



# St Donats Nature Trail

This walk through the woods will guide you through the top of the St Donats castle property. On the way, you will be able to learn about the most commonly seen trees and bird species.

Route includes some uneven surfaces and staircases.



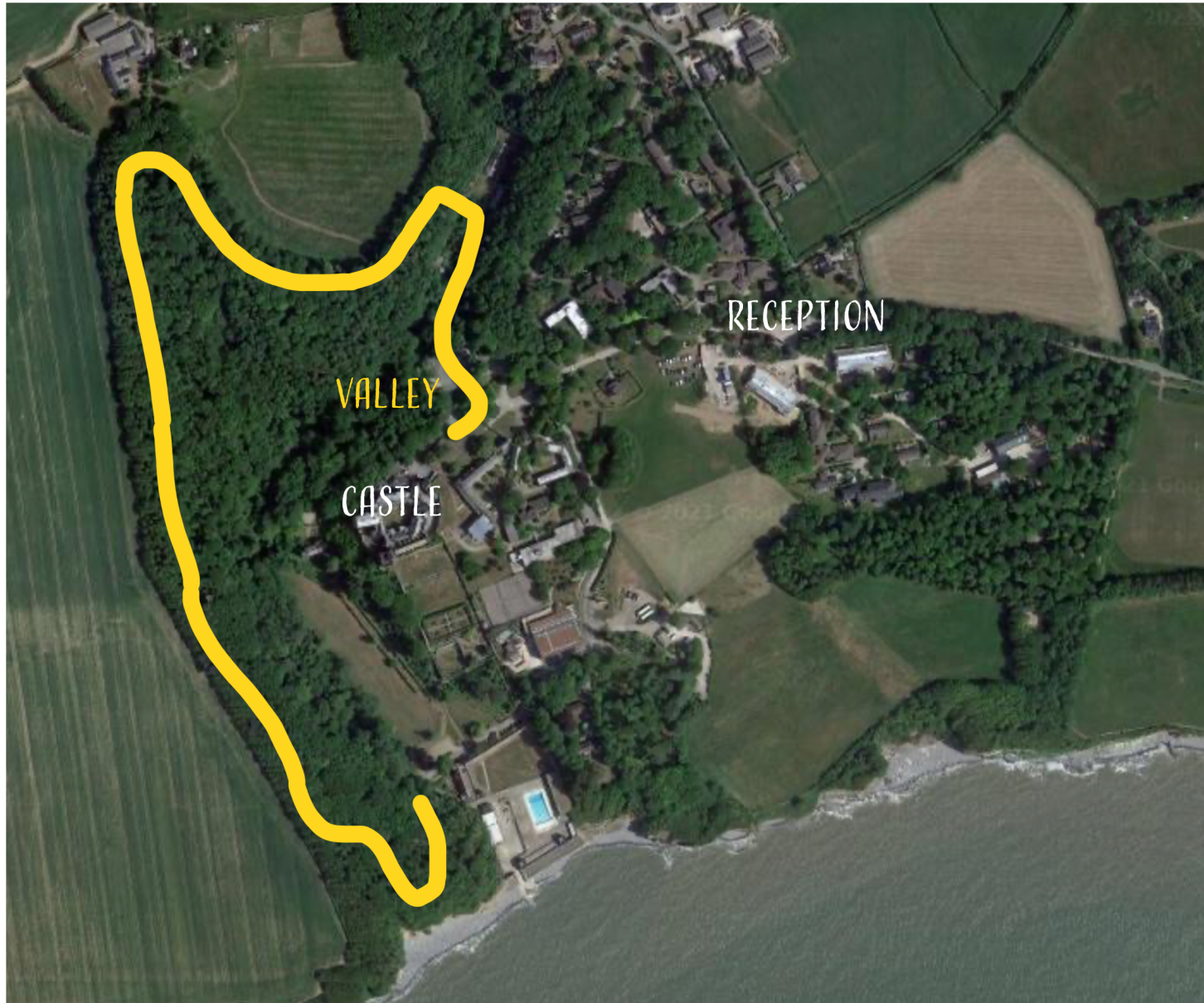
2 km



30 mins - 1 hour



# Wondering how to get to the nature trail?



1. Follow the signs to the valley
2. Walk through the valley until you see a bridge on the left hand side, leading up into the woods
3. Follow the path through the woods - do not turn when you see the path part, continue straight



# SYCAMORE

*Acer pseudoplatanus*

Introduced by the Romans in the 1500s, sycamore is one of Britain's most popular trees. Its seeds are very fertile, and so it didn't take long for sycamore to spread after.

It does very well on dry soils, so our limestone cliffs are the perfect environment for them.

Sycamores can live up to 400 years and grow up to 35 metres, and they form an important part of our local ecosystem.

Welsh love spoons have traditionally been made out of sycamore, and you can see plenty of it around our woods.





# BLACKBIRD

*Turdus merula*

An easily recognisable bird with a wonderful mellow song filling the air in spring, it is one of the most common birds in the UK and around the St Donats castle. The males live up to their name, with black feathers and orange beaks, but confusingly the female birds are dark brown.





# BEECH

*Fagus sylvatica*

Known as the queen of British trees, beech can grow up to 40 m in height. Young leaves on a beech tree have silky hairs on the edges, and beech nuts form prickly four-lobed cases.

In the UK, this tree is considered native to south-east England and south-east Wales. It usually grows on drier soils, so thrives on our limestone cliffs here in

St Donats.

A beech woodland is usually shady, and is characterised by rare shade-tolerant plants such as box or coralroot bittercress.

**Fun fact!** The tallest native tree in Britain is a 45 m tall beech in Hagg Wood in Derbyshire.



# ROBIN

*Erithacus rubecula*

One of the most popular birds in the UK, these cute little birds are aggressively territorial and will quickly drive out any intruders. They feed on worms, fruits and insects and weigh only about 20 grams! They stay in the UK year round, and can often be found in gardens. In fact, robins love to hang around places where soil is being dug up as this means easier access to worms and good food for them!





# ASH

*Fraxinus excelsior*

Ash is one of the most common trees in the British countryside, and is easily identified in winter due to its distinctive black leaf buds.

In mythology, the wood was burned to ward off evil spirits. Ash is also a brilliant construction material, as it absorbs shock without splintering. This makes it the timber of choice for making tools and sport handles, and so is often found in hammers, axes, hockey sticks and oars.

**Fun fact:** Ash trees belong to the family of Oleaceae, also known as the olive family, and they produce oil that is chemically quite similar to olive oil.



# HOUSE SPARROW

*Passer domesticus*

Sparrows are incredibly noisy little birds, and very commonly heard and seen around St Donats. Although numerous around this area, their numbers have been declining in the UK, primarily in England. They feed on seeds and scraps, having learned to take advantage of human environments. In fact, sparrows generally avoid living in extensive woodlands and grasslands away from people!





# ENGLISH OAK

*Quercus robur*

Native to Britain, this tree is a familiar looking presence on walks through our country's woodlands. Growing to 20 - 40 m tall, the majestic oak can be easily identified by its lobed leaves which usually appear around mid-May.

Oak is priceless when it comes to supporting wildlife, as it supports more life forms than any other native tree. Oaks host insects, as well as supplying birds and small mammals with feed in the form of acorns.

Oak trees are also a significant presence in mythology, from being sacred to different gods of thunder to serving as crowns to ancient kings and emperors.

Oak timber is one of the most durable on the planet, but it can take up to 150 years before the tree is ready to be used as construction material.

# THANK YOU!

This marks the end of the St Donats nature trail. Please let our staff know if you have any questions, and we hope you enjoy the rest of the day!

*For more information about the trees and birds of Britain, please visit these websites, where our information was taken from:*

