

WINDSOR GREAT PARK & SAVILL GARDEN

THIS WALK IS SET ENTIRELY IN WINDSOR GREAT PARK. AS PART OF YOUR VISIT YOU MAY LIKE TO VISIT THE BEAUTIFUL SAVILL GARDENS SITUATED HERE. MAPS OF WINDSOR GREAT PARK CAN BE PURCHASED FROM THE SHOP. THE START OF THE WALK IS FROM SAVILL GARDEN CAR PARK (PAY ON EXIT), ENTRANCE VIA WICK LANE (MAP REF: 977707). THERE ARE TOILETS HERE. DOGS ARE PERMITTED WITHIN THE PARK, BUT NOT IN THE SAVILL GARDEN.

Enter the Park by the middle of the three wicket gates.

The walk takes the path to the left, but to the right is the Obelisk, which is worth a look prior to starting the walk. It is an impressive and unusual monument, which commemorates the Duke of Cumberland, a Ranger of Windsor Great Park, who created Virginia Water Lake and the Valley Gardens in the mid 1700's. To take in the view, walk down to the right and enjoy the scenery. Planted around the monument is an impressive collection of ornamental conifers including Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libanii*), Giant Redwood (*Sequoia gigantea*) and Cedar Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*).

At the crossing road by the five-finger sign, turn right along the road through the wooded area, take the path to the left and follow the track downhill as it bears right skirting the edge of the pond, and continues through various mature vintage oaks. At the five-finger sign, turn right through the wooded area, and follow the tarmac track, bending left and right past the small cottage. Nearby is a fine spreading oak.

The path emerges at Smith's Lawn, the grounds for the Guard's Polo Club, which is where royalty often play. The HQ Camp of the Canadian Forestry Corps occupied Smith's lawn during the 1st World War, and for a short time thereafter it was known as the Canadian Camp. After the Normandy Landings the RAF set up a Tiger Moth training camp on the lawn.

Continuing along the road, you pass two entrances to the Valley Gardens on your left. The first is a 90 degrees left turn, which goes through a car park (go through to find toilets). The second is a left fork, just beside the Guards Polo Club House. The Valley Gardens is another part of the gardens worth visiting, especially in spring when they become a cascade of colour. These gardens include a National Heather Collection, a National Rhododendron Collection and a National Camellia Collection, among others. There are also extensive hydrangea plantings and a wealth of other interesting shrubs and trees.

Continue to follow the road past the Guards Polo Club, (the road eventually joins the main road carrying traffic from Blacknest through the park), and at the junction, turn right. You will see a statue on the left of this road, positioned in front of a wooded area of mature Scots Pine and mixed deciduous trees. The statue was erected as a memorial to Prince Albert, the Prince Consort, as the Jubilee Offering of the Women of England, to Queen Victoria.

Continue along the road through Cumberland Gate, passing the Keeper's Lodge and alongside a field of unusual old oaks including the Lebanon Oak, (*Quercus libanii*), a native of Syria, Lebanon & Asia Minor, and two natives from eastern North America, the Burr Oak or Mossy Cup Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) and the Black Oak or Quercitron Oak, (*Quercus velutina*).

Shortly, on the left of the road, is a finger post pointing to Cumberland Lodge. This Lodge was built in the 1650's and was originally used as the official residence of the Ranger of Windsor Great Park. At the finger post, cross the road to the grass verge on the right of the road. Turn diagonally right (45 degrees) and cut across the grass, over a ditch, to join a sand and gravel (hoggin) path that starts off parallel to the road. Turn right onto the sandy path and follow this to the point where it meets up with the tarmac route again.

To the left, the road goes through the entrance to the Royal Lodge enclosure (marked by strawberry pink buildings), and to the right, it goes through Bishopsgate (large white gates).

Turn right at this point onto the tarmac road, and then turn right again onto the small track in front of the Lodge cottage. Go through the small wooden green gate that opens out onto the Rhododendron Walk. In May and June, this is lined with glorious blooms in various shades of red and mauve.

Continuing along the track, Cow Pond is on the right, and further along on the right are the Savill Gardens, and a little further is the car park where the walk started. The Savill Garden covers approximately 18 hectares and was begun by Eric Savill in 1932 under the auspices of King George V and Queen Mary. In 1951 King George VI commanded that its name should be changed from the Bog Garden to the Savill Garden. The area is now one of the world's finest gardens and is well worth visiting.

