

Trail Guide:



22 miles which will take you a half or a whole day depending on how often you stop. A car trail heading eastwards around the delightful villages, Historic Houses, Parks and Gardens in and around The National Forest.

The 'Wow' Factor

- See the original Melbourne from where the city 'down under' got its name
- Marvel at the stately home which slept untouched for 2 centuries
- See where Byron's mistress, Lady Caroline Lamb, lived
- Visit the secret church built in spite of Cromwell's ban
- Discover where Thomas Cook and the original package tour was born
- Relax in a Bluebell Arboretum

The National Forest is a forest in the making: a place of 200 square miles spanning three counties in the English Midlands. Discover the varied landscape of The National Forest and beyond as you follow this delightful car trail.

Start your trail from **Swadlincote** on the A514 towards **Hartshorne** and Ticknall. Mentioned in Domesday, Hartshorne became better known in the Industrial Revolution for making steel screws although today the old Screw Mill is a popular restaurant.

1000 year old **Ticknall** village belonged to the Calke Abbey estate and is where you find **the entrance to Calke Abbey**. It has one of the last surviving 'lock ups' in England, built in 1809 to house prisoners in transit as well as drunks and vagrants. Much of the village is now a conservation area. The road to Calke Abbey will take you over an 1802 tramway bridge.

Calke Abbey is one of the great houses of England and an example of a former 12th century Augustinian priory completely transformed, initially into an Elizabethan courtyard house, then to a grand baroque mansion and finally given the popular neo-classical treatment. The Harpur family have lived in the area since the 1500s and after its last revamp in the 1700s, left the house almost untouched for nearly 200 years. Little restored it is a graphic illustration of the English country house in decline. In fact you might say that the Harpurs were not ones for "de-cluttering"! Please note that whilst entry for National Trust members is free, they must still obtain a ticket. It is one of the Trust's most child-friendly properties with unique collections of curiosities, hidden corridors, underground tunnels and a secret garden.

Trail Key:



Walking



Car



Bus



Cycling



Scenic



Historic



Time



Distance

This trail is one of 44 exciting trails to explore in the Peak District & Derbyshire.

A visit takes about 90 minutes and you can ring on 01332 863822 for current opening hours.

The exit from Calke Abbey takes you to the hamlet of **Calke**, and at the T-junction go left towards the 210 acre **Staunton Harold Reservoir** with its visitor centre, excellent children's play area and walks from here to Calke Abbey. **Springwood** and **Dimminsdale** nature reserves are at the southern end of the reservoir. Drive up to the B587, then turn left and then immediately right in to Burney Lane. Don't worry that you are missing anything - your return journey will take you to Staunton Harold village and Hall.

At the T-junction go left to **Breedon on the Hill** which has a 12th century church with 8th century stones going back to the time of King Offa, the Mercian king. **Breedon Hill** at only 200ft is worth climbing to enjoy the views over the Trent Valley. After Breedon go left towards **Wilson** and then on to Melbourne, to find **Melbourne Hall and Gardens**.

Melbourne has a lovely Georgian town centre where you may want to stop for a while. In 1837 a then tiny settlement in Australia was named after William Lamb, 2nd Viscount of Melbourne, Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister and thus indirectly takes its name from the village. It once had a royal castle, the remains are now part of a farm, where the French Duke of Bourbon captured at Agincourt, was held for 19 years. The parish church is referred to as a 'miniature cathedral', there is no definite explanation as to why such a grand church was built however it is believed that its scale was the result of it being a royal church, or it having been refuge of the Bishops of Carlisle. Melbourne is also the birthplace of Thomas Cook in 1808, founder of modern tourism. At the end of his life he had provided 14 cottages, bakery, laundry and a Mission hall for the town, many of which are still used today.

Melbourne Hall is a grand affair built on the site of the 12th century home of the Bishops of Carlisle, improved by Sir John Coke, Secretary of State to Charles I, and later the home of Prime Minister William Lamb. In 1837, when Victoria became Queen, he gave permission for a small Australian settlement to be named after him! His wife, Lady Caroline Lamb, notoriously became Byron's mistress and left her husband in 1825.

The gardens are famously modelled on those of Versailles and the house is still lived in by the family though open to the public in summer. There are even

stories of the friendly ghost of Betty Cook, sister to Sir Thomas, who works on the tapestries.

From here take the B587 out of Melbourne and continue until you come to the entrance to **Staunton Harold Hall** on the right hand side, just before the A42.

William the Conqueror gave the estate to Henry de Ferrers, well known across this part of Derbyshire. The first hall was built in 1324 and later the Shirley family made it their home. The 1st Earl of Shirley rebuilt it, and in 1653 daringly built a new church in spite of the Cromwellian regime. This church is now cared for by the National Trust – be sure to read the wonderful testament to Robert Shirley above the west door. The hall is now privately owned but access to its grounds adjacent to the church is permitted. Be sure to visit the **Ferrers Centre** for Arts and Crafts in the Georgian Courtyard next to the hall, to enjoy the Ferrers Gallery, tea rooms and numerous workshops.

Follow exit signs from Staunton Harold Hall and when you come to the T-junction take a right turn, signposted all routes and follow the road round past the Staunton Harold Reservoir, repeating a small section of the earlier route from Calke Abbey. At the B587 turn right and follow the road until you come to a T-junction, then turn right towards **Lount**. Here you will find a **Rutland Wildlife Trust nature reserve**, a 50 acre haven based on the former colliery which closed in 1968.

At the large roundabout take the right exit towards **Smisby** and then continue on the A511 to the next roundabout and take the right exit onto the B5006 to Smisby/Ticknall then first left into **Smisby**.

This is an ancient farming settlement, mentioned briefly in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* as the knights' jousting field. It too has one of the old lock ups for prisoners in transit and is also the birthplace of one Hannah Bailey who went to New Zealand as a missionary in 1828 and helped to smooth relations between the Maoris and settlers.

Go through Smisby village and you will come to your last stop on this trail - the **Bluebell Arboretum** on the right hand side with its fine collection of rare trees, shrubs and plants both on display and for sale.

When you depart turn right and follow the road to the end, then turn right. At the roundabout go left back to Swadlincote.

You have lots to remember and come back and see in more depth another day.

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Swadlincote Trail No. 2

The Delights of the National Forest and Beyond



35 km
22 miles

Key

- A-Roads (Green line)
- B-Roads (Yellow line)
- Minor Roads (White line)
- Main Route (Red line with arrows)
- Alternative Route (Red dashed line)



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