

# Walk 4: Ide Hill circular

Ancient woodland that inspired National Trust founder Octavia Hill; 'Garden of England' views, and a brilliant NT hotspot called Emmetts, (pay to enter) lend this stroll rich atmosphere

**How long?** 1½ hrs/3.5 miles

**Public transport:** Nearest rail access is Sevenoaks station from where it is 15 minutes by taxi (about £15) to Ide Hill. There is an infrequent bus service from Sevenoaks station to Ide Hill – the 404, operated by Go.

**Parking:** easy, by the church (the highest in Kent at 216m)

**Start of walk:** Footpath next to church

**Steep slopes?** Quite hilly but nothing too arduous

**Muddy?** Some very muddy spots in winter

## Walk highlights

Weald vistas from one of Kent's highest villages; **Emmetts Gardens**; National Trust-managed woodland with spectacular bluebell displays, blossom and foxglove glades in spring. Combine with a visit to **Chartwell**, Churchill's house and gardens; and Westerham. **The Cock Inn** is a fine pub in the village and so is **The White Hart** at nearby Brasted (where the Biggin Hill pilots used to go during the Battle of Britain). Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map

[Click here for GPX map](#) at Ordnance Survey (includes the 'coronavirus diversion')



Between point 1 and 2, looking south

## THE WALK IN SHORT

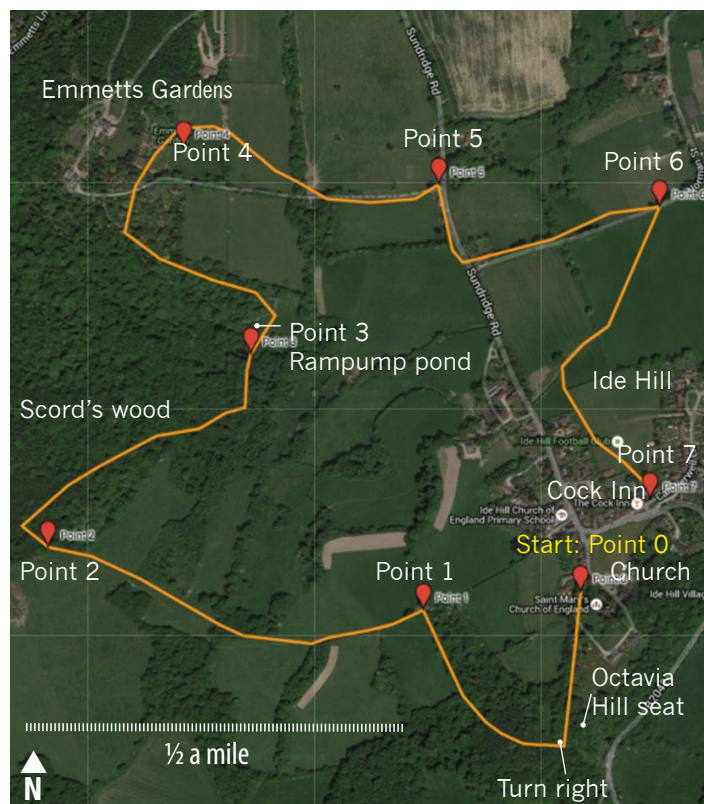
**Points 0-1: 650m.** Join NT footpath marked to right of church and walk downhill, past shetland pony pasture on right. Doesn't matter which path you take at fork (choice is straight on or fork right - they both end up on same path; just go downhill). Note great tree for climbing by a glade (if take right fork). If you've taken the straight-on fork you'll pass close to the Octavia Hill memorial seat off to the left which has a great view. Either way, when you hit a path further down the hill, **turn right** and follow it curving to the right (north west), past a spring (muddy) then out of the woods and alongside a field on left with barbed wire fence uphill to point 1. This is actually the Greensand Way, but you are going east to west on it; not west to east as the yellow arrows might indicate.

**Point 1-2: 650m.** At top of field with barbed wire fence you reach a path junction. Here we turn left, heading away from village descending into a valley (the right turn, uphill, goes back to Ide Hill). Cross a little stream on a bridge and climb up other side of valley to Scord's wood and point 2.

**Point 2-3: 650m.** Enter woods past NT sign for Toys Hill and follow path uphill for 50m or so then, at a junction, take the path sharp right (the Toys Hill red route). Follow this path down steps and various twists and turns. Keep right at the next junction of paths and eventually walk past a large pond (point 3).

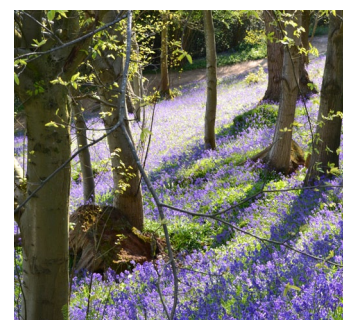
**Point 3-4 600m.** Continue on the path doubling back uphill behind the pond, (then ignoring any path off to the left), to the entrance of Emmetts gardens (towards top of hill). (During the coronavirus crisis this path has been shut so continue west, going gradually uphill for half a mile before taking a path ascending to the right. At the top take another path to the right which comes out in the Emmetts tea garden). Great views here. Enter gardens and follow signs for tea room (pay entrance fee). Once you hit the main path within the garden, turn right until you see an ornamental pond and rose garden on your right and a track (a public footpath) going downhill.

**Point 4-5: 470m.** Leave Emmetts and join the footpath/lane heading downhill on your right by going through the white gate directly to your right. Go down the shady track, eventually passing a tiny cricket pitch (watch out for sixes) and meet Sundridge Rd - take great care, the road is busy for a country lane and quite narrow.



**Point 5-6: 470m.** Turn right up Sundridge Rd for 150m then turn left down much quieter Norman St. After 320m take 'hidden' footpath on right through gap in hedge almost directly under a telegraph pole (yes, I still call them that!).

**Point 6-7: 600m.** Follow path diagonally through large field, then into a second field. Exit this field by turning left then entering a playing field with sloping football pitch. Walk past a playground and to left of a large hut to re-enter Ide Hill from behind the Cock Inn.



Scord's wood bluebells

The Toy's Hill/Ide Hill areas were among the first to be protected by the National Trust, largely through the work of Victorian social reformer Octavia Hill. There is a seat dedicated to her with a great view on the wooded hillside between Point 0 and 1 on the map.

Like the One Tree Hill walks I've detailed, this walk is on the Greensand Ridge (a sandstone escarpment parallel with the main North Downs chalk escarpment to the north). Walks along the ridge tend to be more wooded than the chalk walks. At Scord's wood, huge damage was done by the 1987 storm, as at Knole Park, but the wood has regenerated and the NT is leaving some of Scord's to itself, to see how the process pans out naturally. In the past there was much coppicing and pollarding of trees here, which is still obvious. The bluebells on Emmett's southern bank are among the most photographed in England. The house at Emmetts was owned by Frederic Lubbock, brother of John, friend of Charles Darwin. Look out for the 110ft wellingtonia tree.

Emmetts is not a free garden, you have to pay a fee to enter. Check its website for details.

A superb walk in dry periods but very muddy in winter.

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