

WALK THE CHALK



Challenging Terrain

**12 km
Linear
3.5 hours**

260515



A 7.5 mile (12km) linear walk from Dorking to Gomshall railway stations, via some of the finest chalk grassland in Surrey. The scenery is spectacular and the area is rich in wildlife.

The scenery is spectacular and the area is rich in wildlife. The return leg can be completed by a simple train or bus journey (although the services are quite infrequent, so plan your timings before you set out). This walk is part of the Explore Surrey collection, published through a collaboration between iFootpath and Surrey County Council.

Refreshments are only available at the start and end of the walk. The Lincoln Arms is situated alongside Dorking Station at the start of the walk. The last half mile of the walk leads you through Gomshall where you will find a number of pubs, restaurants and shops. Ordnance Survey Maps: Explorer 146 Dorking, Box Hill and Reigate and Explorer 145 Guildford and Farnham. This walk follows public rights of way that cross public, private and National Trust land. Information is included for your interest, but please respect National Trust bylaws, keep dogs under control and remember the Countryside Code.

Getting there

The walk starts at Dorking railway station and finishes at Gomshall railway station. The return leg can be completed by a single 7 minute train journey, although this service is fairly infrequent (every 2 hours on the day we travelled) so check times before you set out. The return train will take you to Dorking Deepdene Station which is just next door to Dorking Station. Alternatively, there is a bus service from Gomshall to Dorking which takes approximately 20 minutes. For help with planning your journey by public transport please visit <http://journeys.travelsmartsurrey.info>. If you are coming by car, Dorking Station has a large pay and display car park with a daily fee of £6.10 Mon-Fri, £3.40 Sat and £2 Sun and Bank Holidays (correct March 2015).

Approximate post code **RH4 1TF**.

Access Notes

- 1. The walk includes several long-steady and shorter-steep climbs and descents throughout.*
- 2. The paths through woodland and chalk grassland are generally firm but can get very muddy after rain and in the winter months, so good stout boots are required all year and wellingtons with grips are recommended in winter.*
- 3. You will need to negotiate some steps and kissing gates, but there are no stiles on route.*
- 4. At certain times of the year sheep and cattle are used to graze some sections of the chalk grassland as part of the conservation, so take particular care with dogs.*
- 5. The route is waymarked with a green/white arrow symbol with a pedestrian in the centre.*

Walk Sections



Start to Denbies Hillside

The walk starts from the edge of the pay and display car park at Dorking Station, opposite the Lincoln Arms pub.

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Walk down the subway and follow this to the far end, then take the steps which swing right back to the pavement alongside the dual carriageway. Turn left along the pavement, heading towards the traffic lights. At the traffic lights, turn left along Ashcombe Road (A2003) passing Ashcombe School on the left.

At the top of the road you will come to a mini roundabout. Go straight ahead, signed to Ranmore. Soon afterwards you will come to a T-junction. Cross over and turn right along the pavement (still signed to Ranmore). Shortly, where the pavement ends, fork left onto the public footpath which skirts the grounds of St Martin's School on the left. The bank on the right has yew and box trees growing on it, a sure sign that there is chalk below your feet.

At the end of the school playing fields, you will see a footpath on the left and a National Trust sign for Denbies Hillside.

1 → 2 Denbies Hillside to Landbarn T Junction



Turn left here, following the path past the National Trust sign. Follow the main path (ignoring any forks left and right) and you will emerge to a T-junction with a larger track. Turn left along this track. Ignore any paths off to the left and right and carry on along the track for the next two miles, climbing steadily for the first half and then descending steadily for the second half.

This is an old carriage road built in the 1800s by William Joseph Denison, who owned the Denbies House and Estate. The old carriage road is a haven for wildlife. Whitethroats sing from bramble patches and fence posts while buzzards soar above. Adders sunbathe on sheltered banks and chalkhill blue butterflies are commonly seen. Doormice also live here. Fossil sea urchins have been found along the carriage road. They remind us that that the North Downs was once covered by the sea.

After two miles, the path swings hard left to reach a T-junction

with another track (with a fence line and open field ahead). This track is the access track to Landbarn Farm, where the National Trust Surrey Hills West Team is based.

2 → 3 Landbarn T Junction to North Downs Way



Turn right along the track and pass through the gate. NOTE: this area – and several others from this point on – may be used for conservation grazing so take care with dogs. Follow the track ahead, following the fence line on the left. Continue ahead on this track for a mile, ignoring any paths signed off left and right.

After a mile, the track swings hard right to reach a T-junction with a waymarker post (signed with the white/green 'Walk the Chalk' waymark). Turn right here to join the chalk track which leads uphill (heading back on yourself) with a bank of yew trees on your left. Take your time with the climb, enjoying the expansive views on the right. Towards the top of the hill is a handy bench, known as God's Seat, the perfect place to pause and catch your breath while you enjoy the views.

Continue to the top of the slope where you will come to junction with a gate ahead and a pillbox on the right. This marks the junction with the North Downs Way.

3 → 4 North Downs Way to Beggars Lane



Turn left along the North Downs Way (waymarked with the acorn symbol which denotes a National Trail). Follow this path passing several more pillboxes along the way. The views are outstanding and viewpoints along the North Downs were strategically important during the Second World War, which is why so many pillboxes were built here.

Eventually the path swings right to reach a T-junction with a road, White Down Lane. Turn right for a few paces and then turn left off the road to rejoin the North Downs Way. Follow the path winding ahead and go straight on at the crossroads, passing through a kissing gate to enter the National Trust area of White Down Lease. Keep ahead past several more pillboxes. At the end of this section of downs, pass an information board on the left then go through two kissing gates in quick succession to continue on the North Downs Way through Blatchford Down.

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.

At this end of this section of downs, go through the kissing gate and ignore the bridleway on the left; simply keep ahead on the North Downs Way. Keep ahead along this next stretch of path with a fence on the left. When the fence ends, you will come to a crossroads with an ancient public byway known as Beggars Lane.

4 → 5 Beggars Lane to Churchfield Track



Go straight ahead, continuing on the North Downs Way. Just a little way along, take the first kissing gate on the left, signed as a public footpath. You are now leaving the North Downs Way and entering Hackhurst Downs. Hackhurst Downs supports the largest remaining juniper population on the North Downs. Thirteen different invertebrate species rely on these ancient trees for their survival.

The path soon swings left, becoming a grass path which leads you steeply downhill across the hillside. You will pass a well-placed bench (a great spot for another rest should you wish). Continue steeply downhill (taking care as the chalk can be very slippery).

At the bottom of the slope, pass through two gates in quick succession, pass by the National Trust sign for Hackhurst Down and follow the path diagonally down the hill. In the bottom corner, pass through the weighted gate and then continue steeply downhill through a small belt of trees. Continue through the dip and then follow the waymarked footpath past fenced pastures. The path leads you to a crossroads with the access track for Churchfield Farm, part of the Wotton Estate.

5 → 6 Churchfield Track to End



Go straight ahead at this crossroads, using the two kissing gates. Further along, the path leads you between steep banks down to a T-junction with a road, Colekitchen Lane. Turn left along the lane (an ancient sunken lane) taking care of any traffic. If the lane is quiet enough, take a moment to look at the banks which are home to large badger setts.

At the end of the lane you will come to a T-junction with the main road, the A25. Turn left along the pavement and follow this road through Gomshall, where you will find a number of pubs, shops and restaurants. Carry on until you reach Station Approach on the left, just before the railway bridge (there is a bus stop here where you can catch the bus back to Dorking if that is your planned return journey). Turn left along Station Approach and this will take you to Gomshall Station and the end of the walk.

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

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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.

