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Sevenoaks to Westerham

Length: 18.6km (11.6 miles)

With detour to lunch pub in Sevenoaks Weald: 19.6km (12.2 miles)

Toughness: 6 out of 10: quite hilly in places

Maps: OS Explorer 147, OS Landranger 188

Features

The first mile of this walk is on suburban streets in Sevenoaks and then there is a two mile stroll across the deer park of Knole House. A slightly awkward section follows, crossing a busy A road, and then along a bridleway with noise from a nearby dual carriageway, though with fine escarpment views too.

Then the traffic noise ceases and you find yourself in a beautiful area of undulating fields and farms that is as lovely as anywhere in England. One of the two possible lunch pubs is in the village of Sevenoaks Weald, at the start of this section. The route then climbs in stages up onto the Greensand Ridge, with increasingly fine views to the south and a number of fine bluebell woods in late April to early May.

The best bluebell woods are once you reach the ridge, however - this is one of the best places in the south east to see them - while in autumn there is fine autumn colour and plenty of sweet chestnuts on the ground. You end up at the picturesque hill top village of Ide Hill, where the second of the lunch pubs is situated.

After this the route turns north-west, passing through the National Trust's Emmetts Gardens on a public footpath that also runs right past its tea room. The final section of the walk is in the woodlands of The Chart, before a fine descent down a hill into the village of Westerham which has plenty of tea possibilities and London Transport buses back to London.

Transport

There are several trains an hour from **Charing Cross, Waterloo East** and **London Bridge** to Sevenoaks, taking 30-35 minutes from Charing Cross, 22 minutes from London Bridge. Which you take depends on where you aim to have lunch. It is 12.8km (8 miles) to the Cock Inn in **Ide Hill**,

and so if you intend to eat there get a train not much later than **9.30am**. If aiming to eat in The Windmill in **Sevenoaks Weald**, you could potentially get a train as late as **10.30am**.

At the end of the walk, **Westerham** is not on the railway but it is served by a **London Transport bus**, the **246**, which runs at least hourly till midnight seven days a week (twice an hour until 6pm Monday to Saturday). You can use **Oyster cards** or **contactless payment** on this and will be charged just the normal single London bus fare for the whole journey. The bus takes 43 minutes to get to **Bromley South station**, from where there are frequent fast trains to Victoria. A **day return to Sevenoaks** is valid on this service, as Bromley South is on the Blackfriars-Otford route to Sevenoaks.

You can also get off the 246 bus at **Hayes station** (31 minutes from Westerham), from where there are trains every fifteen minutes to London Bridge and Cannon Street or Charing Cross, taking 38 minutes, but your Sevenoaks return will not be valid for this.

There is also a **401 bus** from Westerham to **Sevenoaks** station, taking 23 minutes, but currently (May 2022) the last bus is at 2.30pm.

Lunch and Tea Places

The Brewhouse Cafe at National Trust-owned **Knole Park** is a possible coffee stop 2.7km/1.7 miles into the walk.

The **Windmill** in Sevenoaks Weald (01732 463330), 7.8km (4.8 miles) into the walk and requiring a 1km diversion off the main walk route, is a pleasant and comfortable pub, which offers a high quality twist on the conventional pub menu. It is not a large place, however, and its website currently (May 2022) asks all people requiring food to book in advance. Food is served 12-2.30pm Wednesday to Saturday and 12-4pm on Sunday.

The **Cock Inn** in Ide Hill (01732 750310), 12.8km (8 miles) into the walk, is a characterful, popular and reasonably capacious pub with a good food menu, served from 12-3pm and 5-8pm Monday to Saturday and 12-4pm Sunday. The pub is open all afternoon daily for drinks. It has some outside tables, looking out onto the village green.

Ide Hill has a **Community Shop** at the place indicated in paragraph 67 of the directions, which serves hot drinks, soup and other snacks, and has a couple of outside tables when the weather is fine. It is open until 4.30pm Monday to Saturday, but only to midday on Sunday.

The **tea room** at National-Trust run **Emmetts Garden**, 14.6km (9.1 miles) into the walk, is a another possible early tea stop or late lunch stop (it serves soup and sandwiches). It is open until 4.30pm from March to October and until 4pm in November and early December.

In **Westerham** the **Tudor Rose Tearooms** are sadly only open until 3.45pm Monday to Friday and 4.30pm weekends, but on the left-hand edge of the green there is a **Costa Coffee**, open till 6pm Monday to Friday and 5pm Saturday to Sunday. Between the two is the **Grasshopper on the Green** pub, while other pubs are to the left of it, in the village centre.

For **picnics** there are some fine spots in paragraphs 43 (at the top of the field) and 53 of the walk directions. The green at Ide Hill is also very pretty and has some benches.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Sevenoaks station to Knole House (2.7km/1.7 miles)

1. Coming out of Sevenoaks station, cross the main road with care and turn right, uphill. In 60 metres turn left into St Botolphs Road.
2. In 600 metres, at the end of this long wide road, continue ahead past the war memorial and across the main road. Bear left around the edge of the cricket pitch beyond.
3. In 150 metres, on the far side of the pitch, turn left onto a lane. In 40 metres turn right at a crossroads to go steeply downhill.
4. In another 50 metres, at the bottom of the hill, cross the B2019 (*some fast traffic*) and turn left along its far side.
5. In 200 metres, just before the pavement ends, **go through a small wooden door** in the stone wall to the right to enter **Knole Park**
6. Go straight ahead for 30 metres to come to an estate road. Turn left and follow this as it curves right along the valley floor.

One thing you can say about the Sackville family, which owned **Knole House** from the 16th century onwards, is that they were not keen on redecorating. Having had the state rooms wood-panelled in fine Jacobean style in preparation for a visit by King James I in 1606, the family did nothing much to them for the next four centuries. Quite a lot of bulky wooden 17th century royal furniture also ended up in the house. As a result the rooms are now a glorious timewarp, though arguably a somewhat gloomy one.

Supposedly one of Britain's largest houses, Knole is said to have one room for every day of the year, though this is probably a myth. Its most famous non-owner was Vita Sackville-West, the lover and friend of Virginia Woolf, who would have inherited the estate had she not been born a girl. As a consolation to her, Woolf wrote the novel *Orlando* about an Elizabethan noble whose sex changes mid novel from male to female.

7. In 450 metres stay on the road as it climbs up out of the valley and in

another 100 metres curves left through a wood.

8. In 400 metres you emerge from trees and **Knole House** is visible ahead. Keep on along the estate road towards the house.
9. In 150 metres keep straight on at a crossroads towards a car park and the facade of the house.
10. In another 180 metres, **at the end of the car park** and with the house facade 70 metres ahead, turn left downhill at a tarmac drive crossroads, with the house now on your right.
11. In 100 metres you pass the entrance to the **Brewhouse Cafe** (a large gate into a yard) on your right, a possible coffee stop.

Knole House to Sevenoaks Weald (4.6km/2.9 miles)

12. Carrying on past the entrance to the Brewhouse Cafe, keep straight on uphill on the tarmac drive, with the high wall of Knole House to your right.
13. In another 300 metres, where the wall ends, follow the track as it veers right across the grass (actually a golf fairway, so take care), passing a white house on your left in 100 metres.
14. 40 metres after the white house and 100 metres or so before a reddish-brown house ahead, fork right up a gravel track which stretches ahead dead straight towards the horizon.
15. You now follow this track, which soon becomes a car-wide tarmac drive, all the way to the park gates in 1.4km. In the process you join the route of the Greensand Way, which you will more or less follow all the way to Ide Hill.
16. After exiting the park through a high kissing gate to the right of a large wooden gate, turn right on the road beyond. (*There is some traffic on this road and sightlines are not brilliant, so take care: walking on the left-hand side probably gives you a better chance of being seen by the traffic.*)
17. In 200 metres, 70 metres before you get to a very busy main road, there is **a not very visible path to the left**, signposted Greensand Way. This descends steps to the main road. *If you miss this path, simply carry on to*

the road junction and turn left downhill there.

18. Either way you should now be on the main road, using the pedestrian pavement on its left-hand side, heading downhill. The road curves left and then right around a sharp bend.
19. 100 metres after the bend there is a driveway on the left signposted to Riverhill Himalayan Gardens. Just before this, **cross the main road, taking very great care.** (A hard to see Greensand Way sign here.)
20. On the far side of the road follow a track (which can be very muddy in winter) into an area of coppiced trees.
21. Ignore several turnings to the left (to fieldgates), but **in 600 metres**, where the track forks (almost a T-junction, with the rightmost option going steeply uphill), **turn left along a broad track** (marked with a yellow Greensand Way arrow on a post, but again, this is not very visible due to vegetation).
22. The track soon curves right and, like the one you have just left, contours along the hill.
23. Keep on this track, ignoring ways off. In 400 metres you pass some double metal fieldgates on the right, with farm sheds visible beyond (*less so in summer*). The Greensand Way turns left downhill across a field at this point, through a squeezegate to the right of the right-hand of two fieldgates on the left of the path. But I have found the route described in paragraph 24 much more pleasant and a lot easier to follow.
 - **If you do take the Greensand walk route** you descend on the left-hand edge of the field for 130 metres, then veer left through a metal gate to the left of a fieldgate, marked with a Greensand Way arrow. Slant diagonally downhill across the next field towards the main road below (on what becomes a slightly raised path, though this may not be apparent to begin with). In 170 metres turn left along the edge of the main road to come in 100 metres to a gate in the field corner. Pass through this and in 30 metres turn right over a stile and through a tunnel under the main road. On the far side pass through a gate to the right of a fieldgate and turn right along a field edge on a concrete track. In 70 metres cross a stile and keep straight on. In 80 metres, after passing three barns, turn left with the track and in 50 metres more follow it to the right downhill. In 60 metres, where a field starts to your left, go half left across the grass towards the church on the hill. In 300 metres, in the top corner of the field, cross a stile to go up a path with a hedge to the left. In 30 metres you emerge on the road opposite the church. Turn right uphill. In 40 metres a road joins from the left. **For lunch at The Windmill** turn sharp left on this road and carry on down into the dip (etc, as per the bullet point in paragraph 29 below). **To continue the walk without stopping for lunch**, ignore the road merging from the left but instead turn left through a gate into a field just beyond the bus shelter 30 metres ahead. Continue with the directions in paragraph 30 overleaf.
24. Assuming you have remained on the track as suggested in paragraph 23, 350 metres after the farm buildings the track curves **very sharp right**, steeply uphill. Here **keep straight on** along a narrow path, with an open field to your left.
25. In another 200 metres, 10 metres before a road, a wooden fence blocks your way and a yellow arrow on a post directs you uphill, parallel to the road. In 40 metres you come to a stile next to a fieldgate, which you cross to reach the road.
26. Cross the road and turn left downhill along its far side. Occasional fast cars come along this road - particularly going downhill - so take care.
27. Cross the dual carriageway on a bridge, and beyond carry on downhill on the road, passing a sign for Sevenoaks Weald village.
28. In 250 metres ignore a gravel driveway to the left.
29. In another 150 metres there is a bus shelter on the right-hand side of the road, 50 metres before a large stone Celtic cross and a fork in the road.
 - **For lunch at The Windmill** take the right-hand fork, and carry on downhill into a dip and then up the other side to find the pub on the corner of the village green in 500 metres. **After lunch** retrace your steps up Church Road to the bus

stop and turn left through a metal gate just beyond the bus shelter.

- **If not stopping at The Windmill**, turn right through a metal gate just before the bus stop.

Sevenoaks Weald to Ide Hill **(5.5km/3.4 miles)**

You are now back on the Greensand Way and remain on it to Ide Hill.

30. Having passed through the metal gate keep downhill on the left-hand edge of a field. In 150 metres you enter a part-wooded area.
31. The way ahead is rather indistinct, but keep more or less straight ahead and in another 80 metres, at the bottom of the dip, cross a footbridge and veer slightly right uphill, aiming for a house on the hill.
32. In 150 metres, at the top of the hill, go through a metal gate to pass between the house (a converted oast house) on a concrete driveway.
33. In 30 metres pass through a metal gate to the right of a fieldgate. In 30 metres more, just past the end of the oast house and the house beyond it, and just before a wooden barn, follow the concrete track around to the right. **In another 10 metres** turn off the track down the back of a barn to pass through a metal gate to the left of a fieldgate in 20 metres.
34. Carry on downhill across the next field, heading for a metal gate three-fifths of the way along the bottom edge of the field, next to a large oak tree.
35. In 170 metres pass through the gate, over a footbridge, and then through another gate, and keep straight on up across the next field.
36. In 100 metres pass through a metal gate and a line of trees, and then another gate. Beyond, keep straight on downhill towards a point where a track enters emerges from the trees.
37. When you get to this point, in 150 metres, pass through a metal gate to the left of double metal fieldgates. Veer right, passing in 50 metres between a large concrete and wood barn on the right and an open-sided hay barn with a corrugated iron roof on the left (ignoring another track to the left of the hay barn).
38. Pass the concrete and wood barn on your immediate right, then go through a metal gate to the left of a fieldgate into a field. Veer half left across it.
39. As you walk across this field, a gate comes into view on the far side. Pass through this and another in 20 metres to emerge into another field, and keep straight on downhill across this.
40. In 100 metres pass through a gate to the right of a metal fieldgate and turn left on a tarmac lane. In 10 metres turn right up a concrete driveway to Wickhurst Manor Farm.
41. In 100 metres you pass the manor, hidden behind a high hedge to the right. Beyond that you pass a more modest house. Past this, go straight ahead through a metal gate between two fieldgates (the right-hand one leading to a garage).
42. Keep straight on, initially up the right-hand edge of the field beyond, and then out across a corner, heading towards a house on the hilltop.
43. In 200 metres you are back on the right-hand edge of the field and there is a steep climb in front of you (no longer heading for the house on the hill).
44. In 130 metres, in the top right-hand corner of the field, pass through a metal kissing gate to the right of double metal fieldgates and turn left onto a road.
45. In 70 metres, where a gravel area starts on the right-hand side of the road, leading to a truncated oast house, **turn very sharp right** (ie double back on yourself) to pass through a gate to the left of a fieldgate into a field. Turn left along its near edge.
46. **The exit to this field is a little hard to find.** If you walk to the far left-hand corner, there is a hidden metal pedestrian gate on the left, 25 metres before the field corner and just beyond a metal fieldgate on the left (which is **not** the metal fieldgate on the left earlier in the field, before a bit of the field boundary that sticks out).
47. Pass through the gate and you should find yourself in the corner of a large open field. Turn right along its upper edge, with the wood boundary to your right.
48. In 200 metres pass through a kissing gate to the right of a fieldgate, and in the next field veer slightly left, aiming

for a point half way up the wood edge, 270 metres ahead.

49. Half way to the wood, in 120 metres or so, you cross a slight ditch dotted with bushes and from here you might be able to see a kissing gate into the wood directly ahead. *(But don't confuse this gate with a fieldgate 50 metres to its left in a field corner.)*
50. In 150 metres pass through this kissing gate and keep straight on uphill on a rather indistinct path. If in doubt, note that the path continues to climb and never goes downhill. *This was once a good **bluebell** wood in late April and early May, but now seems to be almost completely overgrown with brambles.*
51. In 150 metres, at the top of the wood, pass through a metal gate and carry on in the same direction up the open hillside, aiming just to the left of the apex of the ridge.
52. In 150 metres veer left to pass between three trees (left) and a mini-pylon pole (right), heading towards a gap in the shrubs ahead. Here, in 80 metres, pass through a metal gate to the left of a fieldgate.
53. After the gate, keep along the top of the ridge with the tree boundary to your immediate right. *(To the left here you can have a fine view of the distant **Bough Beech Reservoir**.)*
54. In another 130 metres cross a stile and keep to the wood edge, with a field fenced off to your left.
55. In 200 metres the path veers right, deeper into the wood (with **bluebells** in late April or early May) and starts to climb steadily.
56. In 300 metres more, at the top of the hill, you come to a path T-junction and turn left on a path parallel to a minor road.
57. In 450 metres the path emerges onto a side road, 25 metres to the left of a crossroads. Go straight across the side road into a gravel parking area and veer left towards its far left-hand corner.
58. The Greensand Way is the path that passes to left of a metal car-blocking barrier, keeping to the wooded top of the ridge.

There are good displays of **bluebells** on the next section, but despite following the Greensand Way

throughout, the route can be surprisingly confusing, so follow the directions carefully.

59. In 250 metres, at a major fork, take the right-hand fork uphill, indicated by a blue arrow on a post.
60. In 30 metres, at the next post, keep straight on along a car-wide bridleway, ignoring a path forking left in another 10 metres.
61. In 150 metres the path narrows and veers left a bit, climbing uphill for a time before levelling out.
62. Keep on, ignoring side paths. In another 200 metres you are back on the edge of the escarpment, though with no views.
63. In 200 metres more a wooden fence starts to the left, and in another 150 metres, where the fence ends, the path turns hard right, still with an escarpment to its left.
64. In 50 metres you come to a T-junction with another path. **Go sharp left here**, doubling back on yourself, on a path that goes gently downhill.
65. In 120 metres you reach an open space with a circle of grass in it, and what looks like a garage building beyond a fence ahead. **Here go very sharp right**, almost completely doubling back on yourself, onto a part gravel track that slants downhill towards the roof of a house visible 120 metres ahead.
66. 200 metres after this house the track merges with a minor road and then comes to a main road. **Cross the main road with care** and turn left on its far verge.
67. In 40 metres ignore a road signposted to Ide Hill to the right (unless you are in a hurry to get to the Cock Inn, in which case it is a slight short cut). Keeping along the main road, in another 50 metres there is a car park and public toilets on your right (and a nice view to the left). Next to the toilet is the Ide Hill **Community Shop**, which serves hot drinks, snacks and soup.
68. Otherwise, carrying on along the main road past the car park, in 30 metres more cross another side road and go up a path signposted Greensand Way into a wood. This is another nice wood for **bluebells**.

69. In 40 metres merge with a path coming from the right and carry on along the hillside, ascending and descending on a car-wide path, with the road audible and at times visible 30 to 40 metres below to your left.
70. In 300 metres you pass a bench dedicated to Octavia Hill, founder of the National Trust, which has a nice view. 20 metres beyond this, in a slight gully, ignore a path uphill to the right and a path forking left (*but see ** below*), to carry on half right up the far bank of the gully.
- ** If you take this path forking left there are more **bluebells**, if you are not bluebelled out by now, but once again these are off the walk route.*
71. This path curves right uphill, at first through scrub and then in 60 metres through a grassy area with two benches. Beyond the benches the path carries on uphill under trees.
72. In 60 metres you emerge onto a path fenced off from a field to the left.
73. In 100 metres, at the end of the field, the path veers right to a tarmac lane, with the churchyard beyond. Here go left.
74. In 100 metres more you emerge onto the green of the village of **Ide Hill**. Turn diagonally across it towards the pub, the **Cock Inn**.

Ide Hill to Emmetts Garden (1.8km/1.1 miles)

75. When you get close to the pub you can see that it is situated on a minor road that veers left off the road on the far side of the green (signposted just after the pub as Camberwell Lane). Follow this road, passing houses on your left
76. In 100 metres the road curves left. In another 130 metres pass to the right of the green island in the middle of the road.
77. In another 40 metres, where the road ends in a cul-du-sac, take a footpath straight ahead between two sets of double houses (numbers 16 and 17) and to the right of a telegraph pole.
78. In 35 metres pass through a kissing gate and go straight ahead across a field, heading for a house which can soon be seen through a gap in the trees (in winter anyway: barely visible in summer).
79. In 250 metres pass through a kissing gate and turn left down a concrete track, and then in 3 metres left again onto a tarmac lane.
80. Keep on along this lane for 400 metres to a T-junction with a much busier road, where you go right. **Care is needed here**, as the road is narrow and there is some fast traffic along it.
81. In 100 metres, just beyond a bungalow, turn left off the road up a gravel tarmac drive, a signposted footpath.
82. In 400 metres pass through a wooden gate to the left of a fieldgate and keep on up the drive.
83. 120 metres after this point, veer left with the drive. You are now in **Emmetts Garden**, a National Trust property, but on a public right of way. *If you are not an NT member and want to divert off the path to visit the garden, you should pay the entry fee at the cafe. The gardens are open till 5pm from mid March to the end of October.*
84. Otherwise, keep on up the driveway, and in 150 metres at the top of the hill you come to picnic tables on the left, and just beyond on the right the **National Trust tea room**.

Emmetts Garden to Westerham (4.1km/2.5 miles)

85. Go straight on, ignoring a left fork, passing to the left of the tea room on a gravel path and on up a path into the woods (a concrete footpath marker on the ground at its start).
86. In 30 metres pass through a gate and keep straight on, ignoring a path forking left.
87. In 70 metres more go straight on at a major crosspaths.
88. In 300 metres you come to a road, with the entrance to Ide Hill House ahead. Turn left along the road, **taking care** as some cars come fast along here.
89. In 80 metres, where the wooden fence to your right ends, turn right up a footpath marked with an NT arrow on a post. **Immediately take the right fork** (not so obvious in summer) which more or less follows the fence to your right.
90. In 200 metres this comes to a gravel track (initially not very obvious), with a

fieldgate marked Private Property 50 metres to your right. Go left on this track.

91. In 300 metres you come to a tarmac lane, with houses beyond. Turn left on this.
92. In 80 metres you come to road by a sign for the village of **Brasted Chart**, where you go right. Again **take care** on this road, which has the occasional fast car.
93. In 60 metres, 30 metres past the end of the houses, go left up a footpath—**not the track**, but a fainter path forking off right from it along an old tree boundary and wire fence (signposted, but the sign is rather hidden).
94. In 100 metres ignore a path to the left marked by a not very visible footpath post, and in 10 metres turn right with the path, still with the wire fence to your right.
95. In 300 metres you come to a field. Pass through a gate into this and head diagonally down across it, with a view of the North Downs in the distance to your right.
96. In 120 metres, just before a large tree on a field corner, turn left through a gate and carry on down a wooded path, with a wire fence left.
97. In 100 metres cross a track leading to a house left and go down through a gate into a field. Go straight on diagonally down across this field, aiming for some houses on the hill.
98. In 250 metres pass through a gate and cross a footbridge and carry on up a fenced path.
99. In 80 metres pass through a metal kissing gate and carry on up steps.
100. In 200 metres go right uphill on a lane. In 40 metres you pass an interesting "Private Burial Ground" on your right, and then some houses.
101. 30 metres beyond the houses ignore a signposted footpath to the right, but in 120 metres more turn left up an easily missed footpath.
 - **If you miss this footpath**, staying on the road for 600 metres will bring you to the major road T-junction in paragraph 106 opposite.
102. Keep straight on, ignoring minor side paths, until in 300 metres you come to

a path T-junction **with a sharp gully beyond**. Here go right.

103. **In 25 metres turn left** down a staircase of tree roots, and then in 5 metres turn right down wooden steps (with a handrail) into the bottom of the gully.
104. In 60 metres you pass a cave on the right (an old quarry) where **bats** live. Keep on past it along the path, going gently downhill.
105. In 150 metres, after passing another bat cave, you come to a road and go left.
106. In another 170 metres, at a T-junction with a major road, turn right (the right-hand side has a verge and later a pavement).
107. In 130 metres, 60 metres after the pavement starts, turn left off the road up a signposted footpath, between fences.
108. In 100 metres there is a field on the left and in 200 metres you pass through a squeeze stile onto an open hillside.
109. Go forward 50 metres to a footpath post and then turn right at it on a faint grassy path (the leftmost of two diverging paths), aiming somewhat to the left of the church spire of **Westerham**, the very top of which is just about visible ahead (it gets more obvious as you walk).
110. Keep straight on down the hill to pass through a kissing gate in 200 metres, and beyond it keep on downhill on a faint grassy path.
111. In 200 metres, at the bottom of the hill, pass through a somewhat hidden wooden kissing gate and carry on up an enclosed pathway to emerge in 200 metres in the centre of Westerham.

The stop for the **246 bus to Bromley** is immediately to your left on the main road. The stop for the **401 bus to Sevenoaks** is the one just to the right on the opposite side of the road.

On the far side of the green, from left to right are **Costa Coffee**, the **Grasshopper on the Green** pub, and the **Tudor Rose Tea Rooms**. Turn left on the road to come to the **George & Dragon** and **Kings Arms** in the village centre.