



Nonsuch Park from West Ewell

Distance: 6¼ km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 1-apr-2020

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Refreshments: Nonsuch Park, Ewell Village

Map: Explorer 161 (London South) *but the map in this guide should suffice*

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Village, parks, parkland, historic site

In Brief

This walk combines a little walking tour round a historic village with a circuit of an ancient park, home to a vanished palace with a noteworthy past.

This walk was originally researched in 2018 but it was not immediately published because of the problem with crossing the busy Ewell By Pass without the help of pedestrian lights. In 2020, with the lockdown in progress and lighter traffic, this walk suddenly became workable for any visitor, not just for the more agile souls. At the time of writing, it should be said, crossing was pretty easy because traffic was almost completely stalled and drivers smiled and signalled politely.

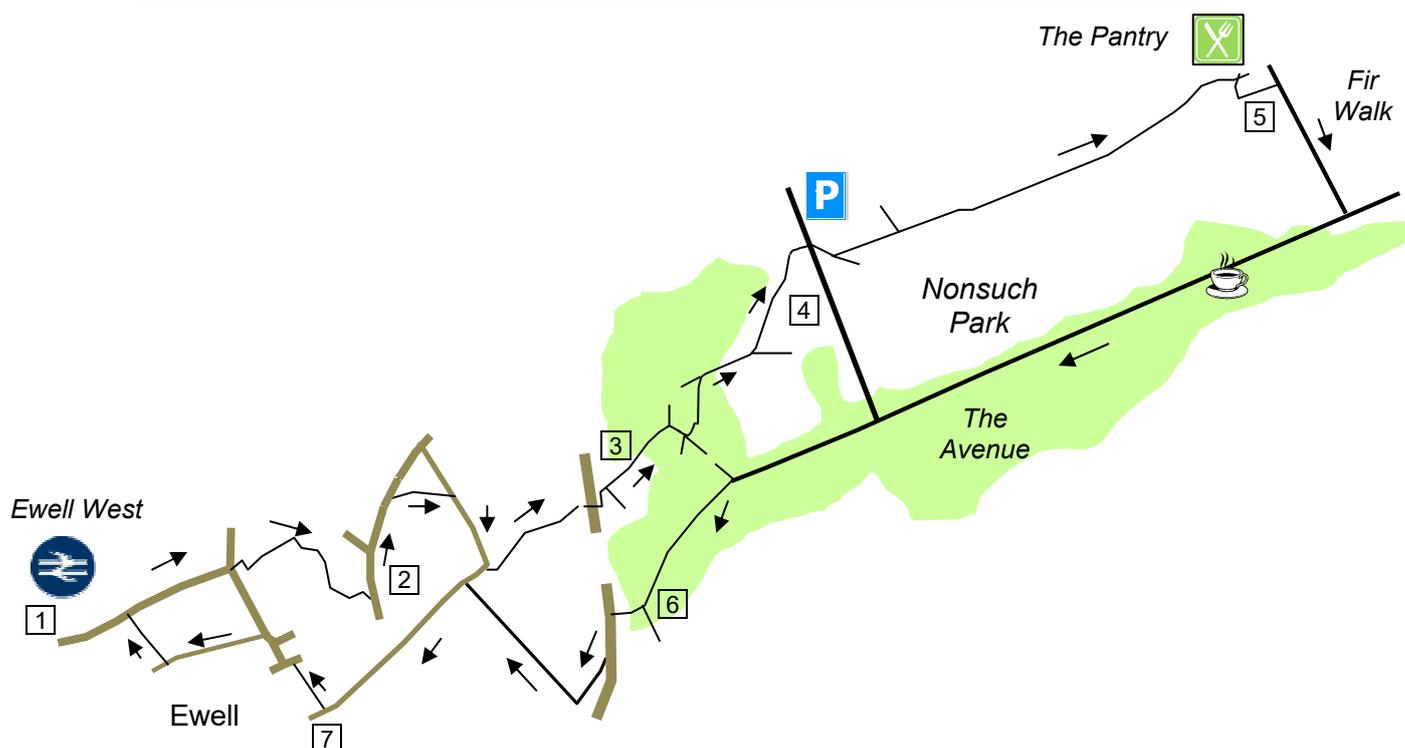
Ewell West station is the nominal starting point, but it is possible to come by car, making the tour of Nonsuch Park a simple self-guided affair. You could drive to or from the village, staying in the High Street or Station car park, at the weekend, making a double stop.



There is no problem on this for with wearers of shorts and any kind of clothing and sensible footwear is fine. This walk is not suitable for your dog because of the crossing of the main road, except for visitors who arrive by car to the car park.

The walk begins at **Ewell West railway station**, with frequent services from London, Waterloo.

The Walk



The name "Ewell" comes from Old English and means "spring" which is fitting because the source of the Hogsmill River is here, as you will see. Samuel Pepys, who made several trips to Ewell, spells it "Yowell". Ewell is usually linked with its neighbour Epsom (see the "Epsom Downs" walk in this series) but it is smaller and quainter, with many historic houses. One remarkable piece of trivia is that Ewell, unlike Epsom, uses the London 020 prefix for its 'phone numbers. The borough has a huge and comprehensive History Explorer website at: eehe.org.uk.

- 1 Starting at Ewell West station, go out of Station Approach and turn **left** on the main road. Continue to a junction with traffic lights, cross straight over and take a tarmac path directly ahead into part of the old town known as the Conservation Village. Turn **right** through a brick arch and turn immediately **left**. The saucer-shaped building on your right is Bourne Hall, built in the 1960s on the site of the old Georgian building, now a library, museum and social centre. After the path curves right, turn **left** at a T-junction to reach a pond, an extension of the Hogsmill River. Turn **right**, still on the London Loop. Keep left to leave the park by way of the white stucco Dog Gate, built by Thomas Hercey Barritt in the late 1700s.
- 2 Cross the main road by the pedestrian lights and turn **left**. You pass the Spring Tavern on your left. Shortly, on your right is the church of St Mary The Virgin, dating from 1848, but on the site of an older church dating from the 1200s. Turn **right** through the churchyard and exit to a residential road, Church Street. Turn right on the road, passing the neo-Tudor Barn House. At a bend, opposite Ewell Castle School, turn **left** on narrow Vicarage Lane. Some steps at the end lead you onto the busy A24 Ewell Bypass. There are no crossing lights to help you, so patience is needed; at busy times you can cross between stalled traffic. Shift a little to the right to cross the first carriageway to a pedestrian barrier and then carefully cross the other carriageway, still following the London Loop.

- 3 Turn **left** and quickly **right** up steps, but **ignore** another flight of steps on the right, thus leaving the *London Loop*. Keep straight on beside a fence. As you come out into an open area, ignore a path that forks off left. Shortly after, veer **right** past a metal barrier to meet a crossing path in 15m. Turn **left** at the crossing path, downhill. Keep to the main path now as it bends right to meet a T-junction. Turn **right** here. In 100m, at a clear fork in the path, take the **left** fork. In nearly 200m your path approaches the main car park of Nonsuch Park. Cross straight over a tarmac path, passing an info board which contains a detailed account of the history of Nonsuch Park and Palace.

Nonsuch was the grandest of Henry VIII's new palaces. Building began in 1538 and the name simply boasts that there was "no such p(a)lace like it anywhere" (remember, even Versailles wasn't completed till 1682). Its style was similar to Hampton Court, with those typical Tudor crenellations and tall chimneys, and its sheer size – magnificent. You might be visiting it now if it wasn't for a certain 17th-century pin-up girl with a gambling addiction. Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland and Countess of Castlemaine, was a tall voluptuous brunette whose portrait was copied and hung in all the great houses. She became mistress to Charles II long before Nell Gwynne, and had at least five children with him. She then took up with tight-rope walker Jacob Hall (to avenge the king, according to Samuel Pepys) and used her wealth to pursue a life of fun in Paris, to purchase Nonsuch Palace and to gamble. Her money was gone, so Nonsuch had to be pulled down to pay for her gambling debts.

- 4 Follow the path along the edge of the grass with a ditch close by on your left. At the end of the ditch, keep your direction by continuing straight ahead across the centre of the park on a path which has been well marked by many feet. You are heading for the Mansion with its brownstone turrets, visible in the distance through the trees. In about 400m, you reach the hedged garden of the Mansion. Keep straight on through the garden, remarkable for its collection of tall exotic trees. In a short distance you reach the café, the newly refurbished Nonsuch Pantry, with its outdoor seating, serving hot and cold snacks and a more substantial menu.



The garden is on your right and a happy hour or so walking around the lawns and flowerbeds, under the rare trees is an unmissable delight. The garden is fenced off, so after your visit you need to exit by one of the gates.

- 5 Returning to the café and the Mansion, make your way round to the **right** of the Mansion and go through an arch onto a tarmac path appropriately called the **Fir Walk**. Turn **right** to a T-junction at the end of the garden boundary and turn **right** again on another long tarmac path known as **The Avenue**. (Some people make use of a little woodland path on the right.) Keep straight ahead at all times, passing several signposts. You will see signs eventually telling you that you have re-joined the *London Loop*. After about 800m along The Avenue, you pass a small house. By turning **right** at the next wide junction, you will reach the Nonsuch car park. Soon after the house, your path forks. Keep **left** uphill and keep straight ahead by a marker post on a dirt path, still on the *London Loop*. By a pillar marked "5", ignore the signpost and keep straight on, thus leaving the *London Loop*. Follow the path to the main road and cross it carefully. As with your outward journey, there are no crossing lights, so you need to wait for a gap in the traffic or for queued traffic on each carriageway.

- 6 Turn **left** on the main road. In less than 100m, just past the gate of Ewell Castle School, fork **right** on a signed footpath. Shortly, at a tarmac path, turn **right**. This is Ox Lane, running beside a long wall on your left, with the grounds of the school on your right. At the end, turn **left** on Church Street with its historic houses. *Glyn House (1859) is used by the school. On the left is The Well House, built around 1700. St Michael's Sanctuary is a meeting place for "spiritual groups".* Carefully cross the main road and go down West Street. *The redbrick building on your left was previously West Street School, closed in 1971.* On your left soon is a junior school, Ewell Grove.
- 7 Opposite Ewell Grove school, turn **right** on a signposted tarmac footpath. At the end, cross straight over to meet the main road at a bend. Immediately turn left on a private road, *The Headway*. In under 200m, you will see a footpath sign on a lamppost. Go **right** here on the footpath to reach the main road. Turn **left**, quickly reaching Ewell West station where the walk began.

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