

DISCOVER DOWNSIDE



Challenging Terrain

**10 km
Circular
3 hours**

180417



Access Notes

- 1. The walk has a few climbs and descents throughout. The woodland and field paths can get very muddy so good boots are required (or wellingtons with grips in the winter).*
- 2. You will need to negotiate kissing gates and steps plus 22 stiles. A few of the stiles are very tall and awkward to cross and so would be difficult for less agile people.*
- 3. Some of the stiles have dog gates, but a couple of the tall stiles towards the end of the walk have tight fence surrounds so dogs may need a lift over.*
- 4. You will be sharing some of the fields with horses and sheep and sometimes cattle so take particular care with dogs.*
- 5. There are a few long stretches of road walking along quiet country lanes so please take care of traffic at these points.*

A 6 mile (10km) circular walk from Cobham, taking you through the beautiful countryside around Downside and discovering the local history and wildlife.

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

Refreshments are available at the start or end of the walk, in Cobham. Alternatively, The Black Swan is a 0.3 mile walk along Ockham Lane (heading west) from Waypoint 4. There is a picnic site at the Semaphore Tower (Waypoint 3) if you wish to take refreshments with you. Ordnance Survey Maps: Explorer 146 Dorking, Box Hill and Reigate and Explorer 145 Guildford and Farnham. 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

Cobham is located just south of the A3, on the A245. The walk starts and finishes at the Hollyhedge Road pay and display car park (just off Downside Bridge Road). Fees are £2.60 for 3 hours or £3.60 for 4 hours (correct April 2015). There are regular bus services to Cobham from Kingston, Esher, Epsom and Weybridge. For help with planning your journey by public transport please visit journeys.travelsmartsurrey.info.

Approximate post code **KT11 3DQ**.

Walk Sections

Go → 1 Start to Downside Bridge

Leave the car park via the vehicle exit to Downside Bridge Road (the longest side of the car park). Turn left along the pavement, passing playing fields and allotments to the right. Follow the pavement for some distance crossing over side roads and passing St Andrew's Church on the left. Beyond the church, take particular care where the pavement narrows.

Follow the road as it bends right and then left to reach Downside Bridge, a bridge over the River Mole. The current bridge was built in 1971 to replace the nine arch

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bridge dating from 1786, which was destroyed by floods in the 1960s.

1 → 2 Downside Bridge to Pointers Road



Cross the river bridge and, before you reach the first house on the right, cross over the road to turn right over a stile (signed as a public footpath). NOTE: You may come across cattle in some of the fields in this section. Walk straight ahead across the centre of the field, passing just to the right of the large tree in the field centre.

At the far side, pass through a gap in the hedge and continue in the same direction across the second field, passing a row of old oak trees on the right. The oak trees here are remnants of a medieval system called pollarding, which was used until recent times. The oak trees had the dual purpose of providing shelter for domestic animals, whilst providing wood from the branches of the pollards, which were cut above the browse line about every twenty years.

Cross the boardwalk and stile to enter the third field and walk across this pasture at about 11 o'clock. Across to the left are three ancient oaks with huge trunks. These magnificent trees may be more than 300 years old and may be home to more than 280 species of insect.

Cross the stile into the fourth field and follow the right-hand boundary with the River Mole running on the right. The River Mole rises near Crawley in Sussex and flows for 80km northwards to join the River Thames near Hampton Court. Legend has it that the river is called the 'Mole' because it disappears underground into the chalk near Dorking during dry weather. However, after wet weather these fields can be underwater. If you are lucky you may see the flash of blue as a kingfisher shoots past you on this stretch.

In the field corner you will come to a footbridge with stiles at

each end. Cross this to enter the fifth field, a large horse paddock. Cross the (often muddy) paddock diagonally left (between 10 and 11 o'clock), crossing a stile in the centre and continuing in the same direction to reach the stile on the far boundary. This stile leads you out to a T-junction with the road, Pointers Road.

2 → 3 Pointers Road to Semaphore Tower



Turn right along the road, taking care of any occasional traffic. After a quarter of a mile you will pass the ornate gateway for The Lodge on the left. Continue for a further 150 yards, then turn left onto a tarmac track signed as a public brideway entering Chatley Heath. Follow the track ahead which leads you over the M25 and, immediately afterwards, turn right onto the signed public brideway to Old Lane.

The woodland path swings left and then leads you fairly steeply uphill. At the very top of the hill you will come to a junction with a tarmac lane. Turn right along this and follow it as it swings right to reach Chatley Semaphore Tower. There is a picnic site here should you wish to stop for refreshments.

The tower was constructed with a semaphore mast on top, as part of a chain of 15 semaphores, which were used to relay messages between the Admiralty in London and Portsmouth Dockyard. The system operated from 1822 to 1848 and a message could be sent from London to Portsmouth in just 15 minutes. The tower is open to the public on certain days. Inside there is an exhibition and from the top a panoramic view of Surrey's countryside. Phone the Tower Manager on 01932 862762 for details of opening times.

3 → 4 Semaphore Tower to Ockham Lane



When you have finished enjoying the tower, return back the way you came along the tarmac lane. Just before the lane bends left, turn right onto the bridleway (signed with a blue arrow). Follow this bridleway winding ahead for some distance. Across to the right is Chatley Heath, worth exploring if you have the time.

Chatley Heath is owned by Surrey County Council. In the past most of this area would have been open heathland, but today there are only a few remnants left. Heathland is a rare and declining habitat. It supports a unique range of species which are under threat, mainly due to changes in the way man manages heathland. In the past they would have been grazed and products such as wood and bracken harvested by local people. Over the last century these activities have declined and this has allowed trees and scrub to grow which have shaded out the heather. The Surrey Ranger Service, in conjunction with local conservation groups including the Lower Mole Project, has started to clear the scrub to reverse this decline.

At the bottom of the slope you will come to a crossroads. Turn left here onto the public bridleway signed to Ockham Lane. Keep right at the fork and follow the bridleway out of the woodland to reach the end of a tarmac access lane. Keep straight ahead along the lane, passing Hasley House and Ockham Manor on the right.

Through the fence to the left are the grounds of Hatchford Park and soon, the house itself will become visible. A house has existed on this site since about 1740. The grounds were laid out by Lady Ellesmere in the mid 1800s and covered more than 70 acres. Much of the original layout still remains. There was a flower garden, rosary, rhododendron and azalea groves, a kitchen garden and a 60 acre pinetum – full of rare conifers, many of them brought from abroad. Just inside the woods there is a mausoleum. This was built in 1921 and originally contained the remains of Sir Bernard Samuelson with his wife and daughter, who had bought the estate in 1906. From 1947 to the 1990s the property was a school, but has since been sold to developers.

Follow the access lane all the way to the end where it meets a T-junction with Ockham Lane.

4 → 5 Ockham Lane to Old Oak Common



Turn left along Ockham Lane for just 100 yards, passing the entrance drive for Hatchford House on the right. Just before the entrance drive for Hatchford Cottage, turn right up the small flight of steps and go through the kissing gate. Follow the narrow path between property fences and you will emerge to a quiet access lane. Keep straight ahead along this, passing several horse paddocks. Take time to enjoy the expansive views ahead.

At the bottom of the slope, where the access lane swings left to Orchard Farm, keep straight ahead on the concrete track passing stables on the right. Cross the stile ahead and follow the narrow fenced path between open fields. Cross the next stile and continue on the path, now with a tall fence on the right. The path winds between garden fences and then crosses a sleeper bridge to reach the corner of the front garden of May Cottage. Swing left along the hedge line and then continue ahead to cross the stile out to the road.

Turn left along the road and, at the junction, bear right (signed to Horsley Road). Follow the lane past cottages and continue to the end with Yew Tree Cottage ahead. Turn right over the stile (half-hidden in the hedge) and then turn left to follow the hedge line on the left. Where the hedge on the left steps back, fork right (at about 2 o'clock) towards the single oak tree in the field centre. As you draw level with the tree, stay on the footpath which swings left and leads you to a sleeper bridge at the edge of a small section of woodland, known as Old Oak Common.

5 → 6 Old Oak Common to Pondtail Farm



Cross the sleeper bridge and follow the narrow path winding through the woodland (which can get very muddy). Some way along, cross the stile ahead and continue on the woodland path. You will emerge from the woodland to the edge of a large open field. Do NOT go ahead as directed by the misleading signpost, instead turn left following the woodland edge. This will lead you to another stile.

NOTE: these next pastures are likely to be holding sheep and/or horses. Cross the stile and walk straight ahead passing a pond on the left. Cross the stile into the second pasture and walk directly ahead following the hedge on the left. Keep in the same direction across three more stiles. After the third stile, keep ahead along the field-edge track with electric fencing on the right. Half way along the field you will come to a junction with a track to the right.

Turn right here (don't worry if the footpath sign is missing, it is a public right of way). Follow the track which soon runs with a hedge on the left and horse paddocks on the right. Stay on the track as it swings right, running along the top of the horse paddocks (with the noise of the M25 clearly audible through the hedge on the left). Continue just as far as the bridge over the M25 on the left and turn left through the metal gate to cross this bridge (signed to Chilbrook Farm).

At the end of the bridge you will be faced with a locked gate ahead. You will need to take a slightly convoluted route here to join the correct footpath. Turn right through the kissing gate and then turn immediately left to follow the hedge on the left. After just a few paces, pass through the kissing gate on the left to reach the concrete track once again. Cross the track diagonally

right to reach another kissing gate. Go through this and then turn right along the grass track (signed to Chilbrook Farm). At the end of the grass track a stile leads you out to the concrete access drive for Pondtail Farm.

6 → 7 Pondtail Farm to End



Turn right and follow the surfaced access track passing a small pond on the right. At the end of the drive, pass through the small wooden gate to reach a T-junction with Chilbrook Road. Turn left along the road, taking care of any traffic and passing a row of cottages on the left. Follow the road for just 300 yards where you will reach a chevron sign marking a left-hand bend. Leave the road here and keep straight ahead on the gravel drive for Chilbrook Farm. Just before you reach the first farm building, turn right through a kissing gate (signed as a public footpath).

Keep straight ahead along the left-hand edge of this large crop field. At the end of the field a final stile leads you out to the grass verge alongside Downside Bridge Road. NOTE: this is a fairly busy road and the visibility is not ideal, so take extreme care. Cross over the road and turn left along the pavement.

Follow the pavement for some distance, heading back towards Cobham. The pavement will lead you past the entrance for Cobham Park on the right and then on to reach Downside Bridge. From this point you will be retracing your steps back to the start point. Follow the right-hand pavement over the bridge then past the church and on to 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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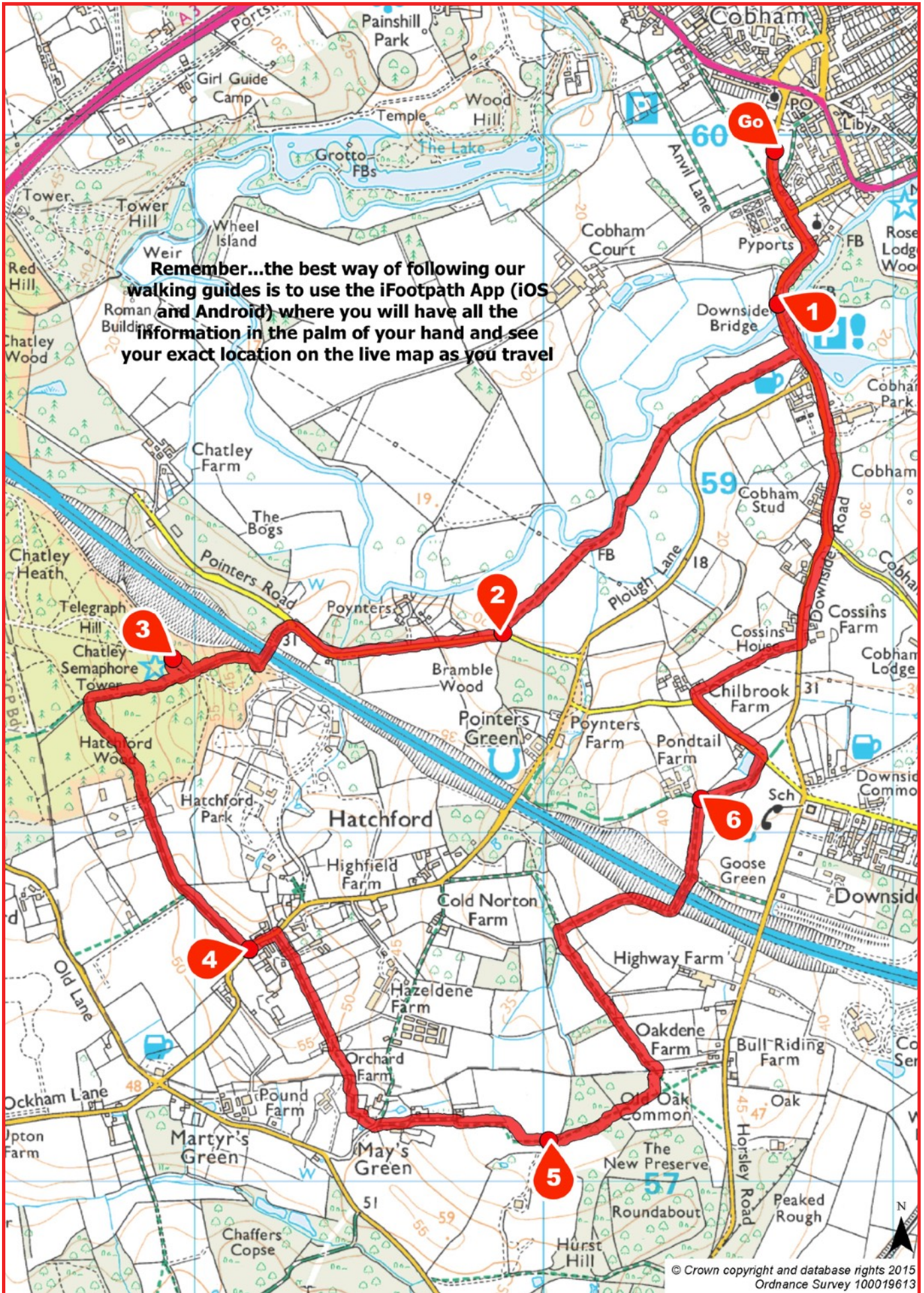
www.surreycc.gov.uk/explore

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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-  Rail station
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-  Walking route
-  Start point
-  Waypoint