

Park Hill Camp walk – 3 miles

Stourhead, Wiltshire

Discover the **Park Hill Camp Walk** – a circular route that leads through magnificent woodland dotted with snowdrops in winter and thronged with bluebells later in the year. See an Iron Age fort and medieval deer park and enjoy Stourhead's renowned gardens.

Start point: Stourhead National Trust car park – grid ref: ST 780340 – OS Landranger 183

Getting there and facilities:

S of Frome and NE of Wincanton; N of the A303 and off the B3092. Limited local bus service. Check out www.transportdirect.co.uk for public transport info. Facilities include WCs, an NT restaurant, shop, and farm shop. Contact us on 01747 841152. Due to sheep grazing on the hill fort, dogs are not permitted on this route.

Points of interest

Stourhead is one of the finest landscape gardens in the world. Created by Henry Hoare II in the 1740s, they were at the forefront of the 18th century English landscape design movement, which turned its back on formal gardens and favoured natural-looking landscapes. Rolling parklands with gentle lines were chosen over hard edges and excessive structure.

- **Classical architecture:** Hoare was captivated by ancient Roman buildings and incorporated many classical follies into his garden. The Palladian Bridge was inspired by one in Vicenza and The Pantheon based on the famous temple in Rome.
- **Trees:** exotic shrubs and trees from the Americas, Japan and China are found throughout the estate. Stourhead's garden may have been created over 250 years ago, but now it is in its prime as trees have matured.
- **Changing seasons:** winter can be quite magical at Stourhead on a still, crisp day when the frosted trees barely move and the lakes ice over. Spring then brings an abundance of daffodils and bluebells into flower. Many of the more exotic plants are at their most colourful in summer, whilst, with so many old trees, autumn is breathtaking as branches laden with orange foliage droop over the lakes.
- **Archaeology:** Park Hill Camp is one of two interesting Iron Age hill forts at Stourhead. The other is at White Sheet Hill which overlooks the estate in the east and is the site of many more prehistoric barrows and landscape features. Henry Hoare II's grandson, Richard, excavated many of these burial mounds. Some of their contents can be seen at nearby Devizes Museum.



The Pantheon designed by Henry Flitcroft in the 18th century, seen here with a light dusting of snow. The gardens at Stourhead received such great admiration that their creator became known as 'Henry the Magnificent'.

© NTPL / Andrew Lawson



The National Trust cares for 2650 acres of the Stourhead estate, the rest is still owned by the Hoare family. Four working farms and a walled garden produce food which can be bought in the Stourhead Farm Shop.

© NTPL / David Levenson



The mature woodlands around Park Hill Camp are home to lots of different birds. Keep a look out for nuthatch climbing up and down branches (pictured here), for plump little wren, thrush and finch. You might also hear the distinct drumming of woodpecker.

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National Trust places to visit nearby

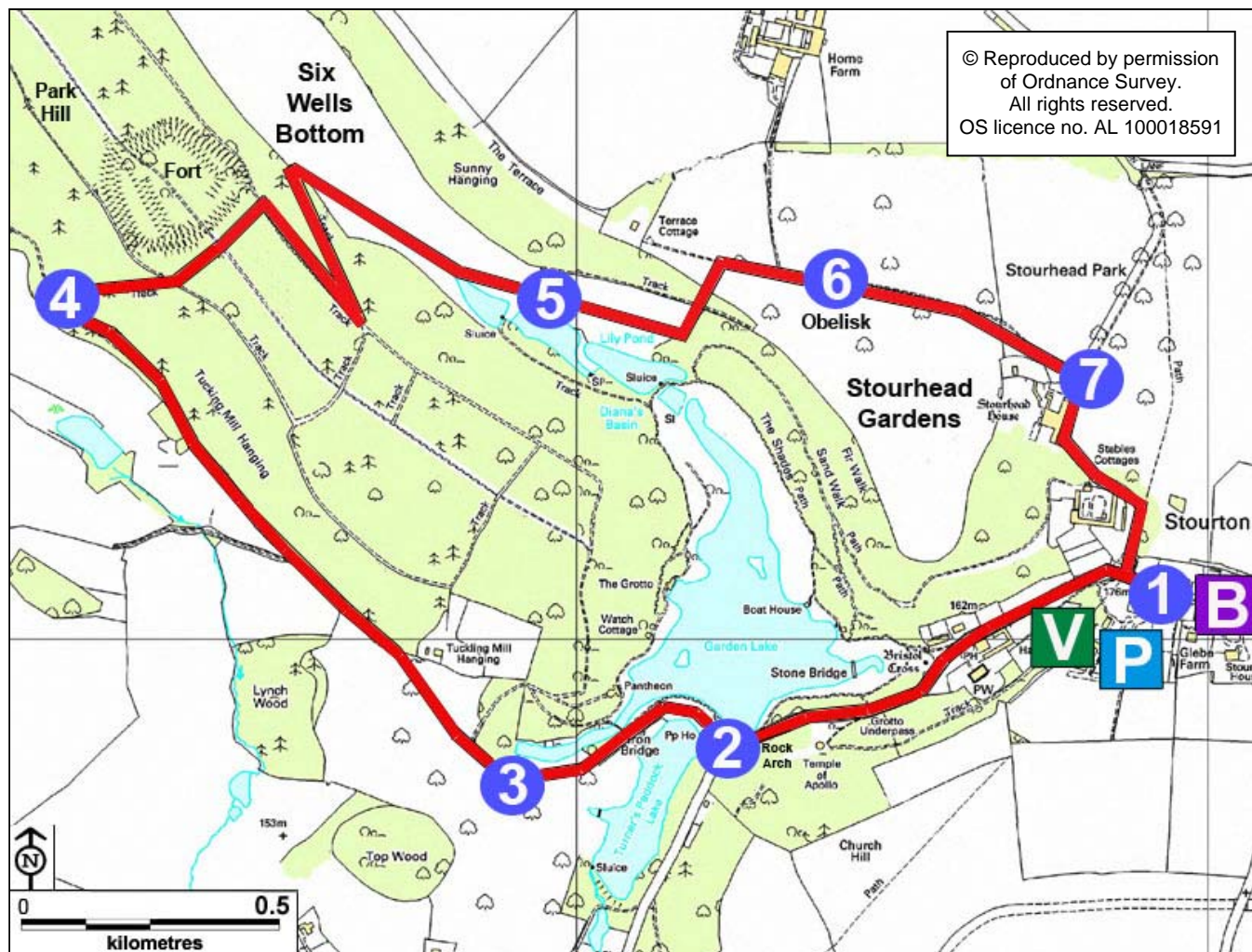
Bruton Dovecote, Cley Hill, Melbury and Fontmell Downs, Lytes Cary Manor, Dinton Park & Philipps House, Stonehenge Landscape.

Route and directions

1. From the Visitor Centre, take the path that winds down towards the garden. Walk through the Spread Eagle Inn car park and courtyard. At the road, turn left passing the parish church of St Peters.
2. Continue until just beyond the Rock Arch where you turn right. This peculiar structure, humped over a narrow lane, was built from knobby tufa rock imported from Italy.
3. Skirt alongside the lake and keep to the main path passing Beech Cottage on the right. Over the brow of the hill, King Alfred's Tower – a triangular 50 metre tall folly – can be seen in the distance. Go through two gates and continue along the edge of the field.
4. As you reach the next gate, the ruins of Tucking Mill and cottages are hidden in the trees on the left. Turning right at the T-junction you will see Park Hill Iron Age hill-fort. Keeping the hill-fort to your left, follow the path at its edge. Take another right turn at the next track and then a sharp left down to Six Wells Bottom.
5. At the end of the track, cross a stile and walk diagonally right, across the valley of Six Wells Bottom, the source of the River Stour is just upstream. Head for the gate and walk uphill with the medieval ponds below on your right.
6. Pass the obelisk which was originally erected in 1746, and then rebuilt in 1839.
7. Cut across Great Oar Meadow to join a track which takes you to the front of Stourhead House. Follow the drive to the Clock Arch, cross a road and walk back to the car park.

Distance, terrain and accessibility

Follow the red waymarks on this **3 mile** (5km) circular walk. The paths are mostly surfaced with gravel, grass or natural woodland floor. The lakeside part of the route is mostly flat and easily accessible but there are some slopes through the woods and deer park. Can be muddy in wet weather.



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Find out more at www.nationaltrust.org.uk