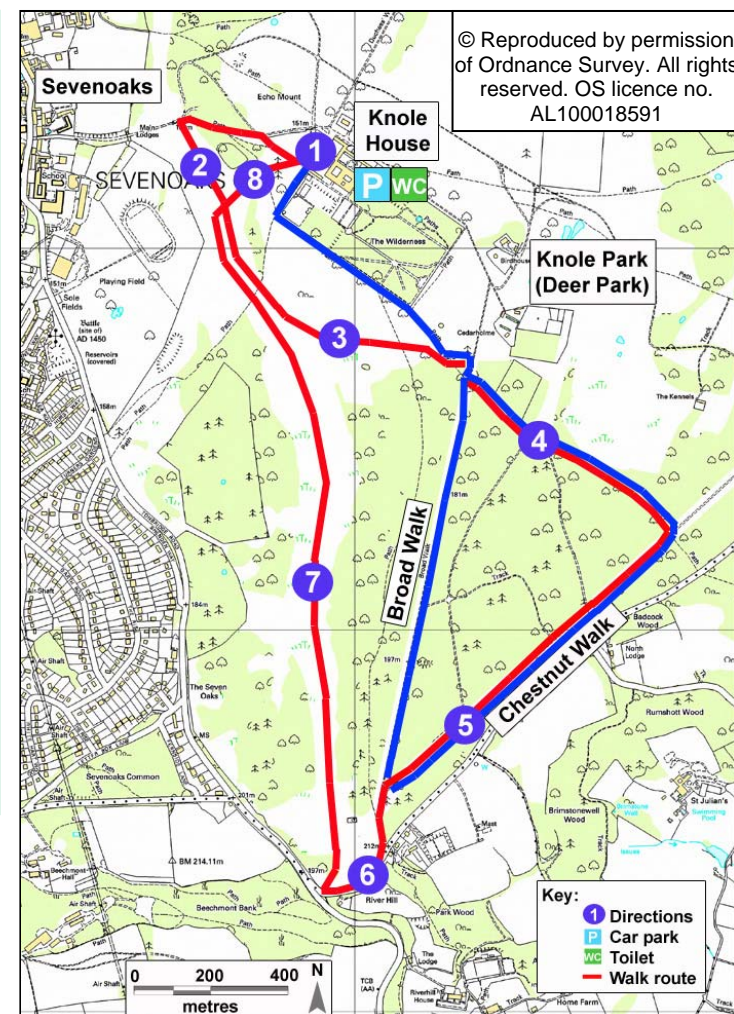
1. Early example of an ice-house (first half of 18th century), which was used to store ice in the summer.

2. Cedars have been planted in this area, probably for ornamentation.



3. Larch trees are coniferous with curtain-like branches and lose needles in winter.

8. After a considerable time, you will pass a quarry on the right and several larch trees (picture 3). Take the next path on the right, going up past a spreading oak tree and back to the front of the house.



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