

BROOKMANS AND GOBIONS WOOD, HERTFORDSHIRE

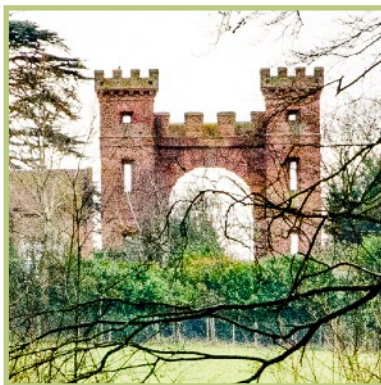
Brookmans sits at the heart of the Brookmans Park community, right on the green, and offers tempting refreshments for locals and visitors alike.



Challenging Terrain

**4 miles
Circular
2 hours**

050418



A 4 mile (can be shortened to 3 miles) circular pub walk from Brookmans public house in Brookmans Park, Hertfordshire. The walking route heads south to explore the magical Gobions Open Space, a former historic pleasure gardens with pretty brook, large lake and bluebell woodlands. For the optional final mile, you will travel through open countryside, passing the famous Royal Veterinary College along the way.

Getting there

Brookmans Park is located about halfway between Hatfield and Potters Bar in Hertfordshire. The walk starts and finishes from Brookmans public house, alongside the Bradmore Green in the centre of the village. If you are coming by public transport, the pub is just a 200-metre walk from Brookmans Park rail station. If you are coming by car, there is a public car park directly in front of the pub. Please note that this parking is limited to 3 hours, however you can extend this time by putting your vehicle details into the tablet (ask at the bar), allowing you more time to enjoy refreshments after the walk.

Approximate post code **AL9 7QW**.

Walk Sections



Start to Bluebridge Avenue Gate



Access Notes



1. The walk follows mainly unmade woodland and meadow paths which are particularly prone to becoming muddy at times.
2. The paths are also very uneven in part with a few steep slopes and exposed tree roots.
3. You will need good boots all year round and wellingtons with grips are recommended after periods of rain or in winter and spring.
4. With lots of intersecting paths and few obvious landmarks within the woodland, the live GPS-map on the iFootpath App will be your best navigation aid.
5. There are no stiles or livestock on route, but you will need to negotiate several kissing gates, footbridges and flights of woodland steps.

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Leave the front car park via the vehicle entrance and walk diagonally left along the pavement for a few paces to reach the road junction. Ignore the entrance to the two side roads on your left, instead cross over this entrance to go straight ahead along the left-hand pavement of the main road, passing the two Bradmore Green bus stops.

The road leads you past the United Reformed Church on your right. Cross over the next side road, Moffats Lane, and then turn left into the next side road, Bluebridge Avenue. At the end of this residential avenue, you will come to a wide metal gate and smaller pedestrian gate ahead, marking the start of Gobions Open Space.

1 → 2 Bluebridge Avenue Gate to Gobions Pond



Pass through the gate to enter the grass clearing and turn right across this. Go through the wide hedge gap (a mud hotspot!) to enter a second clearing. Turn left to walk along the length of this clearing, following the line of trees and hedgerow on your left.

At the far side, cross the stream footbridge ahead and continue through the tree belt (ignoring a path to your right) to emerge into a third grass clearing (with a children's playground to your left). Walk ahead to pass a round oak tree immediately on your right, then keep in broadly the same direction across the remainder of the large clearing, to reach the far right-hand corner. On your right here you will see a litter bin, as well as your first view of the nature reserve's lake, known as Gobions Pond.

2 → 3 Gobions Pond to Gobions Wood



Keep ahead to join the main wide woodland path, with the lake just across to your right. Follow this path ahead, crossing a stream to reach a fork. Take the right-hand branch, soon with

the lake visible on your right again. As you near the end of the lake, stay on the main lakeside path which swings right to reach a junction with a kissing gate on your left. Do NOT take the kissing gate, instead stay with the lakeside path as it bends right again.

Continue ahead with the lake on your right, passing a bench and several fishing platforms. Before you reach the western edge of the lake, look out for a kissing gate on your left. Turn left through this and head down the wooden steps, bearing right for a few paces to reach the corner of a grass meadow. Turn left to follow the meadow edge with the hedgeline running on your left. In the next meadow corner, turn left into the trees to reach a T-junction within this area of woodland (Gobions Wood).

3 → 4 Gobions Wood to Giant Sequoias



Turn left along the path, passing a waymarker post (with a red band) and following the two flights of steps, down and then up. Continue on the woodland path winding ahead. This is the perfect stretch to pause and understand the history of the site.

In the mid-1700s Gobions Wood was a landscaped pleasure garden, one of the most famous gardens in England. It was part of Gobions Estate (named after Sir Richard Gobion who held the property from 1125). In 1708 the estate was bought by Jeremy Sambrooke who employed the renowned gardener Charles Bridgeman to improve the grounds. Bridgeman was the royal gardener to George II and Queen Caroline. The design included a series of pools and cascades, a temple, a grotto, a bowling green, a pigeon house and a variety of classical statues. Today the site is a mix of ancient woodland with waterways and grassland, and there are several remnants of the past. In spring and summer the woodland is alive with bluebells, wood anemones, butterflies and damselflies; whilst in autumn and winter there is lots of fungi to discover (such as the striking earthball) and birds such as tree creepers and nuthatches.

When you come to fork in the path, take the right-hand branch which leads you to an information board, with a large footbridge over Ray Brook just to your right. Do NOT turn right to reach the footbridge, instead turn left to continue on the woodland path, soon passing a bench and the next waymarker post (with blue and red bands). Continue until you reach the next path junction, with a pretty old brick bridge to your right and a wooden footbridge ahead.

Look around you here and you will see several giant trees with red bark, remnants of the pleasure gardens. Two of the trees are giant sequoias, whilst the others are coastal redwoods. The trees are native to California and were popular spectacles for pleasure gardens due to being so long-lived and also the tallest species of trees on earth. Sequoias can live up to 1,900 years and reach more than 100 metres. Look to your right over the old

brick bridge and, in the distance, you will see a large red-tower gateway. This gothic style folly arch is thought to have been designed by James Gibbs around 1740.

4 ➔ 5 Giant Sequoias to Main Footbridge Junction



Do NOT turn right towards the brick bridge and folly, instead go ahead over the wooden footbridge to cross Ray Brook. Beyond the bridge, keep ahead through the woodland, now with Ray Brook running on your left. This half of Gobions Wood is particularly known for its bluebell displays in the late spring. To your right you will see a section of still water, this is the old canal that formed part of the landscaped gardens.

Continue just until you reach a flight of three steps leading down ahead. Do NOT take these, instead turn right at this path junction and the path leads you past the end of the old canal waterway on your right. Immediately after passing the end of the old canal, turn right over a wide sleeper bridge to continue on the path with the old canal on your right (passing several red band waymarker posts).

Just before the end of the old canal, you will come to the next path junction. Turn sharp left here to join the side path (passing a blue band waymarker post). At a small crossroads of paths, turn right (past another blue post) to continue through the bluebell wood. At the next path junction, turn right (still following the blue posts). You will emerge to a junction of multiple paths, with a red-band post ahead. Glance to your right and you will see you are now at the far side of the old brick bridge within the woodland.

Go straight ahead at this junction (passing immediately to the right of the waymarker post) to reach a staggered T-junction just 20 metres later. Turn left, heading west through the woodland with Ray Brook in the valley bottom to your right. Follow this path passing the Paws for Thought pet memorial bench and then leading you over two small footbridges in quick succession. You will come to the next path junction (with the main metal and wood footbridge over Ray Brook that you passed earlier now to your right).

5 ➔ 6 Main Footbridge Junction to Bluebridge Road Pitches

Do NOT turn right to cross Ray Brook, instead keep straight ahead crossing two smaller stream footbridges. Pass a bench on your right and, just a few metres later, you will see a metal kissing gate on your left and a large noticeboard on your right. Do NOT go through the kissing gate, instead stay on the woodland path with Ray Brook still running to your right.



Follow the main path meandering ahead, always keeping Ray Brook on your right and taking care on the flights of steps, sections of boardwalk, sleeper bridges and tree roots. Eventually you will reach a path junction, with two plaque-topped dedicated posts (dated 1994 and 1999) on your right. Take the left-hand path here, which leads you past the next waymarker post (with red band).

This path leads you to the next path junction. Ignore the kissing gate to your left, instead turn right to cross the short boardwalk, passing between a Little Rye Plantation sign and a waymarker post. This path leads you along the edge of Gobions Wood, with woodland on your right and fenced horse paddocks on your left. Towards the end of Rye Plantation, you will see a kissing gate into the horse paddock ahead.

About 15 metres before you reach this gate, turn right onto the side path (passing a waymarker post on your right). The path leads you between an old circular quarry pit on your right and a gate-topped old quarry shaft on your left. At the minor fork, stay with the main path as it swings right and, about 40 paces later, turn left over the large footbridge across Ray Brook.

A few paces later (with a noticeboard on your right), turn left over a smaller bridge and pass through the kissing gate to reach a waymarker post with yellow arrows. Take the left-hand path, an enclosed path with fenced paddocks on your right. Stay on this main path alongside the fenced paddocks, leading you ahead and then bending right and left to reach a T-junction of paths. Turn left (passing an old shed on your left) and this stretch of track leads you to a wide metal gate. Pass through the kissing gate alongside this and you will emerge onto Bluebridge Road.

6 ➔ 7 Bluebridge Road to Royal Vet College



At this point you have two choices. For the shorter walk, simply turn right along the pavement and follow this back to Brookmans. For the full walk turn left along the pavement to

cross over the brook bridge and, immediately afterwards, cross over the road to turn right onto the public footpath signed to Waterend. Follow the path down the steps and keep straight ahead to follow the grass path with a crop field on your left.

In the field corner, turn left to continue around the field boundary, with the train line running beyond the fence to your right. At the end of the field you will emerge to a roadside pavement. Turn right along the pavement to cross over the railway. Immediately after this, turn right, passing alongside a metal gate to join a stone track with fenced fields on your left and the rail line on your right.

Beyond the fields on your left you will be able to see the extensive complex of buildings that make up the Royal Veterinary College. The Royal Veterinary College is a vet school (the oldest and largest in the UK) and animal hospital that also carries out world-class research. One of the hospital facilities, the Queen Mother Hospital for Small Animals, is Europe's largest small animal hospital. Between the three on-site hospitals, more than 20,000 animals are treated every year.

7 → 8 Royal Vet College to End



Where the stone track bends left, keep straight ahead to follow the path alongside the rail line on your right. Further along, you will reach a footpath fingerpost. Turn left to continue on the public footpath, leading you through a tunnel of trees and then steeply down the woodland bank via a long flight of wooden steps. At the bottom, keep ahead on the grass path with fenced horse paddocks on your left.

When you reach a wooden kissing gate ahead, do NOT go through this, instead turn right over the footbridge and then through a metal kissing gate. Keep ahead on the grass path between fenced fields. You will later reach a kissing gate ahead. Pass through this and, just a few paces later, do NOT continue on the main path ahead. Instead fork right up the rough steep bank (with care) to reach a grass track directly alongside Brookmans Park rail station.

Turn left along the grass track to reach a junction with the road. Cross over to the far pavement and turn right along this, crossing over the rail bridge. The pavement will lead you to Brookmans public house on your left for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

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