

Walk 12: Eynsford/Lullingstone

How long? 90 minutes
(4 miles)

Public transport: Trains to Eynsford station direct from Denmark Hill etc on Thameslink. You can join the Orpington train (Southeastern) from Brixton etc and change at Bromley South for Eynsford.

By car/parking: Allow 50 minutes from, say, Brockley. Park near the Plough pub, point 2-3. Start of walk: Eynsford Station or Plough pub

Steep slopes? None

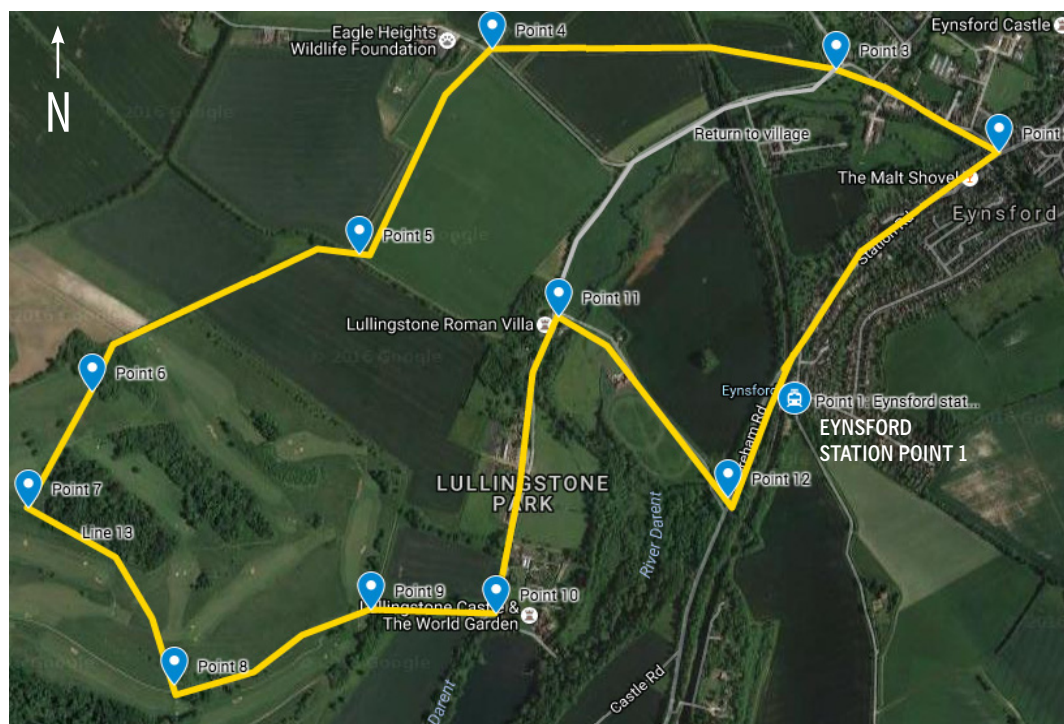
Buggy? Yes, but tough, potentially muddy bit around points 5 and 6.

Dogs? On and off the lead.

Highlights? Great views, grassland, beautiful buildings

Lowlights? Rubbish pavements in Eynsford make the walk's start and end a bit of a bore

Pubs/tea rooms: the Malt Shovel and the Plough both in Eynsford, also the Riverside Tearoom between the two pubs.



Superb views from high above Eynsford. Skirt woods and enjoy chalk downs grassland and medieval buildings

THE WALK IN SHORT

Point 1-2 (700m): Eynsford station is just out of the village, just off the A225. Leave the station and walk north to the village on whatever bit of pavement you can find. A few metres past the Malt Shovel pub turn left on to Riverside.

Point 2-3 (400m): Cross over the old bridge just past the Riverside Tearoom. Take care (cars). Pass the Plough Inn and keep straight on until the road bends left.

Point 3-4 (800m): Look out for signposted footpath leading uphill on the right at the aforementioned bend in the road, at a little layby. Follow path uphill, carefully cross the railway line at the pedestrian crossing (over stiles) and continue diagonally uphill towards Eagle Heights. The path passes through a hedgerow and continues diagonally to the lane leading up to Eagle Heights bird of prey centre. Cross the lane.

Point 4-5 (600m): Walk along the frontage of Eagle Heights, north to south. Watch out for soaring birds of prey and the huskies being exercised.

Point 5-6 (700m): Follow the path through a hedgerow and continue towards a lone tree (the same tree features on the Shoreham-Eynsford walk). Great views here, the highest point of the walk. Pass the tree and continue downhill. At the foot of a shallow dry valley follow the path behind a golf green and tee and walk up into the

woods. It's best to take the left fork path which soon emerges from the woods (muddy in winter) on to a grassy hillside.

Point 6-7 (300m): Head diagonally left and pass between a golf green (12th hole) and a tee (the 13th) and join a clear footpath running along the top of the hillside.

Point 7-8 (550m): Turn left on this path and pass benches with dense woods behind. The benches face a fine view of the Darent valley beyond a dry valley on the golf course. Walk downhill on the clear footpath to the right into the dry valley, skirting a golf tee. At the end of

this path the slope becomes very steep, with an interesting plantation of shrubs and small trees on the left.

Point 8-9 (450m): Turn left on the track at the bottom of the valley. You are now heading towards Lullingstone Castle. Soon the track bears right (between the green of the 7th and tee of the 8th) and goes uphill.

Point 9-10 (300m): Continue on the track downhill with a copse of trees on your right to Lullingstone Castle.

Point 10-11 (600m): Turn left on the lane (a few cars use this lane to reach the apartments

at the castle) and pass the World Garden wall, heading north. Continue for half a mile until you reach Lullingstone Roman villa. Cross the bridge over the Darent river by the Roman villa car park and walk past a farmhouse up to the A225. If you wish to get back to the pubs/cafe, ignore this turning and take the grey route on the map above by continuing on the road under the viaduct back to the village (this adds about 1 mile to the route).

Point 11-1 (300m): Turn left on reaching the A225 and walk back along the grass verge, under the bridge to Eynsford station. Take care.

Eynsford has some lovely buildings, and the river and water meadows are beautiful. The pubs are welcoming and there's plenty of history too with the remains of a Norman castle, a fantastic Roman villa, and a church (St Martins) with a Norman arch and early medieval features.

The walk starts badly with dodgy pavement hopping as you stroll from the station into the village.

After reaching the footpath at **point 3** things get very nice indeed. The hill walk is not strenuous, the view of the railway viaduct ahead of you is glorious with the valley laid out below and beyond.

After **point 4** you reach Eagle Heights, a bird of prey centre, whose birds have become stars in their right, whether it's in the Made in Chelsea reality show or at Crystal Palace FC (the Eagles) matches at Selhurst Park

The displays are really spectacular – it's about £9 to get in. The walk passes the bird display area.

We stay high for a while; soon after **point 5** we encounter the lonely damaged tree mentioned and pictured on walk 3.

Between **points 6** and **10** the walk passes through a corner of Lullingstone public golf course. The paths neatly pass between greens and tees and so there's no ball dodging. There are orchid-festooned (in spring) Sites of Special Scientific Interest along the hillside between **points 7** and **8** and plantations of native species like blackthorn (sloe), alive with butterflies and birds.

Lullingstone Castle and the World Garden are described in **Walk 3**, as is the superb Roman villa (**point 11**).

Head back to Eynsford on the lane from the Roman villa (grey line on map) or turn right, go across bridge and up track to A225 and walk on grass verge the last 150 metres or so to the station.

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