

The Hare and Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent



Challenging Terrain

4 miles
Circular
2 to 2.5
hours

210114



Access Notes



1. There are a number of climbs and descents throughout the route and, whilst most of the path surfaces are well made, they can get muddy in places.
2. Some of the paths are quite narrow and can be a little overgrown in late summer.
3. You will need to negotiate a number of kissing gates, some steps plus nine stiles (some with dedicated dog gates but one which dogs may need a lift over).
4. You are likely to come across cattle grazing in some of the fields so take care with dogs. One of the fields may also be holding some of the menage of animals from the Groomfield Place estate (such as an alpaca or zedonk!).

The site of the Hare has been home to a pub since 1785, the present building dating back to 1901, and it is a beautiful spot in the centre of Langton Green.

A 4 mile circular pub walk from The Hare in Langton Green, near Tunbridge Wells in Kent. The walking route is fairly strenuous but well worth the effort with lovely views, peaceful stretches of ancient tracks and a visit to Groombridge Place, a stunning moated manor house which is now home to a surprising range of animals.

Getting there

Langton Green is situated on the A264 Langton Road, just a couple of miles west of Tunbridge Wells. The walk starts and finishes at The Hare which is on the junction between Langton Road and The Green. The pub has just a handful of parking spaces directly in front of it, so if you are completing the walk please park along The Green instead, on the left-hand side of the road next to the village green.

Approximate post code **TN3 0JA**.

Walk Sections



Start to Fordcombe Road



Stand facing the main road with your back to the pub, and turn right along the pavement, signed to Groombridge. Keep ahead on the pavement passing the church and the old schoolhouse to the right. Immediately after this, fork right through a kissing gate onto a woodland footpath. Follow the footpath winding through the woodland heading downhill and keep ahead as the path becomes fenced with a large crop field on the left.

At the end of this first field you'll see a footpath crossing the route, with stiles in the fences each side. Turn left

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over the stile and follow the grass path along the right-hand edge of the crop field. Keep ahead to follow a section with fenced woodland on the right and a line of trees on the left. As you reach the corner of this woodland, cross the remainder of the field at about 11 o'clock. At the far side pass out through a kissing gate to reach a T-junction with Fordcombe Road, with a road junction just to the left.

1 → 2 Fordcombe Road to Groombridge Hill



Cross the two roads at about 11 o'clock, taking care, passing in front of the gates of Langton Lodge, to reach a stile at the far side. Cross this stile into a pasture (likely to be holding cattle) and cross the field passing to the left of the first oak tree and to the right of the second in the centre of the field. At the far corner, turn left through two wide metal gates and you'll reach a T-junction with a small farm track.

Turn right for just a few yards and then keep left at the junction. Pass through the left-hand of the two metal gates ahead to join the narrow path between hedgerows. Cross the stile and keep ahead, now with fenced open fields to the left. Cross the next stile and swing right to join the concrete access track for Top Hill Farm.

Follow this narrowing track for some distance and, on clear days, the views across the fields to the right stretch for miles. (Note: at the time of writing some of the fencing had collapsed and the farmer had kindly provided a couple of extra stiles to the right to allow you to access and walk along the pasture edge instead – but no handy dog gates on these!).

In the bottom corner of the field, cross the stile into a section of woodland. Note: The next turn is very easy to miss (we did!) so pay close attention here. Follow the path as it swings right for just a few yards and you'll pass a large oak tree and then a fallen tree on the left. Immediately afterwards, turn left to join a hidden path which heads down through an arch of holly. Just before you pass through the holly arch take a moment to look right into the beautiful ancient area of coppiced woodland. (We are not sure what type of tree these are, the leaves resembling cherry or sweet chestnut but having no visible fruit, so if you do know then please tell us).

After the holly arch you'll pick up a yellow arrow confirming you are on the correct path. Follow the woodland path winding downhill. At the bottom of the slope you'll emerge down a few steps to Groombridge Hill.

2 → 3 Groombridge Hill to The Oast House

Turn right along the pavement and you'll pass the village boundary signs for Groombridge. Continue past the first few properties and then cross over to turn left onto the signed footpath immediately before the church. Pass through a wooden kissing gate into an open pasture, the start of the Groombridge Place estate. Note: this field may be holding some animals, it held the estate's alpaca and its zedonk (yes, a zebra crossed with a donkey) when we crossed.



Cross straight over the pasture, pass through the old metal gate and then go straight ahead onto a footpath with a lake on the right. To the left you'll have the first view of Groombridge Place. Swing left down a few steps and then keep right again and cross the grass, staying alongside the fence on the left. You'll come to the tarmac entrance drive of the house.

Groombridge Place is a moated manor house, dating back to 1239. The house is a private residence but the grounds are a popular visitor attraction, known for their formal gardens, vineyards and enchanted forest. One famous garden is the drunken garden, a favourite of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's, and the manor is where he set his Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Valley of Fear*. You'll notice the four giant redwood trees on the front lawn, more at home in California but a popular show stopper in country estates. The estate is also home to the Raptor Centre, a bird of prey sanctuary, that has successfully bred a wide range of birds.

Go straight ahead to join the narrower tarmac path still with the fence on the left, and from this point you'll have a great view of the entrance bridge which crosses the moat. At the end of the moated house, keep ahead onto the footpath marked with a yellow arrow between fences.

Pass through the gate and keep straight ahead into another large meadow, and cross this keeping close to the fence on the left. Over to the left you may be able to see the vineyard of the estate and don't be surprised if you see birds of prey flying here as part of the twice daily displays – we were surprised by the bald eagle, Helga, circling overhead!

At the far end, cross the stile to join a path through woodland. Note: there is a deep river to the left here so take care with children and dogs. Follow this narrow footpath and cross the footbridge ahead into the next pasture (likely to be holding cattle). Keep ahead over the pasture, following the left-hand boundary as it swings left. At the far end cross a stile to reach a gravel access road with The Oast House on the left.

3 → 4 The Oast House to Woodland T-junction



Keep straight ahead onto the signed fenced footpath opposite. Keep ahead and then swing right onto a path passing under a

tunnel of trees. Follow this fenced path for some distance, passing the water treatment works to the right.

Beyond the treatment works, you'll emerge to a T-junction with Broom Lane. Cross over and take the bridleway opposite, a wide stone track. You will emerge to a junction, with gates into properties to the left. Keep straight ahead across the grass, close to the fence on the left, passing over a small footbridge and then through a wide metal gate into woodland. A few paces in you'll reach a T-junction.

4 → 5 Woodland T-junction to End



Turn left onto the path signed with a blue arrow, and follow the woodland path steadily uphill. Keep your eyes peeled in the field to the left, where you may see more alpacas. Continue for some distance and you'll emerge to a T-junction with Barrow Lane, merge left along the tarmac road still heading uphill. Take care of any traffic on this climb.

At the very top of the road you'll reach a T-junction with the main Langton Road. Cross over with care and turn left along the pavement. Follow this pavement passing the petrol station and continuing beyond. You'll come to the crossroads with The Hare on the right 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.

