



National
Trust

Sissinghurst Castle Garden Group Information 2023

Please be aware that all information in this guide is subject to change to adhere with government guidance. For all the latest and most up to date information please get in contact with the property office in advance of your booking:

+44(0) 1580 710 700

sissinghurst@nationaltrust.org.uk



Historic, poetic, iconic; a refuge dedicated to beauty. Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson fell in love with Sissinghurst Castle and created a world-renowned garden.

Introduction

Sit within the ruins of a great Elizabethan house, framed by the rich Kentish landscape of woods, farmland, lakes and streams, the famous garden with romantic pink brick tower is the result of creative tension between the formal design of Harold Nicolson and the abundant planting of his wife, Vita Sackville-West.

The layers of colour, intimacy of different garden rooms and rich herbaceous borders are the epitome of an English garden and provide an ever-changing picture throughout the seasons.



About Sissinghurst Castle Garden



Our past is a complicated one; spanning many centuries, monarchs and uses. Delve into the past of one of the most intriguing places in the Weald of Kent.

How Sissinghurst became a castle

The site that Sissinghurst Castle Garden sits on was once a Saxon pig farm, it would have been originally called 'Saxenhurst', with 'hurst' having meant woodland. The Tudor buildings were used as a prison for up to 3,000 French sailors who

were captured by the British during the Seven Years War, between 1756 - 63. Held for months at a time in vile, stinking conditions, the prisoners lived in 'cells' with little access to fresh air, clean water or adequate food supplies.

The sailors referred to Sissinghurst as 'le chateaux' hence 'castle' being adopted into its name, although not a direct translation. An original ink and dye drawing on display in the library gives a remarkable insight into what the Sissinghurst site would have looked like in the 18th century.

About Sissinghurst Castle Garden

Sissinghurst in the 19th century

In 1796 the Cranbrook 'Councillors' took out a lease on Sissinghurst from the owners at the time, the Mann-Cornwallis family, this was to be used as a poor house for the able bodied. Around 100 men were offered housing, employment and food. The owners repaired many of the buildings, their legacy is apparent even today, on the weathervanes you can see the markings MC 1839.

The inmates worked the farm which became profitable for the local parish. When the estate reverted to the

Cornwallis family in 1855 it was the beginning of a great period of Victorian 'high farming,' the Sissinghurst farm was deemed to be the best on the whole of the substantial Cornwallis estate.

Sissinghurst in the early 1930s

When Vita Sackville-West and Harold purchased Sissinghurst in early 1930 it looked quite different to the present day. The buildings were used to house farm workers, the current famous garden had yet to be laid out and was mostly growing vegetables for the workers. The surrounding farm was

growing cereals as well as having well established orchards and hop gardens.

The last private owners of Sissinghurst Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson were the last private owners of Sissinghurst Castle. After Vita's death in 1962, Harold decided that Vita's beloved Sissinghurst should be given over to the care of the National Trust. We started taking care of it in 1967.

About Sissinghurst Castle Garden

Victoria (Vita) Mary Sackville-West (1892-1962) was a prolific fiction writer, prize-winning poet, and gardener. Her husband, Harold Nicolson, was a diplomat and important diarist. Their younger son Nigel Nicolson also became a writer, as did his son Adam. The Sackville-Wests and Nicolson's were involved in the activities of the National Trust from its earliest days.

Harold and marriage

Vita married diplomat Harold Nicolson in 1913. The Nicolson's enjoyed a close relationship and a very successful marriage, later documented in their son Nigel's book, *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973).

The Nicolson's at Sissinghurst

Vita and Harold purchased Sissinghurst Castle in 1930, a then run-down Elizabethan mansion in Kent, and began immediately to renovate both house and garden. Vita became increasingly reclusive as the Second World War began, and spent her last decades ensconced at Sissinghurst, writing novels and gardening book in its famous tower and creating the splendour of its gardens.

The Nicolson's and the National Trust

Vita began speaking for the National Trust in 1928, helped to negotiate the institution's taking over of Knole in the early 1940s, and became, along with Harold (who served as Executive Council vice-chairman), a member of the Trust's council. Sissinghurst became a Trust property upon her death.

Admission prices 2023

26 March – 28 October

Garden: £15.20 per adult

Garden: £7.60 per child

Free for National Trust members

To be eligible for the group rate groups must book in advance, consist of 15 people or more (including members) and pay in one transaction on arrival. Members will need to provide their cards for scanning on entry.

Opening Times 2023

26 March – 28 October

Visitor Reception: 10am -5:30pm

Granary Restaurant: 10am -5:30pm

Gift Shop: 10am -5:30pm

Plant Shop: 10am -5:30pm

Garden: 11am– 5:30pm

(last garden entry 4:45pm)

~~29 October~~– 25 March

Visitor Reception: 10am -4pm

Granary Restaurant: 10am -4pm

Gift Shop: 10am -4pm

Plant Shop: 10am -4pm

Garden: 11am– 4pm

(last garden entry 3:15pm)



Group benefits

- ✓ Free familiarisation tour for the group leader
- ✓ Discounted prices for groups of 15 or more
- ✓ Complimentary admission for the group leader
- ✓ Free refreshment voucher for the coach driver
- ✓ Free coach parking

Transport

We can accept single and double-decker coaches but please keep to only one coach per group.

We have free reserved parking for coaches and mini buses, however we are unable to reserve parking for groups visiting in cars. Where possible, we would ask that you travel in a coach or mini bus for this reason.



Please note we have a charge of £4 per car for all non-members.

How to get here

Postcode: TN17 2AB

By road: 2 miles north-east of Cranbrook, 1 mile east of Sissinghurst village on Biddenden Road, off A262. Keep a look out for brown signs, we are on the left if coming from Sissinghurst village and on the right if coming from Biddenden and Headcorn.

SatNav: Look out for brown signs, the SatNav may take you to the wrong address. The turning for Sissinghurst Castle Garden is on the left from Sissinghurst village and on the right when coming from Biddenden and Headcorn.



Planning your visit

To enjoy all that Sissinghurst has to offer, we recommend around 2 hours 45 minutes for your visit. To help plan your visit, please refer to the timings below.

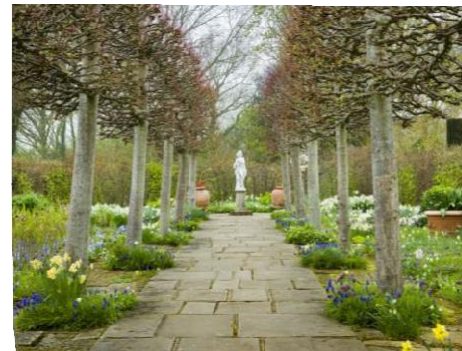
Garden:	1.5 hours
Shopping and eating:	45 minutes
Estate walks:	1.5 hours

(All timings are approximate and for guidance only.)

Due to the narrow paths in the garden it is not possible to lead a guided tour within the garden. If your tour leader or guide wishes to give you more information, we ask that this is done outside of the formal garden area.

If you have any questions during your visit, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff or volunteer. We have picnic benches situated by the vegetable garden or spaces down by the lakes if you wish to bring your own food. Due to conservation reasons with the exception of water, we are unable to allow food or drink in the garden.

For a copy of our access statement please email us.



Eating and shopping

Scone of the month

Each month a new seasonal scone is on offer in the Granary Restaurant. The delicious scone of the month in October for example was an autumnal salted caramel and apple scone.



Granary Restaurant

Why not pre-book your morning coffee, lunch or cream tea in our restaurant?

If you prefer not to pre-book, visitors can enjoy a lunch prepared from our seasonally changing menu. Hot food can be found in the restaurant between 12pm and 3pm as well as coffee, tea and cake all day.

We kindly ask large groups to stagger their entry to the Granary to avoid greater queue times.

The Old Dairy

Our coffee shop is housed in the former cow sheds with hot and cold drinks, light bites and ice cream, as well as our second-hand book shop.

Gift Shop

Once the piggery, this lovely old building now houses a huge array of products. Whether it's a gift or a treat for yourself, you're sure to find something amongst the accessories, books, cards and preserves. We've got our own range of products inspired by the garden too so you can pick up greeting cards and prints of local artist's work or a wide range of books about and written by the family.

Plant Shop

Plants are at the very heart of Sissinghurst and our nursery is the hub of the garden. Take a little piece of Sissinghurst home with you as most of the plants are propagated within our onsite nursery.

If you would like to make a group reservation, please contact us on:

+44(0) 1580 710700

sissinghurst@nationaltrust.org.uk

On arrival

To avoid congestion on our narrow drive it's important that the driver or group leader contacts us 15 minutes before arrival.

When you arrive, you will be welcomed by one of our car park team who will show you to your parking space. They will then board the coach, scan the National Trust members cards and provide them with garden entry ticket.

The group leader should make their way to visitor reception to pay for the non-National Trust members to receive entry tickets. Payment should be made as one transaction: we accept cash, credit or debit cards, cheques, or travel company vouchers.

The group is then free to go straight to the garden.

Please leave large bags and luggage on the coach.

We have a buggy available from the main car park to transport you to and from various points on our site.

If you need further assistance, we have wheelchairs for loan at visitor reception.

A larger format map of the garden showing accessibility routes is available from visitor reception.

Audio guides are not provided.

If you have booked catering, your group should arrive at the restaurant at the pre-booked time and the group leader should make themselves known to a member of staff.

You will be directed to your seating while the group leader makes a single payment for the pre-ordered meals.

Running late?

If you are running late on the day or need to cancel your visit, please contact us.

Please note that we book Coach arrival times. If you are delayed arriving, we may need to hold your coach on arrival as we may have other booked coaches arriving.

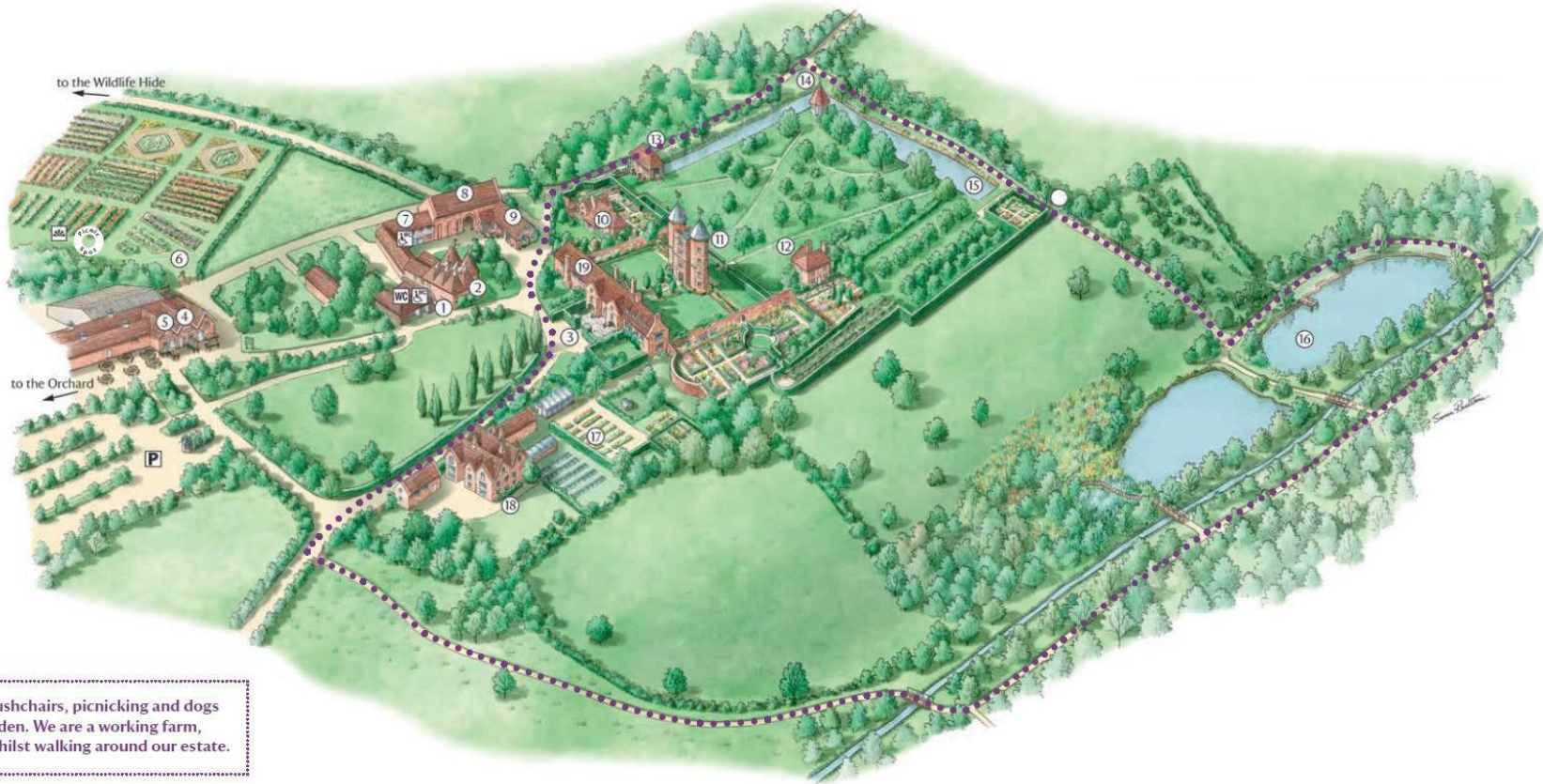
Sissinghurst Castle Garden: +44(0) 1580 710700

Sissinghurst Castle Garden

Key:

- P** Car Park
- WC** WC and Baby Change Facilities
- ♿** Accessible WC
- 1** Visitor Reception and Information
- 2** Oast House Exhibition
- 3** Entrance to Garden
- 4** The Garden Shop
- 5** The Coffee Shop
- 6** Vegetable Garden
- 7** Granary Restaurant
- 8** Elizabethan Barn
- 9** The Gift Shop
- 10** Priest's House Holiday Cottage
- 11** Tower & Garden
- 12** South Cottage (privately owned)
- 13** Boat House
- 14** Gazebo
- 15** Moat
- 16** Lakes
- 17** Propagation Area (no access)
- 18** Sissinghurst Castle Farmhouse B&B
- 19** Library

●●●● Short Walk (1 mile)



For conservation reasons, pushchairs, picnicking and dogs are not permitted in the garden. We are a working farm, please keep dogs on leads whilst walking around our estate.

Granary Restaurant 2022 Group Menu

Please note that a minimum booking of 15 is required for a group booking. We request that payment is made on the day, unless you have arranged credit facilities with our group booking team.

We need final numbers to be confirmed 21 days prior to your arrival. As we use fresh ingredients, it may mean that we have to substitute some items due to availability. Please select one menu for your party. We can always offer vegetarian and special dietary needs as alternatives, please advise us in advance of any dietary requirements. *all items are subject to change due to supply*

Morning Coffee MC1

Breakfast tea, coffee or fruit infusions.

Home baked shortbread biscuit.

£6.25

Luncheon B

Warm salmon salad with lemon mayonnaise, salad leaves and crusty bread.

Salted Caramel and Vanilla Ice Cream.

Tea & Coffee
£15.80

Ploughman's Lunch

Cheddar cheese, Sissinghurst garden salad.

Crusty bread and butter.

Mayonnaise / Chutney / Salad dressing / Rapeseed oil.

Tea & Coffee
£14.50

Cream Tea CT6

Available between 3.30 and 5.00pm

Fresh baked scones, clotted cream and strawberry jam.

Tea and fruit infusion or coffee.
£6.75

High Tea HT7

Available between 3.30 and 5.00pm

A selection of fresh sandwiches, scones, clotted cream and strawberry jam.

Tea and fruit infusion or coffee.
£11.00

We can add a dessert of the day to your choice should you require from £4.75.

Whilst we have no bar facilities available, we have a limited selection of drinks available.

Glass of House wine from £5.50

Soft drinks from £2.95

Bottled beer (no Draught) from £5.00

Sissinghurst Portfolio

Group Pricing

Lamb House

A portal into a world of literary connections, a doorway that so many writers and artists have walked through. Intriguing rooms draw you into the sanctuary of the peaceful garden, a true hidden gem tucked away in the cobbled streets of Rye.

Stoneacre

Step back in time and explore Stoneacre, a carefully restored medieval yeoman's house. A perfect example of a Wealden Hall-House, it is full of beautiful collections of furniture, wood and metal work. Enjoy its attractive garden and country walks in the surrounding area.

Smallhythe Place

Built in the early 16th-century when Smallhythe was a thriving shipbuilding port, was home to the Victorian actress Ellen Terry from 1899 until 1928. The property includes a beautiful cottage garden and a charming 17th-century thatched Barn Theatre. As you walk through Smallhythe you'll step back to the 16th Century and learn about Ellen Terry, her fascinating costume and theatrical collection and experience this relaxing and tranquil place.

Sissinghurst Castle Garden

Sissinghurst Castle Garden is a historic, poetic and iconic refuge dedicated to beauty. Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson fell in love with Sissinghurst Castle and created a world renowned garden. Explore the changing colour palettes and abundant planting in 'rooms' including the rose garden and white garden and be immersed in the newly reimagined, Mediterranean inspired Delos garden.



How to make a booking

To qualify for our group offer there must be a minimum of 15 visitors and the group must be booked in advance. Due to the available coach parking space we limit the number of group visits each day and we operate a timed coach arrival system, with the first coach arrival time being 10:30am.

Time and date slots can sell out quickly and we suggest that you provisionally book your group in up to one year in advance to avoid disappointment. A provisional booking will be made and a form sent to you for completion. We'll do our best to accommodate your time and date preference but may need to suggest an alternative if they have already been taken.

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