

Boathouse walk... 3½ miles

Woodchester Park, Gloucestershire

 THE NATIONAL TRUST


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Nestled in the Cotswolds, the secluded valley of Woodchester Park is home to the remains of an 18th and 19th century landscape park, a Victorian mansion, a chain of five lakes fringed by woodland and pasture and an abundance of wildlife.

Start point: Car park – grid ref: SO 797012 – map: OS Landranger 162

Getting here & facilities

By foot: Cotswold Way National Trail is only ⅔ mile away

By bus: Ebley 35, Stroud (close to ) to Nympsfield, followed by a short walk to the park

By car: 4 miles SW of Stroud off B4066, Stroud to Dursley road. Car park (pay & display) off Nympsfield road, 300yds from B4066 junction.

Café at Woodchester Mansion (not NT) on house open days. Leaflets about the park available. Contact us on 01452 814213 or woodchesterpark@nationaltrust.org.uk

Things to look out for...

Woodchester Mansion (not NT)

William Leigh, a wealthy ship owner from Liverpool, bought the Woodchester Estate in 1845. He demolished the old house and began work to replace it with a Victorian mansion. However, work was abandoned for unknown reasons after sixteen years, leaving the unique, unfinished Victorian Gothic building that you see today.

Greater Horseshoe bats

Greater Horseshoe bats have a breeding roost in the mansion where they live during the summer months. Pasture is being restored within the valley to increase the feeding area for these rare bats.

The Boathouse

Built in the late 18th century, the Boathouse was used by the Leigh and Ducie families and their guests for outings. It was restored in 1998 when the roof, windows and floor timbers were replaced. Bats use the roof space as a stop-off on their nightly feeding forays.

The lakes

Brick Kiln, Old and Middle ponds are the first three of a chain of five lakes created by the middle of the 18th century. Keep your eyes open for birds, such as kingfishers and herons, as well as mandarin and tufted ducks.



Old alder trees fringe the banks of Middle Pond and white water lilies grow in the lakes, providing shelter for fish such as carp, roach and tench. Look out for dragonflies and damselflies in warm weather.

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Greater Horseshoe bats are not the only bats to be found in the valley. Common Pipistrelle (pictured here), Lesser Horseshoe, Daubenton's and Long-eared bats have also settled here.

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On sunny days in spring and summer the wild flowers in the valley teem with colourful insects, including Scarlet Tiger moths and Peacock, Painted Lady and Silver-washed Fritillary (pictured here) butterflies.

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“A fascinating place, steeped in history and abounding with wildlife. The contrasting seasons and ongoing restoration work make every visit a new experience”.

David Armstrong, National Trust Head Warden

Directions...

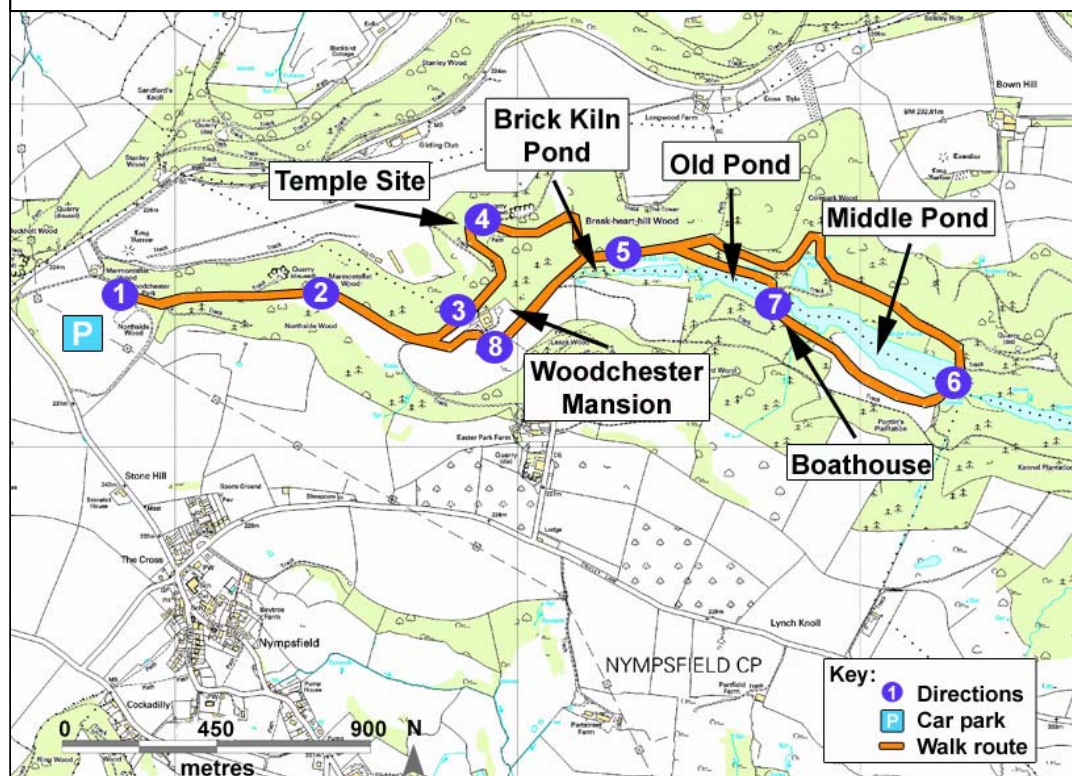
1. From the car park turn right down the hill following the orange waymarkers of the Boathouse Trail into the woods.
2. As you emerge from the woods, take a look at the pasture to your right, restored from conifer plantation in 1997. It is now grazed by traditional Welsh black cattle.
3. Bear left at the waymarked junction. You will see the remains of the coach house and stables that were associated with the Georgian mansion to your left. Property details prepared for the sale of the Woodchester in 1846, describe these buildings as everything the *'most fastidious Gentleman can desire...coach house for eight carriages...stables with twelve stalls and harness rooms...'*
4. Continue onwards to the Temple Site (now a small ruin). The wooded valley enclosed by the curve of the track contains the remains of terraced gardens, which were created in the early 1800s. Historic records describe a temple overlooking Italian-style gardens with fountains playing in ornamental ponds.
5. Entering the pasture, continue downhill to where you will see Brick Kiln Pond, the first of five man-made lakes. The dam was breached in the 1940s and there is now a plan to restore the lake. Larch plantations have been removed so that the historic views can be enjoyed once again.
6. Having walked the length of Middle Pond, turn right onto the dam. These deep lakes were created through the damming of a small stream.
7. From a series of board walks the Boathouse comes into view. Continue to follow the orange waymarkers.
8. Passing Woodchester Mansion on your right, continue up the hill to the car park.

Terrain and accessibility

A 3½ mile (5½ km) circular walk following the orange waymarkers. Some steep sections in places. The ground can be muddy, especially after wet weather. Walking boots recommended. Dogs welcome under close control, but must be on leads near livestock.

There are two other waymarked walks to explore: the Woodland Walk waymarked in blue (1.7ml / 2.7km) and the Valley Walk waymarked in red (7ml / 11.3km).

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