

FARTHING DOWNS AND HAPPY VALLEY



Moderate Terrain

**5 km
Circular
1.5 hours**

190716



Access Notes



1. *The walk has several climbs and descents throughout including a couple of quite steep sections.*
2. *The route follows wide paths throughout, including one path across the centre of crop fields. There are no stiles or gates on the route, just one flight of steps (which runs alongside a steep path).*
3. *The chalk path surfaces can get very muddy and slippery when wet so good boots are a must.*

A 5km (3 mile) circular walk near Coulsdon, taking in the beautiful rolling chalk grassland of Farthing Downs and Happy Valley.

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

There are toilets in the car park at the start of the walk. Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 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 at the free Farthing Downs car park on Ditches Lane, managed by the City of London. The car park opens at 7am and closes at dusk. Leave the A23 at Coulsdon and at the roundabout take the B276 (signed to Caterham). Take the second right turn, Downs Road, and keep left at the fork into Ditches Lane. Follow this single track lane over a cattle grid and along the top of the downs. Just before you reach cottages on your left, you will come to the car park on the right. Approximate post code CR5 1DA. If you are coming by train, Coulsdon South rail station is about a one mile walk from the starting point.

Walk Sections



Start to Grassland



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Before setting off on the walk, you might want to take some time enjoying the views from the ridge-top paths alongside the car park. Farthing Downs is managed by the City of London and has stunning panoramic views across the surrounding countryside and all the way to London. Farthing Downs (along with Happy Valley which we will enter soon) is a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to it being part of the largest area of chalk grassland habitat remaining in the Greater London area. Listen for the beautiful song of the skylark which can last for five minutes without a pause.

From the car park, cross over Ditches Lane and walk down the grass bank opposite, staying close to the Farthing Down cottages running on your right. Where the cottages on your right end, swing right to join the obvious level chalk path, leading you past a vehicle barrier. Keep ahead on this main path through the ancient woodland (ignoring any side paths), with the trees sloping up to your right and down to your left.

This area is known as Happy Valley, a special place comprising areas of chalk grassland and ancient woodland. The site is managed by Croydon Council. Dormice and white admiral butterflies can be found in the ancient woodland which is carpeted with bluebells in the late spring.

When you reach a major fork, keep left, still following the main track which descends steadily. You will emerge out into an area of open chalk grassland. Bear slightly right along the edge of this grassland, following the line of the woodland on your right, with the grass sloping down to your left.

1 → 2 Grassland to Hedgerow Path



Many chalk-loving orchids grow here, along with the nationally rare greater yellow-rattle. Chalk grassland is one of our richest plant communities and more than 50 kinds of wild flower can be found in a square metre of land.

About half way along the clearing, ignore the footpaths into the woodland on your right. Instead, continue following the right-hand edge of the clearing as it swings steadily left and downhill to reach a fingerpost.

Turn right at this point, passing through the wide gap in the woodland belt and then keep ahead, staying fairly close to the woodland edge running on your left. Continue just until you reach a hedgerow crossing your path. Do NOT pass through the hedge, instead turn right heading uphill with the hedgerow running on your left.

2 → 3 Hedgerow Path to Chaldon Green



At the top corner keep straight ahead to join a stone track leading you through a section of trees (signed as a public footpath to Chaldon Church). You will emerge to the edge of a large crop field. Take the obvious path heading diagonally left (at about 11 o'clock) across the field. As you draw level with a corner of woodland on your right, stay with the path which now bears further to your left, leading you diagonally across the next section of crop field.

The path leads you over the brow of the rise and then heads steadily downhill towards a belt of trees. NOTE: Beyond this tree line the path emerges directly onto a road so keep children and dogs close as you approach. Pass through the trees and turn left along Ditches Lane, taking care of any traffic. At the fork in the lane, take the left-hand branch.

The grass triangle on your right is known as Chaldon Green and is the smallest registered common in England. Chaldon Church, visible beyond the green, is famous for its Doom Painting on the west wall. Dating from 1200, the painting features 'the ladder of salvation of the human soul' and is one of the finest and oldest in England.

3 → 4 Chaldon Green to Valley Bottom



About 30 metres beyond the green, turn left onto the footpath signed to Piles Wood. Pass through the hedgerow gap and follow the path with the crop field (which you just crossed) on your left and fenced paddocks on your right. In the top right-hand corner of the crop field, continue ahead on the grass track with the fence line on your right and Piles Wood running on your left.

At the end of the path you will emerge to a junction with a tarmac access track. Turn left, signed as a bridleway to Happy

Valley, with Piles Wood still on your left. You will pass a number of properties on your right. When the tarmac track ends, simply keep ahead on the stone and dirt path, following a fence line running on your right.

The path begins to descend and, when the woodland on the left ends, you will come to a junction. Ignore the path to the left, simply keep ahead with a section of open grassland visible through the trees on your left. At the bottom of the slope you will come to a fingerpost marking a crossroads at the bottom of Happy Valley. Turn left here and join the path along the valley bottom.

4 ➔ 5 Valley Bottom to End



Follow the valley bottom path, with the grassland sloping up to your left and woodland on your right. Further along you will meet a hedgerow crossing your path (the one you encountered on the outward leg). Pass through the hedge and turn immediately right to join a smaller path leading you steeply up through the woodland via a flight of steps. As you emerge from the trees continue up the steps, passing a bench on the left. At the top you will come to a T-junction.

Turn left onto the footpath signed to Farthing Downs. Follow this obvious path leading you gently back down the hill, across the grassland and passing between a few benches. The path leads you through a belt of trees. Continue ahead, going downhill. Simply keep ahead to reach a junction of paths at the valley bottom.

At the first crossroads (recognisable by the stone path running uphill to the right) go straight ahead. A few paces later fork right and join the grass path along the valley bottom which leads you past a small group of blackthorn bushes and a bench on your right. At the far end of this grassland, go ahead on the wide track through the trees and you will emerge to a narrower area of grassland.

Keep straight ahead and you will soon merge with a stone path coming in from the right. Further along, follow the stone path as it bears right (passing a memorial bench to your left). At the next right-hand bend on the path (just before the grassland narrows to a single track), turn left into a wide gap within the woodland. Ten paces along you will reach a fork. Take the right-hand branch, the path heading diagonally uphill, giving you a gentler gradient.

As you enter a section of trees you will see a bench. Turn sharp left and follow the path continuing uphill through the trees. Towards the top, swing right to reach the corner of the Farthing Downs cottages (that you passed as you first entered Happy Valley). Dog-leg right and then left, walking up the grass slope with the cottages to your left. At the top of the slope you will reach the car park where the walk began.

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.

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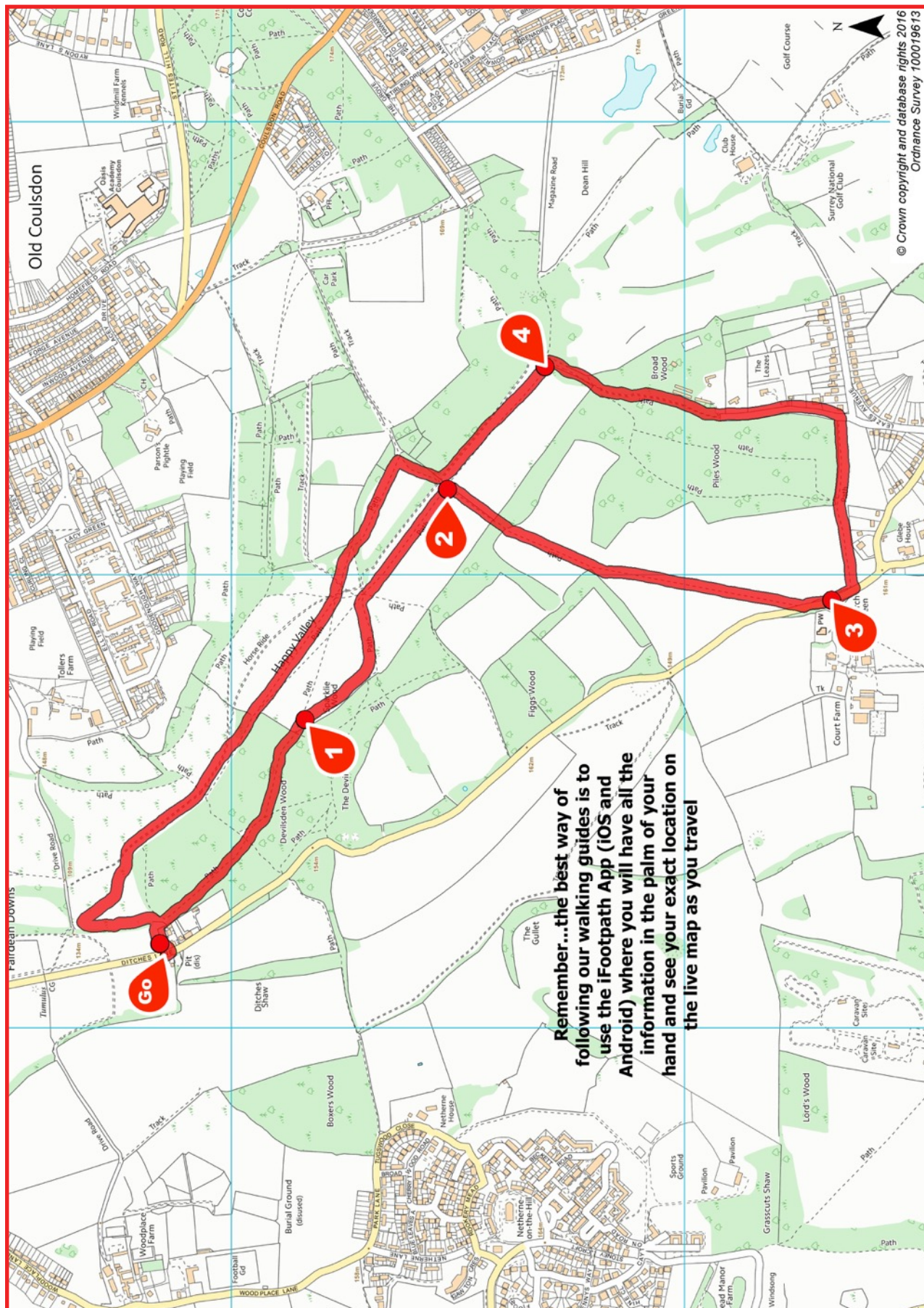
www.surreycc.gov.uk/explore

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.



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R Rail station **B** Bus stop  Walking route  Start point  Waypoint