

Britain's 50 best walks

Ninety-two pages of rambles and ambles from St Ives to the Isle of Skye



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Water

River Darent Kent

Classification Moderate walk
Distance 8 miles (12.9km)
Typical duration 4 hours
Height gain 182m
Starting point Plough Inn car park
OS grid reference TQ 538 655
(Explorer maps 162 & 147)

Walk in a nutshell

One wood is enough, really: picturesque. Your starting point, Eynsford on the River Darent, is a multiple winner of "Best Kept Village" and "South East in Bloom" competitions. And Shoreham, the half way point in the circuit, is similarly inclined to sparkle.

Why it's so special

But this stretch of water isn't just one of the most scenic parts of Kent, it's also one of the richest historically. Eynsford has remains from one of the earliest Norman stonework defences in the country as well as a ruined castle. And nearby Lullingstone Roman Villa (run by English Heritage) is regarded as one of the most exciting archaeological finds of last century.

Keep your eyes peeled for The Hop Shop, a farm shop in a lovely setting beside the river that



you will pass along the way. **But bear in mind** Some walkers might be put off by the constant roar of the M25 in the distance.

Impress your companions Beside the river at Shoreham is 19th-century artist Samuel Palmer's former house – happily he found inspiration in idyllic rural scenes.

Recover afterwards The walk starts and ends at the Plough pub, which has an attractive riverside seating area.

And if it's tipping down Lullingstone Roman Villa includes a room decorated with Christian symbols that are among the earliest evidence for Christianity in Britain.

How to get there **By car** Eynsford is on A225, 3 miles south of M25 (Jn 3) / M20 (Jn 1). Opposite St Martin's Church turn into waterside over small bridge. Park opposite Plough pub or round corner. **By train** Nearby Eynsford station is on the London Victoria main line.

Step-by-step guide Walk ID 3187

1. From Plough Inn car park, proceed west along riverside. Pass Toll Bar Cottage on left and Spareway Lane on right. Follow Lullingstone Lane to sharp left bend, passing the Waggoners Farm. Turn right into ascending track to a gate and stile leading into a field.
 2-4. Cross stile, continue on narrow path (diagonally right across field). Track broadens. Continue ahead to railway crossing. Cross railway line, continue across field to farm drive. Cross narrow drive into field opposite. Follow path between crops. Keep left of hedge and follow grassy path to end of field.
 5-6. Turn right, follow path for 100m to post. Turn left through small copse to reach broad grass track at edge of field. Follow track past tree. Track descends as it turns slightly left with golf course now in view. Follow track until fork. Keep left, ascend steps through narrow wood and cross wooden barrier.
 7-9. Go straight over field. Aim right of lone horse chestnut at edge of wood. Follow path on edge of wood, keep left at fork. At crossing keep left. After blue brickway marker post, emerge on drive crossing golf course. Turn right on to installed drive, follow as it swings left. After 200m reach post on right of drive.
 10. Turn left (signed "Circular walk public

footpath 206"). The path bends left. Enter small wood on downhill track, emerge on to golf fair way. Take grassy uphill track opposite. Do not fork left as you ascend but follow path as it bends left at top.
 11-12. Turn right at next post and enter gate into enclosed path. Cross stile and continue ahead with wire fence on right to another stile. Cross and descend by steps to lane. Turn left into lane; after 100m turn right on to track.
 13-14. After bangalow, walk on to path past another bangalow, to reach corner of field. Follow its right edge with hedge on right, to top right corner. Cross stile, follow descending path keeping left across sloping meadow until road.
 15-17. Turn left into Cockenard Road to T-junction, then right into Castle Farm Road. Follow uphill until it becomes Shacklers Road. After 50m turn left on to double track. Keep to right upper path running parallel to valley below. Pass through barrier past memorial cross cut in chalk slope. Turn left at crossing path soon after.
 18-20. Descend steps, follow sloping path through woodland, then across stile into meadow. Keep fence on left and descend to enclosed path. Follow path through kissing-gate, continue to Landusy, leading to Shoreham. Turn right into High Street, then left

into Church Street at T-junction. Pass King's Arms, head over bridge to reach Darent Way. 21-22. Turn left, passing war memorial, keep left to walk along River Darent. Cross footbridge, turn right. Follow zigzag left and right to rejoin riverbank. Go through swing-gate into path with open field on left. Leave enclosed path to continue in same direction along edge of crop field, then cross stile.
 23-24. Follow path as it crosses meadow diagonally left, to reach gate and stile leading on to farm drive. Cross drive, head across field to stile in hedge opposite. Cross and maintain direction on path between crops. Reach gate.
 25-26. Pass through gap at its side and walk ahead along Castle Road to The Hop Shop. Continue straight on to Kingfisher Bridge. Turn into entrance to Lullingstone Roman Villa Centre and take swing-gate on right leading to left bank of river. Walk to swing-gate to entrance to Lullingstone Castle, past lake on right. Keep ahead along narrow road about half a mile to reach Lullingstone Roman Villa.
 27-28. Continue on narrow road (past entrance to Eagle Heights) to C19 railway viaduct. Go under arch and round bend to reach bangalow from earlier. Continue along road back into Eynsford and the Plough pub.