

ALNWICK CASTLE

A castle was first built in Alnwick by the Normans shortly after they conquered England to assert their position in the Scottish borderlands. Since then, bits have been demolished and added, so what we see today is an amalgam of styles through the ages. The Norman keep is now a sumptuous Italianate palace – far removed from its original state.

The castle has impressive fortifications, including a creative assortment of death-traps in the barbican, ready to foil intruders. This includes pits full of spikes with trapdoors above that would be released when men were on top of them, murder holes, and an unusual dummy spiral stair that leads up to nowhere. Those who ran to the top could be speared through carefully placed openings.

The castle was not robust enough to cope with cannon fire; once cannons were introduced into warfare, its role switched from fortification to administrative centre for the Duke of Northumberland's estates. The duke's family has owned the castle for most of the last 700 years, and it remains their family home during the winter.

You may be familiar with the castle as a setting for Harry Potter

(remember his first broomstick flying lesson?) and Christmas specials of *Downton Abbey*.

WALK DETAILS

START/FINISH

Hulne Park gates, Alnwick
NE66 3HX

DISTANCE

10.5km (6½ miles)

PARKING

On road near start, castle or town car parks

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus from Alnmouth station to Alnwick Canongate

REFRESHMENTS

Pubs and cafés in Alnwick, café in castle

TOILETS

At castle and The Shambles and Greenwell Road, Alnwick



THE WALK

An easy walk through parkland and woodland, over rolling hills and alongside rivers, mostly through Hulne Park. The park is open daily from 11am to 4pm and is occasionally closed for private events.

Please check before setting off: <https://northumberlandstates.co.uk/the-estate/walks-trails/>
Dogs are not allowed. The second loop provides the best view of the castle.

1 Head west through the gates into Hulne Park and along the drive.

You will be following the red waymarkers along the route.

Hulne Park is one of three parks that once belonged to the castle. They were primarily designed to provide timber for maintaining the castle, and Hulne Park still performs this function today. They were also stocked with deer for hunting, and continue to fulfil this

purpose, too. The 4,500 hectares of land were enclosed by a wall 21km (13 miles) long.

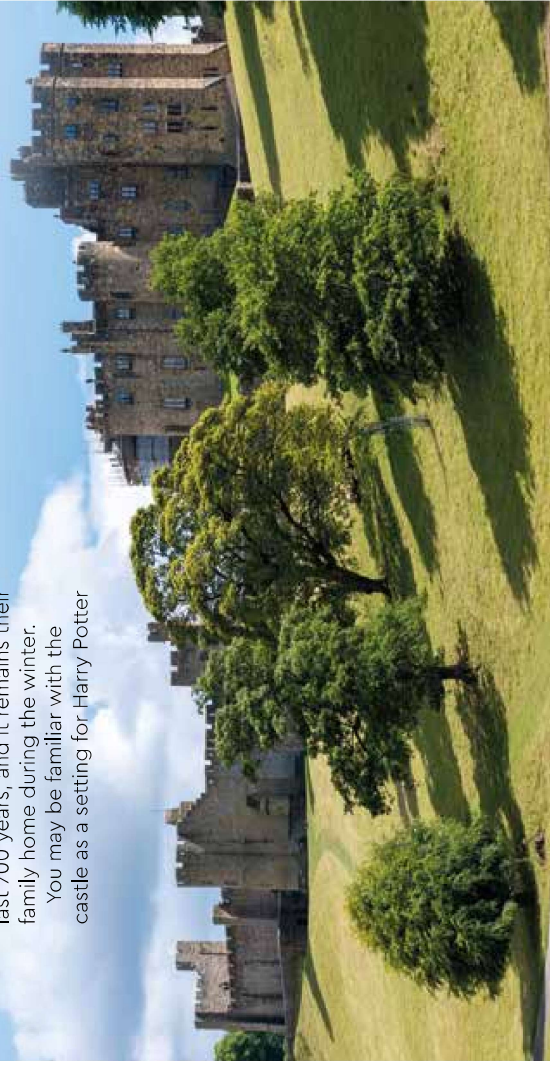
The park is one of the last remaining homes of the red squirrel in England. Grey squirrels were introduced into Britain by the Victorians as game. Since then they have been spreading and the reds have been retreating. Red squirrels are elusive, but if you keep your eyes peeled, you might be lucky enough to see one.

Cross a stone bridge. At the first junction, bear right past Old Moor Lodge. At the next junction, stay left. After some time, you reach the drive to Park Farm.

2 Turn right here, then take the first left, following the red waymarkers.

Eventually, this track reaches a bridge over the river. Cross and then turn right onto another track. You can see the remains of Hulne Priory ahead. Take the grassy path up to the left edge of the ruins.

The priory was founded by Carmelite friars who were



LEFT Alnwick castle from Lion Bridge.



granted grazing and specific foraging rights within the park. By the mid-18th century, it was in ruins. When the first Duke and Duchess Percy decided to make the castle their home, the ruins became a place for them to entertain guests on carriage rides, and the duchess planted a garden here. On her death, the duke built the picnic house as a memorial to her, along with Brizlee Tower, which you can see on the neighbouring hill.

3 After exploring the ruins, exit through the gate and turn right along the cinder track, following it around to the right.

Through the gate, turn right downhill. When you reach the river, continue in the same direction on the track with the river on your right for about 1.2km (¾ mile), then cross the bridge. Continue ahead through the parkland and into trees on the far side. Stay left at the next junction of tracks. The river is still to your left. At the next junction, turn right.

This track brings you back to Old Moor Lodge that you passed earlier.

ABOVE The river and parkland from Lion Bridge.

4 Continue ahead and retrace your steps to the entrance of the park.

The first loop of the walk is complete.

For the second loop, turn left onto the public footpath just outside the park gates, down through a meadow to a corner of the estate wall, and then alongside it until you reach a road.

Turn left over the bridge and follow the road for about 500m (⅓ mile).

5 A few metres after the end of the stone wall on the right, turn right up what looks like a private drive, but has a public footpath running along it. Follow the drive around to the left, and you will see the path ahead. Follow this path until you reach a road. Turn right along the road.

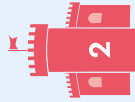
The bridge at the bottom is Lion Bridge. In the 19th century, the park was relandscaped by 'Capability' Brown. Trees were planted to obscure sight of the castle until this point, so that visitors had the best possible view from the bridge.



Cross the bridge and continue ahead to reach the castle entrance.

6 From here, turn right down Bailliffgate to return to the start.

TOP Alnwick Castle barbican and gatehouse.
ABOVE The ruins of Hulne Priory.



ARUNDEL CASTLE

A figure-of-eight shape, similar in design to Windsor, Arundel Castle dominates both the landscape and the town. The castle wall forms the western boundary of the ancient town centre, and from the east it stands proud on a hill above the flat river valley.

Shortly after the Normans invaded, the castle was built as one of a chain along the south coast to deter anyone else thinking of following their lead. Initially, the keep and defences were made from timber. These were replaced with stone – mainly local flint – over the following century. The keep, however, was built using stone from Caen in Normandy – a significant status symbol at the time.

The castle continued to be built and rebuilt over the centuries. Much of the original Norman stonework is still visible, along with significant Victorian renovations. The modern gardens are almost as impressive as the castle itself.

The castle was not impervious to attack. Indeed, it changed hands three times during the British Civil Wars. The final siege only lasted 18 days, as the attackers knew that

Swanbourne Lake was the source of the castle's water – and drained it. Severely dehydrated, the defending troops had no choice but to surrender.

WALK DETAILS

START/FINISH

Mill Road car park, Arundel BN18 9PA

DISTANCE

17.25km (10¾ miles)

PARKING

At start and Points 2 & 4

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Train to Arundel, bus to Arundel Riverbank

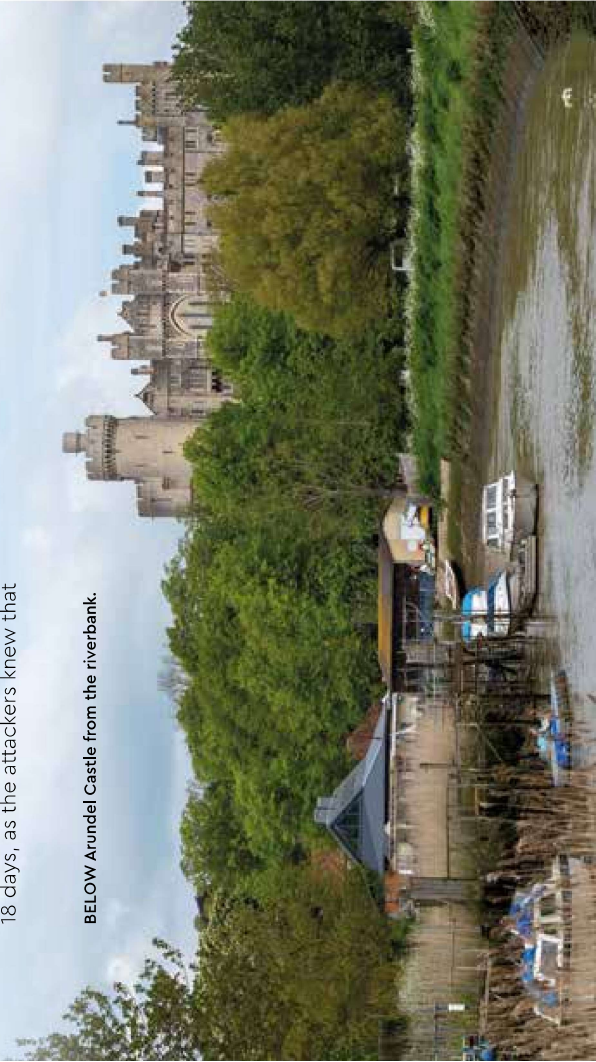
REFRESHMENTS

Pubs and cafés in Arundel, café at castle and at Swanbourne Lake

TOILETS

At start and castle

BELOW Arundel Castle from the riverbank.



THE WALK

An easy walk around a gap in the South Downs. The first leg is through the historic town, then the sweeping landscapes of Arundel Park, past the Horne Tower and along Swanbourne Lake. After a stretch on a quiet road, the route returns along the River Arun with fantastic views of the castle.

1 From the car park, turn left onto Mill Road, then right onto High Street, through the centre of the old town. Where the road turns to the left, continue with the castle walls on your right. Pass the Catholic

cathedral, and follow the wall bearing right away from the road.

Before reaching the cathedral, you pass the flint and stone church of St Nicholas, which was built at the end of the 14th century. It is the Protestant parish church of Arundel, although, thanks to a quirk of history, part of the church (the Fitzalan Chapel) is Catholic.

BELOW Castle Park (photo courtesy of Arundel Estate).

