

THREAVE GARDENS (Easy)

What you'll see: Gardens, wildfowl reserve, castle and country house



SITUATED beside the River Dee near Castle Douglas, this large estate offers a variety of outdoor activities including an interesting walk linking a newly restored Victorian country house and gardens, with an extensive wildfowl reserve and the ruins of imposing Threave Castle.

The walk can be tackled in two stages, divided by a welcome lunch break in the visitor centre cafe, starting with the longer Estate Walk followed by a guided tour round the house and garden in the afternoon.

From the main Visitor Centre car park walk a short way back along the access road, then left down the grass bank (white Estate Walk sign on post) to a lower access road. Turn left then right and through a car park and cross over the main road past Hightae Cottage to a track.

This is left almost immediately for a parallel woodland path which leads down to houses where you swing round on an access road to reach steps on the right, just before the main road. These lead to the main road opposite a gated track. Cross over and follow the

track up and over the A75 to a gate up on the right which gives access to Barley Hill wood and views across to Castle Douglas. Where the path joins the old railway line turn left and follow it to just beyond the bridge where a path leads up right to join the road to Threave Castle.

A signposted path leads from the whitewashed farmhouse and outbuildings of the Trust's Threave Wildfowl Reserve to the castle, which is part of the estate given to the National Trust for Scotland by Major Gordon in 1948, but has been in state care since 1913 and is maintained and opened to the public by Historic Scotland.

Standing on an island in the middle of the Dee, Threave Castle is reached by small boat during the summer months, the entry charge including the short boat trip. This stronghold was built in the late 1300s by Scotland's most powerful nobles the Earls of Douglas and is the oldest and biggest tower house in the region.

Retrace your steps to the old railway and continue towards Lamb Island, exiting onto the access road to Lodge of Kelton farm. Follow the access road left past houses and straight ahead onto a track and bridge over the A75.

Turn left soon after and follow the sometimes muddy path through woodland and fields, crossing a minor road and continuing on to another. Turn left



here and this road leads back to Hightae Cottage.

Threave Garden offers a relaxing wander round a garden best known for its 200 varieties of springtime daffodils. A sculpture trail leads from a walled garden to more formal areas and secluded areas culminating in an arbo-retum and heather garden and Threave House itself. Restored to 1930s grandeur, the principle rooms of this baronial-style country house were first opened to the public in 2002.

The essentials

MAP OS 1:50,000 SHEET 84
DISTANCE 5.5 MILES [9 KM]
TIME 2-3 HOURS
GRADE EASY WALKING
START/FINISH VISITOR CENTRE



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