



Outdoor Property Access Statement Leith Hill

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Introduction

The Leith Hill estate comprises 700 acres of mixed woodland, grassland, ponds, wetland and lowland heath. The summit of Leith Hill – location of the tower – can only be accessed on foot but permission for vehicular access can be granted to disabled visitors by contacting the office number above. On the heath and Greensand ridge the terrain is characteristically sandy and dry but where the property extends south to the Wealden clays, the ground can be very muddy in places. There are self-guided trails and a number of connecting public footpaths and bridleways, and also surfaced tracks which are suitable for buggies and trampers; some are suitable for wheelchairs. Dogs are welcomed but we ask that they are kept on leads within the fenced area of Duke's Warren heath between 1 March and 1 September. Dog walkers should also be aware that cattle, sheep, deer, horse riders and mountain bikers are likely to be encountered across the property.

Arrival & Parking Facilities

There are 5 National Trust car parks located around the property. For access to the tower parking is available at the Rhododendron Wood on Tanhurst Lane (signposted from the junction of the A25 and Hollow Lane); and Windy Gap and Landslip car parks on Abinger Lane. The Cricket Pitch car park in Coldharbour Village provides access to the heath, but the access route – a public byway - is suitable only for 4x4 vehicles. The Etherley car park on the Ockley Road provides access to the south. The Rhododendron Wood car park is the largest with spaces for up to 40 vehicles and is also the access point for Leith Hill Place mansion. The Surrey County Council managed Starvealls car park (1.2m height restriction barrier) provides the easiest access to the tower via a gentle gradient which is suitable for buggies.

All of the NT car parks contain property maps – located at the noticeboards - and dog bins. Parking is free, although we welcome donations for upkeep via the cairns in the Rhododendron Wood and Landslip car parks. All Leith Hill car parks have natural surfaces but are firm and dry throughout the year.

There is no direct access to the property by public transport although currently one bus a day runs between Dorking and Coldharbour village. See <https://www.coldharbour.net/useful-information/buses/> for details. The nearest train station is at Ockley (3.5 miles) although no bus is available for the onward journey.

Trails

There are 4 way marked trails ranging from 0.75 to 2.5 miles. All walks include some steep slopes and/or steps and can be muddy and slippery after heavy rain. There is also a marked mountain bike track – the Summer Lightning – the start of which is at the summit of the hill.

The way marked trails are detailed on the website and in the walks leaflets available at the noticeboards in all the NT car parks. The OS map should be consulted for interlinking public rights of way.

Tower

The top of the tower is the highest point in south-east England and is accessed via a narrow spiral staircase with 72 steps. Tickets are available from the servery at the base of the tower (free to NT members) and entry prices and opening times can be found on the website.

There are 2 free telescopes for public use at the top of the tower offering views to London and the South Downs.

The servery offers a range of hot and cold drinks, ice creams, cakes, sandwiches and hot pies and pasties. It is operated by an independent catering company therefore no NT staff are available at the tower.

There are no toilet facilities at the tower or anywhere else on the wider countryside property. Toilets are available at Leith Hill Place mansion during opening times – currently Fri/Sat/Sun from March to October. For up to date information on opening times and other information please see the Leith Hill Place website

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/leith-hill-place

Garden

The Rhododendron Wood garden is open all year round but is best viewed between April and June when it is in bloom. The garden has surfaced paths which are mostly suitable for trampers and buggies (where there are steps alternative routes can be taken) and some are accessible for wheelchairs, although the surface is uneven in places and gradients may be challenging.

Contact details for more information

Information about the property – including maps and trails - is available on our main website www.nationaltrust.org.uk/leith-hill

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Map



Finding your way around the Leith Hill Estate

Leith Hill is crossed by a number of footpaths and bridleways that allow you to explore the surrounding landscape. Ordnance survey map 'OS Explorer Map 146 - Dorking, Box Hill & Reigate' and 'OS Landranger Map 387 - Dorking, Reigate & Crawley' will show all the available routes in the area.

If you prefer, here are four waymarked nature trails:

Woodland trail (orange)
The woodland trail offers a lively walk at all times of year with autumn being particularly exciting due to the burning colours of the trees. Graded as 'medium' the 2.5 miles long route does have some steep parts and will take up to 2 hours. It is our longest trail and will take you through parts of the original estate and woodland.

Etherley Farm Loop (purple)
The loop will add an additional 1.5 miles to the woodland trail, taking you across a landscape of farmland and parkland. This hour long walk is graded as 'easy' but can become very muddy underfoot, if wet.

Heathland trail (green)
The heathland trail takes you on a journey through the high, sandy, open heath of Duke's Warren. Graded as 'easy' the 1.25 mile long route does have a steep climb back up to the tower and will take approximately an hour to complete. The trail will take you through a landscape of heather, bracken, siltberry, gorse, pine and birch.

Frank's Walk (pink)
This walk guides you to the historic arborist, through the conifer avenue and into Frank's Wood with its spectacular spring display of bluebells. Graded as 'medium' the walk is our shortest at 1 mile long and should take around half an hour to complete. There are some steep slopes, steps and muddy patches.

Herman Bankhouse
Located in Broadmoor, Herman Bankhouse provides residential accommodation for National Trust volunteers, corporate groups, recreational groups and family holidays. It is fully equipped and can sleep 16 people.
For more information contact the office or visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/leith-hill

Leith Hill Tower
Sweeping views across 4 counties with London landmarks to the south and the English Channel to the south, all visible through the fine telescopes at the top. Find out about the Tower's history in the upper room. At the base is a sensory selling hot and cold food and drink (not NT).

Leith Hill Place
Once the childhood home of one of England's greatest composers, Ralph Vaughan Williams.

What to look out for

- A Line Avenue & Walled Garden**
An exquisite formal garden was once a notable feature of the estate. A decorative Line Avenue and a walled garden which provided a plentiful supply of fruit and vegetables for Leith Hill Place.
- B Hazel coppice**
As well as providing gas and bean sticks, the cut shoots of the hazel are split into seven trap fencing panels known as hurdles. The hazel regrowth is cut on a six to seven year cycle, providing a diverse range of habitats for a variety of wildlife.
- C Etherley Farm**
Managed by tenant farmers, Etherley Farm is maintained as a pastoral farmstead of small fields and hedgerows. There is a small farm shop selling their produce and an adjacent camp site.
- D Parkland**
Museum parkland trees provide a home for a rich variety of native wildlife, including little owls, bats, owl hoots and many dead-wood insects such as stag beetles.
- E Darwin's wormstone**
Here lies one of Charles Darwin's worm stones. The famous naturalist made numerous trips to Leith Hill conducting research around the estate with his insects. Darwin studied how worm casts will eventually bury stones that lie on the surface of the ground.
- F Tillingbourne source**
Natural springs rise to form the Tillingbourne stream that flows west towards Ardingley, on through Godalming to Albury and joins the River Wey at Guildford. Its flow was harnessed in part to generate power for industry such as Dabford Mill.
- G Heathland**
Duke's Warren was once part of the extensive woodland that surrounded the heath, but deforestation after the First World War changed the area to an open landscape of heather, bracken, siltberry and gorse with stands of pine and birch. Duke's Warren now supports communities of nightjar, woodcock and other heathland specialists.
- H Boundary banks**
Layered beech hedges line many of the footways in the surrounding landscape. Originally planted to protect plantations from deer and grazing livestock, they were abandoned for many decades and have since grown to an enormous size.
- I Colthurston pit**
Located above Colthurston village, the colic pit is thought to be the highest in south east England. The stones that form the sides were transported from the original pit in the heart of Colthurston during the 1940s.
- J Stone pits**
Sandstone was used in the area to build boundary walls and surface tracks. Quarrying sandstone until the early part of the last century has left the woodland around Leith Hill pitted with hollows and gullies.
- K Dakota crash**
In winter 1944, a US Douglas Dakota aircraft crashed into the hills above Moses Wood, with no survivors. The first crash saw the aircraft hit the ridge while a third belly-logged into Duke's Warren. A few weeks later, tragedy struck again when another Dakota crashed in almost exactly the same place.
- L Piggot-Brown gate**
Moses Wood was given to the National Trust by Lady Piggot-Brown in memory of her son who was killed in action on Christmas Day, 1942. A plaque attached to the gate commemorates his life.
- M Frank's Wood**
Named after National Trust woodman, Frank Longhurst, the oak trees were planted in 1910. He planted three acres for each hour, one for the noise, one to fall and one to grow into a beautiful oak. In spring the woodland floor is covered with bluebells.