

Visitor Guide & Map

KNOLE



National
Trust

Preserving Knole for future generations

Knole's fading beauty continues to draw admirers. As time has taken its toll on the fabulous treasures, we've been working to slow the decline of the building and collection. With funding from individuals as well as the Heritage Lottery Fund, we're now in the final phase of a five-year programme to preserve Knole for future generations and to open up parts of the house that have never been seen by the public.

Last year, the Gatehouse Tower opened to visitors for the first time, alongside the new Brewhouse Café and Shop. We have now opened a state-of-the-art conservation studio, where you can see conservators caring for Knole's precious collections.

Specialist carpenters, plasterers, decorators and textile experts continue to work in Knole's Showrooms to secure and improve these magnificent, historic spaces.



Making the past accessible to all

Knole is committed to making its heritage as accessible as possible. Please ask at the Visitor Centre how we can help you enjoy Knole. Please note, the Great Hall is the only part of the Showrooms accessible to wheelchair users.

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Built for show

Knole was built to impress. It's a statement of its owners' wealth and influence.

Knole began life as a medieval archbishop's palace. Like other grand buildings of the time, it was a symbol of power. In 1603 Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset, took ownership of Knole.

The Sackvilles were an aristocratic family who made the most of their royal connections and their collection of royal treasures. As their political influence declined in the 19th century they used the collection in the Showrooms to remind people of their powerful past.

Knole came to dominate Sackville family life and led to bitter fights for control, creating a complex family tree of ownership. Through it all, the treasures remained on show. Knole remained in the possession of the Sackvilles until 1946 when the National Trust took over. The current generations of the Sackville family still live here in their own private apartments.

Showrooms

People have come to visit the Showrooms for hundreds of years, keen to see the treasures inside. For the Sackville family this was an opportunity to display their wealth and status, harking back to their heyday in the 17th century.

The rooms contain rare fabrics and furnishings, many of which came from royal palaces. As Lord Chamberlain, Charles Sackville could take his pick from unwanted royal furnishings. It was an accepted perk of his job.

Designed as sumptuous apartments in the early 1600s, the Showrooms have not been lived in for 300 years. They became the home of the prestigious collection and a reminder of the wealth and power held by the family.

Kent's last medieval deer park

The parkland at Knole is unusual because it's enjoyed more than five centuries of continuous management for its deer herds. Until the early 20th century the hunting of deer was a hugely popular sport among the aristocracy.

The park is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), best-known for its insects. Look out for the small grassy mounds built by colonies of yellow meadow ants. A typical colony contains around 14,000 ants.

Please pick up a park walks map from the Visitor Centre to help you explore the park.

There is a golf course near the house and we advise avoiding this area where possible. If you do have to cross the golf course please be courteous to golfers and keep to the paths at all times.



Gatehouse Tower

Find out about one of Knole's 20th century residents in the recently-opened Gatehouse Tower. The tower was home to Eddy Sackville-West, reluctant heir to Knole, from 1926-1940. You can explore his bedroom and music room, with displays of his personal belongings including books, music records, gramophone and visitors book.

Climb the spiral staircase to the top of the tower to enjoy stunning panoramic views of Knole Park. The breath-taking sight is worth the steps as it takes in the vast parkland with its wild deer herd and the scale of Knole's complex roofline with its many chimneys and carved stone leopards.

Conservation Studio

The Knole Conservation Studio is now open, allowing visitors the unique opportunity to watch conservators working on objects from the house's magnificent collection. Housed in a beautiful medieval barn, it has taken two years and £2.5 million to transform the building from a dilapidated storage facility into a stunning, state-of-the-art space.

The studio is home to six highly-skilled conservators, specialising in everything from upholstery to leather and picture frames. They will work on more than eighty percent of Knole's collection over the next two years.

