

TRING PARK TRAIL

This itinerary consists of two circular walks starting in Tring town centre. The longer route (5 miles) takes you through Tring Park, along the Ridgeway Path, then via Hastoe, Stubbings Wood and Millennium Wood back to Tring; the shorter route (3 miles) allows a fuller exploration of Tring Park.

(For those who are following the Heritage Trail route and wish to explore Tring Park, this route should be taken up at Point 4.)

1. This itinerary starts in Park Street. To reach it from the town centre, starting at Church Square, walk along the High Street towards the crossroads and take Bank Alley (signposted Tring Park). Alternatively, turn left into Akeman Street, turn left at the top after the Natural History Museum and continue until the first house on the right.



2. The lodge-keeper originally operated a magnificent pair of gates (the remains are still visible) at the rear entrance to the Mansion. Take the footpath (signposted Tring Park) which leads to the footbridge over the A41.

3. Once over the bridge, follow the footpath sign diagonally left across open parkland (not the path against the fence)



You can see the Mansion away to your left. Walk towards the wood in front of you. Spring and summer bring a wide variety of chalk grassland flowers and you may spot a red kite, buzzard, kestrel or barn owl. There may be cattle in the park, so dogs must be kept under control.

The ground form of the parkland is entirely natural, the result of glacial activity rather than any physical landscaping. On reaching the wood, turn left through the gate and walk up the wide path. This was part of an elaborate layout of carriage drives through the woods, making a *patte d'oie* (goose-foot) design, the work of landscape architect Charles Bridgeman in the eighteenth century, for the Gore family who owned the estate.

4. At the far side of the parkland go through the gate and head uphill



You will come to the Obelisk, a feature thought to have been designed by James Gibbs. Locals might tell you that it commemorates Nell Gwyn but there is no real basis to this idea. Walk round it backwards nine times with your eyes closed and an orange will appear!



You will see the white colonnade of the Summer House ahead.



This too was probably by Gibbs and is all that remains of a larger building. During the Second World War it was lived in by (Dame) Peggy Ashcroft, the famous actress, while her husband, Jeremy Hutchinson, was away at sea. His sister was married to Victor, 3rd Lord Rothschild, who lived in the nearby Ranger's Cottage at the time.

5. At the Summer House turn right and follow the path uphill



to the point where the Ridgeway Path comes in from the left. Unlike the length through Wiltshire and Berkshire, the Chiltern section of the Ridgeway has no ancient significance, having been put together to make a Long Distance Path in the 1970s. Continue straight ahead along King Charles' Ride, an avenue of lime trees extending through Bull's Wood for over a mile.

6. You will soon reach the 'rondpoint' where carriages could turn round and return. To your right there are wonderful views over Tring and the countryside beyond, taking in Mentmore Towers and Ivinghoe Beacon.



After a while you will spot an intriguing wooden gateway on the left, leading to an area with timber sculptures and interesting activities for children.



7. Shorter Route

The path continues on steadily. Where it curves left and starts to rise, turn down to your right



(signed Woodland Walk).

This leads through dense woodland to a gate and out onto the open grassland, revealing a superb view. Pause to imagine the herd of deer which used to roam, or the emu, cassowaries and other creatures that Walter Rothschild kept here. Walk straight ahead downhill and then sharply uphill to the beginning of an avenue of lime trees, which give off a delicious scent in early summer. This will take you to the footbridge over the A41. Walk down the path to return to Park Street; the alley opposite will take you back to Tring High Street.

8. Longer Route

To continue on the longer route, stay on the Ridgeway Path to the end of the wood.



Turn left onto the road

9. Turn right at the first junction through the hamlet of Hastoe. This was largely rebuilt by the Rothschild family and centred on Hastoe Farm, once renowned for Mr. Timberlake's herd of Shorthorn cattle. Note the Village Hall established by Lady Rothschild in the 1890s and recently restored. After half a mile and just after the barn conversions.

10. Cross the road junction and then turn right down the track by the white house.



11. Keep on the track until you reach the red brick house (Hastoe Grove) where there is a choice of paths; both end up at West Leith hamlet, so you can take either. The right-hand path is a 'holloway', worn down with centuries of use by men driving herds of cattle.



Continue downhill to the bottom of the wood

12. Go through the gate to West Leith and another former Estate farm.



13. Follow the road down to a right-hand turn into Duckmore Lane. Go under the A41 bridge (try the echo!) and turn immediately left into the Millennium Wood.



This was planted on disused allotment land.

Keep on the path and you will soon see a waymark pointing to the right which leads you back into Duckmore Lane. Turn left into the lane

14. At the T-junction turn right and keep right along Park Road. You will come to a fork, and can turn left into King Street to the Kings Arms pub, or right along Park Road, which is more scenic and will take you back to the Natural History Museum. Both have a junction with Langdon Street; to return to the town centre, turn left down Langdon Street and then right at the roundabout into the High Street and back to Church Square.