

THE WHITE DOWNS



Moderate Terrain

**3.5 km
Circular
1 hour**

250716



Access Notes

1. *The walk follows woodland bridleways and chalk grassland footpaths which can get very muddy at times so good boots are a must.*
2. *There are no stiles or steps, but you will need to negotiate two kissing gates.*
3. *The route includes a few gentle slopes plus one short steeper climb.*
4. *There are no road crossings on route, making it perfect for families and dogs.*



Start to Old Simm's Junction

Walk to the top of the car park (away from the road) where you will find a vehicle barrier. Just to the right of this you will also see a waymarker post with a white arrow for the self-guided trail. It is this symbol that your walk will be following for its entire length. Pass alongside the vehicle barrier and keep directly ahead on the signed stone bridleway, heading steadily uphill.

A 3.5km (2 mile) circular walk taking in the beautiful woodland (renowned for its bluebells) and chalk grassland of the White Downs on the slopes of the North Downs in Surrey.

This walk is part of the Explore Surrey collection, published through a collaboration between iFootpath and Surrey County Council.

There are no toilets or other facilities on route. If you would like refreshments after your walk, you will find Kingfisher farm shop (famous for its local watercress) and several pubs in nearby Abinger Hammer and Gomshall. Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 145 Guildford and Farnham and 146 Dorking, Box Hill and Reigate. This walk follows public footpaths and bridleways which cross private and public land. Information is included for your interest, but please respect people's privacy, keep dogs under control and remember the Countryside Code.

Getting there

The walk starts and finishes from the free White Downs car park (2m height restriction barrier) on White Down Lane between Abinger and Effingham. If you are coming from the south, you will find the entrance for White Down Lane on the A25, just east of Abinger Hammer (approximate post code **RH5 6PZ**). From this point follow White Down Lane north (steeply uphill) for 1.5 miles and you will find the car park on the left. If you are coming from the north, you will find the entrance for White Down Lane at the junction between Ranmore Common Road and Crocknorth Road (approximate post code **RH5 6SL**). From this point follow White Down Lane south for half a mile and you will find the car park on the right.

Walk Sections

get **iFOOTPATH**



iFootpath.com



On your right you will see a bank running alongside the path, topped with a line of beautiful old twisted beech trees. This is a good example of a boundary bank, probably dating from the 1700s, when parcels of land for timber production were separated from the grazing areas and drove roads. During the Tudor period the woollen industry expanded and, as a result, large areas of the Downs were used for sheep pasture. This bridleway was one of the old drove roads, down which large flocks of sheep would have been driven from the daytime hillside pastures to their night folds or on to local markets.

As the path levels off you will come to a fingerpost marking a crossroads. Keep straight ahead and stay with this main path first meandering ahead and, later, bearing left. On the right is Old Simm's Copse, although who or what Simm was, remains a mystery. The copse is called Bluebell Woods by locals, for good reason, and the area is essentially a crop of oak standards with an understorey of coppiced hazel and ash trees. Eventually the path will lead you to a staggered crossroads marked with a waymarker post.

1 → 2 Old Simm's Junction to North Downs Way



Turn right here and follow the wide bridleway with Old Simm's Copse still on your right. Further along, the path winds through a section of heavily coppiced trees to reach the next fingerpost marking a junction with another bridleway.

Turn left here and follow the stone track as it begins to lead you downhill. This is an old coach road and at this point, because of the steep descent, the horses would have been unhitched and put behind the coach, to prevent the coach running over the horses.

After just a short distance you will come to a clearing between two lines of fencing and a fingerpost, marking the junction with North Downs Way. Turn left, passing through the kissing gate to enter the National Trust site of Blatchford Downs.

2 → 3 North Downs Way to White Down Lease Gate



Follow the obvious grass path leading you steadily downhill and passing a couple of handy benches on the left, the ideal spot for enjoying the views down the chalk grassland slopes and across the valley.

The first farmers in this area removed much of the original woodland cover to create fields for their crops and livestock. Their grazing animals prevented the regrowth of trees and coarse vegetation, which allowed the special wildlife habitat known as chalk grassland to develop and thrive. Chalk grassland has always depended on continued active management for its survival, which is why the National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust use cattle and sheep to control the growth of vegetation. As a result, the chalk slopes are rich in orchids and chalk-loving butterflies such as Adonis and chalkhill blues, silver-spotted skippers and marbled whites.

The path swings left, entering a small belt of trees. Within the woodland on the left you will see the remains of a brick pillbox. At the start of World War II a real threat of German invasion caused the fortification of the Downs by a series of pillboxes. However, when Churchill came to power, he felt that any plan that abandoned Kent and Sussex to the enemy was ill-conceived. The North Downs then became a secondary barrier, should the effort to stop the enemy at the beaches fail. Most of the Downs pillboxes still remain, and today make important roosts for bats.

Simply continue ahead on the North Downs Way, passing a second pillbox on your right, a third on your left and then a fourth across to your right once again. Eventually you will come to a kissing gate alongside a National Trust sign for White Down Lease.

3 → 4 White Down Lease Gate to End



Pass through this gate and a few paces later you will come to a fingerpost, marking a staggered crossroads. Turn sharp left here, to join the signed public footpath leading you steeply uphill and soon following the line of a wire fence on your left. Stay with the path as it swings left and levels off, still following the fence line on your left.

As you pass a large yew tree on your left, stay with the path which veers right heading away from the fence, passing a waymarker post and leading you uphill once again. A little way up, the path swings left to merge with a wider track. 30 metres later, you will see a waymarker post on your right. Turn right, leaving the main track to join a narrow path which winds through a short section of trees to reach a staggered crossroads (which you may recognise from the outward leg).

Turn right here and follow this track as it swings steadily left, leading you through Dunley Wood. Dunley Wood, part of the privately owned Wotton Estate, comprises a variety of trees including oak, ash, cherry, beech, larch and pine and also has a thriving bluebell population.

Further along, the path leads you past the green railings and grass mounds of a water reservoir on your right, owned by the East Surrey Water Company. Immediately after the reservoir you will reach a staggered crossroads, stay on the main track (at about 11 o'clock). About 30 metres later as you reach a waymarker post, turn left to join the narrower stone path winding through the trees. You will emerge to the crossroads of paths (marked with a fingerpost), that you passed through at the start of the walk.

Turn right to join the bridleway and this will lead you directly back to the car park where the walk began. If you are looking for refreshments, Abinger Hammer and Gomshall are only a short drive away. Turn right out of the car park, follow the lane steeply downhill, turn right at the T-junction and this road (the A25) will lead you through Abinger Hammer and then Gomshall, both of which have plenty of options.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

This walk is part of the Explore Surrey collection, published through a collaboration between iFootpath and Surrey County Council.

Surrey is the ideal place to explore the outdoors on foot. Whether you're an adventurous walker or someone who prefers a short stroll, there's a walk to suit you.

If you would like to know more about Explore Surrey and find more walks please visit

www.surreycc.gov.uk/explore

