

1 Turn left out of Eynsford station and walk to the main road. Cross the road with care (visibility is limited), turn left under the railway bridge and follow the roadside verge for about 400 metres to a gated track on the right. Follow the track downhill to a bridge over the River Darent in the valley bottom. A concrete structure ahead encloses the remains of Lullingstone Roman Villa.

- Enjoy a succession of panoramic views into and across the Darent Valley
- Pass through Lullingstone Country Park, Polhill Bank Nature Reserve and Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve
- Diversions possible to riverside villages of Eynsford, Shoreham and Otford
- Follows some of the North Downs Way and the Darent Valley Path.

On The Way

Start point: Eynsford station
End point: Sevenoaks station
Length: 9 miles / 14.4km
Terrain: Some pavements and hard surfaced paths but the majority is countryside tracks. Some road crossings. Follows some sections of the Darent Valley Path
Accessibility: There are steps and stiles on this walk
Toilets/refreshments: during opening hours at Country Park and in the villages
What3Words: ///hands.unit.help
OS Explorer map: 147

Darent Valley Rail Trails

WALK 7

EYNSFORD/SEVENOAKS

Along the Valley Side

A 9 mile route exploring the Darent Valley from the valley sides, discovering three nature reserves, panoramic views across the Kent Downs and an option to explore three riverside villages along the way.



Photo credits - johnmillerphotography.com and Andy Vidler

2 Turn left in front of the villa and then right onto a path leading uphill. Follow the path up the left side of a sloping field to the top corner from where there is a good view looking back into the valley. Continue into the next field then bear left through a tree belt onto open woodland where the route enters Lullingstone Country Park. The public footpath turns right here but continue straight ahead on a permissive path that initially goes across the hillside with more good views on the left.

3 The path then crosses a wooded side valley, forking right at a junction on the far slope. At the top, continue ahead along the right edge of grassland and at the far corner, continue ahead following the black Lullingstone Loop marker. The path continues through a woodland corridor with a golf course on the left. Continue until you reach a paved track then turn right, initially up a gentle slope.

Lullingstone Roman Villa is among the most outstanding Roman villa survivals in Britain. The villa was begun in about AD 100 and developed to suit the tastes and beliefs of successive wealthy owners, reaching its peak of luxury in the mid-4th century. Visitors to the villa today can still view the spectacular mosaics and prints of the rare wall paintings, a heated bath-suite and a house-church;

4 The path becomes more pronounced as it leads into woodland and descends into another side valley. At the bottom, cross a fairway then climb back into woodland following the track as it curves left, still following the Lullingstone Loop. Then leave the Lullingstone Loop and carry on ahead to an old metal ladder and gate and beyond it, join an enclosed path leading to a field which is crossed to a lane.

5 Turn left and after about 100 metres, turn right into a driveway which leads to a path on the right of garden fences which in turn leads into a large field. Cross the field following the right boundary. The path now enters a sloping field, bears left and

Lullingstone Country Park is internationally important for its collection of ancient trees, with over 300 veteran oak, beech, ash, hornbeam and sweet chestnut, some of which are thought to be 800 years old.

There is a seat here to the left of the track and just beyond, an impressive hollowed-out oak tree. The track levels off and heads towards the clubhouse but before it gets there a public footpath turns left (the path is initially rather faint but the turning is well-signposted).

13 Back on the main route, cross the road with care and take the path through a gate into Bradbourne Lakes.

Bradbourne Lakes, owned by Sevenoaks District Council, form a series of ornamental lakes linked by small waterfalls that were first laid out in the eighteenth century by the owner of nearby Bradbourne Hall.

14 Follow the main path keeping to the left of the lakes, crossing a road on the way. Coming to a road turn right and then left onto a footpath. This leads over a railway line and then along an unmade road to join another road, Bradbourne Park Road. Turn right and follow it to join Hitchen Hatch Lane, bearing right. Sevenoaks station is now visible on the far side of London Road and can be reached via a pelican crossing to the left.

12 Turn right and follow the road for about 400 metres to where a track forks left. The track runs between residential and commercial development to the east and open land to the west and eventually leads to the western edge of the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, crossing the River Darent at an inlet and passing one of the Reserve's lakes on the left. The route then crosses a field and emerges onto the A25. Turn left and follow the road to a footpath on the right. A diversion to the Reserve is possible by continuing a short distance to the entrance on the left.

The Darent Valley Rail Trails have been created by the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme. DVLP is led by the Kent Downs AONB, working throughout the Darent Valley to conserve the area's rich heritage landscapes and encourage people to enjoy, explore and connect to them www.darent-valley.org.uk

A selection of the Rail Trails are available to use on the Darent Valley Trails app, available free of charge on the App Store and Google Play. With special thanks to Alan Dyer for devising the route.



EUROPEAN UNION

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Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve is a 73ha site containing five lakes surrounded by woodland with a few ponds, seasonal flooded pools, grassland and small areas of reedbed and is crossed by the River Darent. The reserve was formed from old gravel workings and is managed by Kent Wildlife Trust. It is particularly important for its range of birds but it also has diverse communities of plants and other species. Facilities include a visitor centre, shop, café, bird hides, walking trails and picnic area. Entry is free.

descends with more good views looking down and across the side valley and the Downs. This section is part of the Samuel Palmer Trail.

One of Britain's most talented artists, Samuel Palmer immortalised the beautiful landscape of the Darent Valley nearly 200 years ago. Walk in his footsteps on this 5.3 mile circular trail, experiencing the landscape through the eyes and ears of one of our best painters on this self-guided audio visual trail (available on the free Darent Valley Trails app).

6 At the bottom join a lane, turn left and follow it to a T junction. Turn right here and go uphill a short distance past a road on the left onto a footpath turning just before a house. Bear left onto a track. Follow the track uphill and where the path forks, keep straight through a vehicle barrier with Shoreham Woods to your right. It eventually levels out and soon after some steps on the left lead to the Shoreham Cross.

The cross was carved out of the chalk hillside in 1920 as a memorial to residents of the village lost in World War I. It is listed as a scheduled monument and maintained by Shoreham Parish Council.

7 The next section follows permissive paths on land owned by Sevenoaks District Council through Shoreham Woods. Continue ahead across the field to a stile that leads into woodland. A narrow path leads ahead slightly downhill, soon joining a wider track. Stay on this track past a picnic table and then down to a junction at the bottom edge of the wood. Turn right and up a few steps to enter Polhill Bank Nature Reserve. Head uphill through another kissing gate to the top edge of the downland and then along the woodland boundary to a well-positioned seat in the top corner.



Polhill Bank Nature Reserve is almost four hectares of chalk grassland on a southeast-facing hillside, managed by Kent Wildlife Trust. Many common chalk grassland flowers can be found here such as orchids along with various butterflies, insects and birds.

8 This is the end of the elevated section of the walk which now descends to the valley bottom. Turn left at the seat and head steeply downhill. Informal steps have been cut into the hillside but this section may still be slippery in wet conditions. Go through a gate at the bottom of the steep section, leaving the reserve, and continue to descend more gently on a track between fields leading to Filston Lane.

9 Cross onto another path with Sepham Farm to the right. This leads to a T junction at the entrance to a field. Turn right and then left at the corner of the field. Follow this path avoiding all turnings, crossing a small stream (Twitton Brook, a tributary of the Darent) and crossing fields to reach Pilgrims Way West in western Otford. Turn right, heading away from the village centre. Take the first left into Telston Lane.

10 The walk now follows the signposted Darent Valley Path to Sevenoaks; the route out of Otford is also followed by the North Downs Way. Continue ahead when the lane becomes single track leaving the built-up area of the village. The lane curves right then left and heads uphill to end at a railway bridge. Cross the bridge to a path junction.

11 Turn left, leaving the North Downs Way, and cross two fields keeping to the left edge. Drop down a slope and bear left to go under the M26 motorway. Follow the track on the far side for a short distance

