

SIDNEY WOOD AND THE LOST CANAL



Moderate Terrain

**8 km
Circular
2.5 hours**

110618



Access Notes

1. The walk is relatively flat, with just a few steady gradients. It follows long stretches of bridleways through woodland and parkland, with some stretches that can become very muddy (so good boots are required, or wellies with grips after periods of rain).
2. There are no stiles, kissing gates or livestock on route, but you will need to negotiate some gaps alongside vehicle barriers, one bridle gate and some narrow paths and uneven, rutted tracks.



An 8km (5 mile) circular walk from Sidney Wood near Alfold in Surrey (near the border with West Sussex).

This attractive route explores mixed woodlands and old parkland as well as a long stretch of the old Wey and Arun Canal, built during the Napoleonic Wars and now reclaimed by nature with some stretches undergoing restoration. This walk is part of the Explore Surrey collection, published through a collaboration between iFootpath and Surrey County Council.

There are no refreshments directly on route, but you will find pubs in nearby Alfold and Loxwood. Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 134 Crawley and Horsham. 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 Forestry Commission car park in Sidney Wood, accessed from Dunsfold Road between Alfold Crossways and Dunsfold. There is no sign for this woodland car park from the road, but the access drive is shared with two properties (Cobdens Farm and Sedgheurst).

The post code for these properties is **GU6 8HU**, which should take you to the correct woodland entrance drive.

As you enter the woodland, keep left at the first two forks, pass under the 2m height restriction barrier and you will see the Sidney Wood Forestry Commission car park on your right. This large circular car park has several parking bays and a picnic area.

Walk Sections

Go → 1 Start to Canal Towpath

Leave the car park via the vehicle entrance and swing left to pass under the height restriction barrier. After about 120 metres, turn sharp left onto the first left-hand driveway (marked with a Sedgheurst Private sign on your left), soon passing a blue arrow on a waymarker post (on your right) which marks this driveway as a public bridleway.

Continue for about 500 metres to reach a tall fingerpost on your right. Fork right here, leaving the tarmac drive to

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join the unmade bridleway path, passing between wooden bollards and leading you into the woodland. Follow the bridleway ahead, passing the nature reserve called Fir Tree Copse on your right (this was once part of the ancient Chiddingfold Forest, comprises of hazel, oak and ash and has a stunning carpet of bluebells in the late spring).

Ignore the path signed right into this nature reserve and you will come to a fork in the bridleway (marked with two blue arrows). Take the right-hand branch and this leads you to an old metal gate ahead. Pass alongside this gate and you will immediately cross over the course of the derelict Wey and Arun Canal. Immediately after this channel, turn left onto the public footpath, part of the Wey South Path which follows the old towpath (with the old canal running on your left).

1 → 2 Canal Towpath to Lock Flight



Walk ahead along the old towpath, which we will be following for the next mile. The old canal on your left may appear as a water channel or just a muddy trench, depending on the time of year and recent weather. Either way, it holds a fascinating history...

In the closing years of the 1700s, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing and the country's road network was struggling to cope with the required transport of raw materials and finished goods. By 1803 there was an added complication with the start of the Napoleonic Wars which saw Britain at war with France. The usual cargo shipping route from London to Portsmouth around the coast was now at risk of enemy attack. Instead, an inland route was required. The Wey and Arun Canal was built to complete this inland route, although by the time it was completed in 1816, the war was over. Find out more about the canal's heyday, its decline and restoration progress by tapping the Listen button (App only) below...

As you walk along the towpath, you will pass some concrete milestones, which show the mileage to and from The Arun and The Wey. Originally these were installed every half mile so that tolls could be levied accurately. Stay on the towpath, ignoring

two footpaths signed off to the right and passing the Arun 13 – Wey 10 milestone. The canal now bends steadily left then sharp right. On this next straight stretch of canal you will pass a wider basin area (where an old glassworks once operated) and then a stretch with steeper tree-lined banks. This marks the point which once held a flight of six locks.

2 → 3 Lock Flight to High Bridge



Continue along the towpath until you emerge to a junction with a tarmac access track, with the white property called Knights Court ahead. Turn left to join this tarmac access track leading you through the woodland. You will come to a vehicle barrier ahead, alongside a Sidney Wood sign. Pass alongside the barrier and keep ahead on the stone path leading you through the woodland.

At the first woodland crossroads, keep straight ahead. As you reach the next vehicle barrier ahead, pass alongside this and follow the fenced track which leads you past the white property at High Bridge on your right.

3 → 4 High Bridge to Gennets Bridge Lock



Immediately after the property you will reach a T-junction with a tarmac access lane. Turn right (passing the house on your right) and then turn immediately left to join the signed public bridleway. This bridleway is still part of the Wey South Path and you will have the canal channel running on your left once again.

Follow this pretty stretch of old towpath ahead (which we will be following for about a mile). Further along, you will be able to see the beautiful fishing lakes of Upper Oakhurst on the far bank to your left. Ignore the three side path options (a canal footbridge on your left, a stile on your right and a second footbridge on your left).

Just after passing the Arun 11.5 – Wey 11.5 milestone, you will find yourself at the restored Gennets Bridge Lock. This lock is one of the latest restoration success stories of the Wey and Arun Canal Trust and had its official opening ceremony in April 2018.

4 ➔ 5 Gennets Bridge Lock to Oakhurst Cottage



Immediately after passing the lock, turn left to cross the canal bridge (signed as part of the Sussex Border Path). We have now crossed into the county of West Sussex for this most southerly portion of our walk. After crossing the canal, keep ahead on the bridleway stone track leading you through the woodland. After about 400 metres, you will reach a fingerpost on your left marking a crossroads of bridleway paths.

Turn left here to join the unmade (and often muddy) track between hedgerows, signed as a public bridleway. The track leads you past a large cottage on your left, Oakhurst Cottage, to reach a staggered crossroads of tracks.

5 ➔ 6 Oakhurst Cottage to Rosemary Lane



Go straight ahead at this crossroads (actually a small dog-leg left then right) and follow the vehicle track leading you away from the cottage and through the open grassland. Keep ahead on this main track, passing a pretty pond on your right and then bending right then left. You will notice your surroundings have a feeling of historic parkland, and indeed this area is home to a number of old illustrious halls. Just a few hundred metres to the north is Velhurst Farm, a former Wealdon hall house which dates from the early 1500s with 54 acres of formal gardens, ponds and paddocks.

At the next fingerpost, ignore the footpaths signed to the side, instead keep ahead on the main bridleway track. Pass through the bridle gate ahead (or the wider farm gate alongside may be open anyway) to reach a fork. Take the right-hand branch, leading you through the trees to reach an access drive lined with wooden posts. Follow the bridleway ahead, with the wooden posts running on your right. You will emerge to a junction with Rosemary Lane.

6 ➔ 7 Rosemary Lane to End



Cross over the lane and take the signed public bridleway directly ahead, leading you past the entrance for Rosemary Cottage on your left. Stay ahead on the woodland track bridleway, an old thoroughfare known as Sachelhill Lane.

After about 800 metres, look out for a waymarker post on your right, marking a side path on your right. Do NOT take this, instead keep ahead for a further 20 metres and then turn left onto the path into Sidney Wood (marked with a Riding By Permit Only sign). Pass this sign on your right and ignore the small side path into the trees on your right, instead keep straight ahead on the main forest stone path.

You will emerge to a junction with a wider stone track (leading ahead and right). Turn right to join the stone track and follow this for about 400 metres to reach a vehicle barrier. Here you will find the car park on your left 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.

