

Walk over the Duke of Beaufort's estate, across a grassy airstrip, past castellated barns and cottages, and through the deer park.

Distance: 8.3 km/ 5 miles with a gentle climb and descent of 60m/200ft. The central section may be muddy, but the start and the last 2 miles are on tarmac.

Time: 2½ hours

Start: Badminton (near Chipping Sodbury) at the village post office. ST 804/827. Drinks, ices and snacks sold here (closed on Sundays).

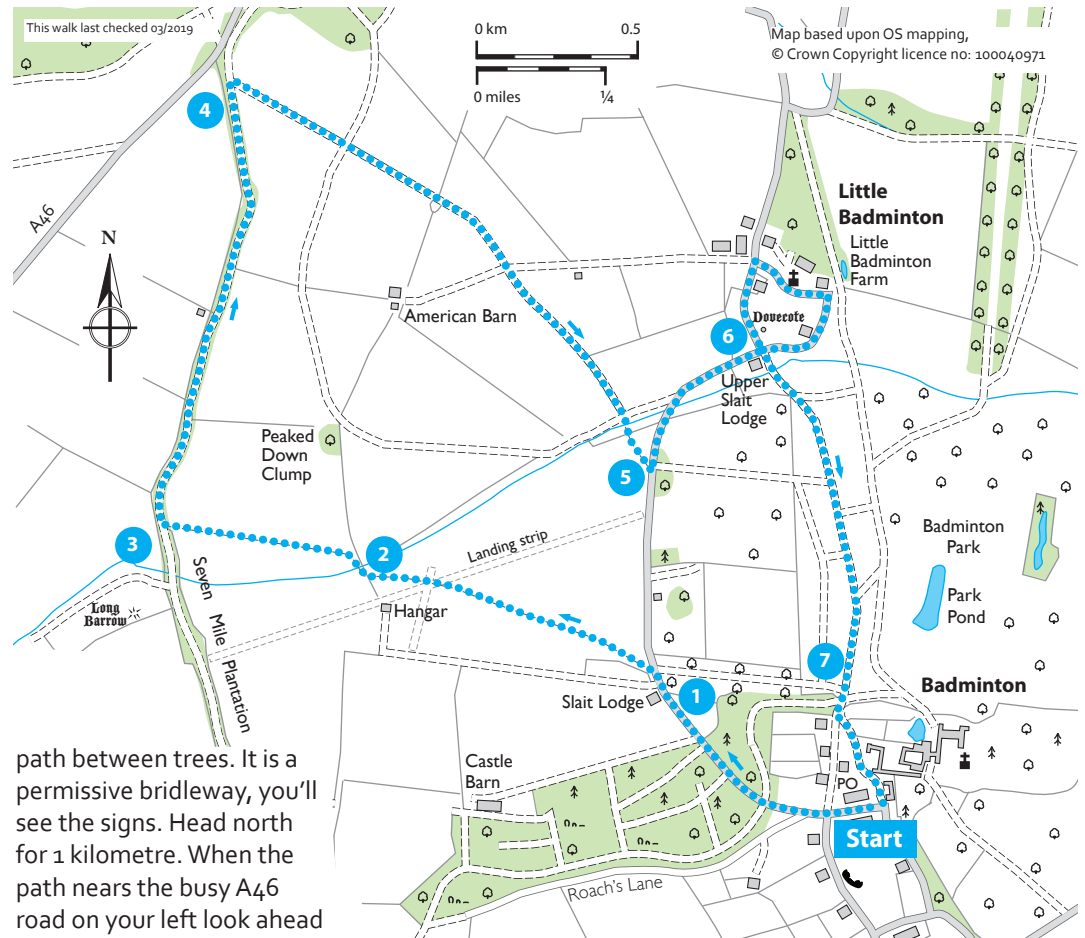
Route:

With your back to the post office turn right and take the road out of the village towards Little Badminton for five minutes. There is a right-hand bend and no pavement, so take care.

After five minutes pass the distinctive Slait Lodge **1** and go through the bridlway gate next to the double gates on your left. Head alongside the wood and across the field towards a distant black and white barn. It is the hangar of the landing strip used for the Badminton Horse Trials, held every spring.

Nearing the hangar bear right onto a track passing the remains of Plague Cottage into a shallow dip **2**. Climb briefly and turn left onto a signed bridlway with a hedge on your right. This takes you to Seven Mile Plantation **3**.

Here go through the trees and turn right on a wide



path between trees. It is a permissive bridlway, you'll see the signs. Head north for 1 kilometre. When the path nears the busy A46 road on your left look ahead for a diagonal track crossing yours **4**.

Here turn right through a wide gate leaving the trees on a wide field-edge track heading south east.

Walk straight ahead along field edges on a wide grassy track. After crossing a concrete farm track (private) carry on with a hedge on your left, down to a tiny bridge and up to a public road **5**. Go through the gate, cross the road and turn left to walk along it (facing the traffic) towards Little Badminton.

At point **6** (opposite Upper Slait Lodge and a gate into the park) the road turns square left. Follow it uphill into the village past a red phone box and turn right into Church Lane.

The churchyard is large but the church is small. Follow the lane downhill round the rough green and an old dovecote on your right, past a small pumping station.

Just before Upper Slait Lodge turn left through a double gate into Badminton Park **6**. It is a deer park so

dogs should be on a lead. Take this metalled drive gently uphill and as it levels out you'll see Park Pond on your left, with a glimpse of the big house beyond.

Approaching a lodge with a crest **7** fork left between stables and farm buildings to the estate office, and turn right back to the post office.

Note: You can cut half a mile off the walk by skipping the tour of Little Badminton. At point **6** simply turn right into the deer park. But you'll miss the smiling fox.

Look out for these along the way



Two very small castles



Follow these signs



A fox and a dovecote



A Great Estate



- Badminton Park is the only ducal seat in Gloucestershire.
- The successive families Somerset, Worcester and Beaufort have lived here for 500 years, building and embellishing the house, its gardens, deer park and estate. Even small buildings have turrets and castellated roofs.
- The game of Badminton (known as "Poona" in India) was brought back by army officers on leave and played here in Victorian times.
- When GWR wanted to build the rail line from Bristol to London across the estate in 1900 the 9th Duke agreed as long as they put in a station where all trains must halt, "should a first class passenger wish to alight."
- The Beaufort hunt is based here, and some paths you walk may show the passing of many horses. Sturdy shoes are advised.
- Outside the Horse Trials (held in the spring, when the walk is closed for a few days) the grass airstrip is rarely used.
- The house is private, but the extensive gardens are open on a few days in the summer.

Little Badminton

The tiny hamlet of Little Badminton is no more than a church, two fine farms with their stone barns, a very old dovecote and a handful of thatched cottages. After passing the church be sure to look up to your left and spot the little stone fox sitting on the wall.

Why is he smiling?



St Michael's and All Angels' church is over 700 years old. To see inside it please call the churchwarden on 01454 218407.