



Butser Hill

Distance: 12 km=7½ miles easy walking with one long climb at the start

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 12-sep-2016

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Last update: 11-oct-2025

Refreshments: Clanfield, QE Park

Map: Explorer 120 (Chichester) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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High hills, views, woodland, forest trails

In Brief



This is a walk for lovers of views. Here, on the extreme western edge of the South Downs, there are views in all directions. The extensive grassy hillside is hugely popular and this walk will certainly make you want to return regularly. But, in contrast to the wide open expanse, you will also enjoy long trails in beautiful woodland. This circular walk starts and ends in a country park close to the A3 trunk road, extremely easy to reach from London, Guildford and the M25. Along the way, you pass a good pub/restaurant (to enquire at the *Hampshire Hog*, ring 023-9259-1083).



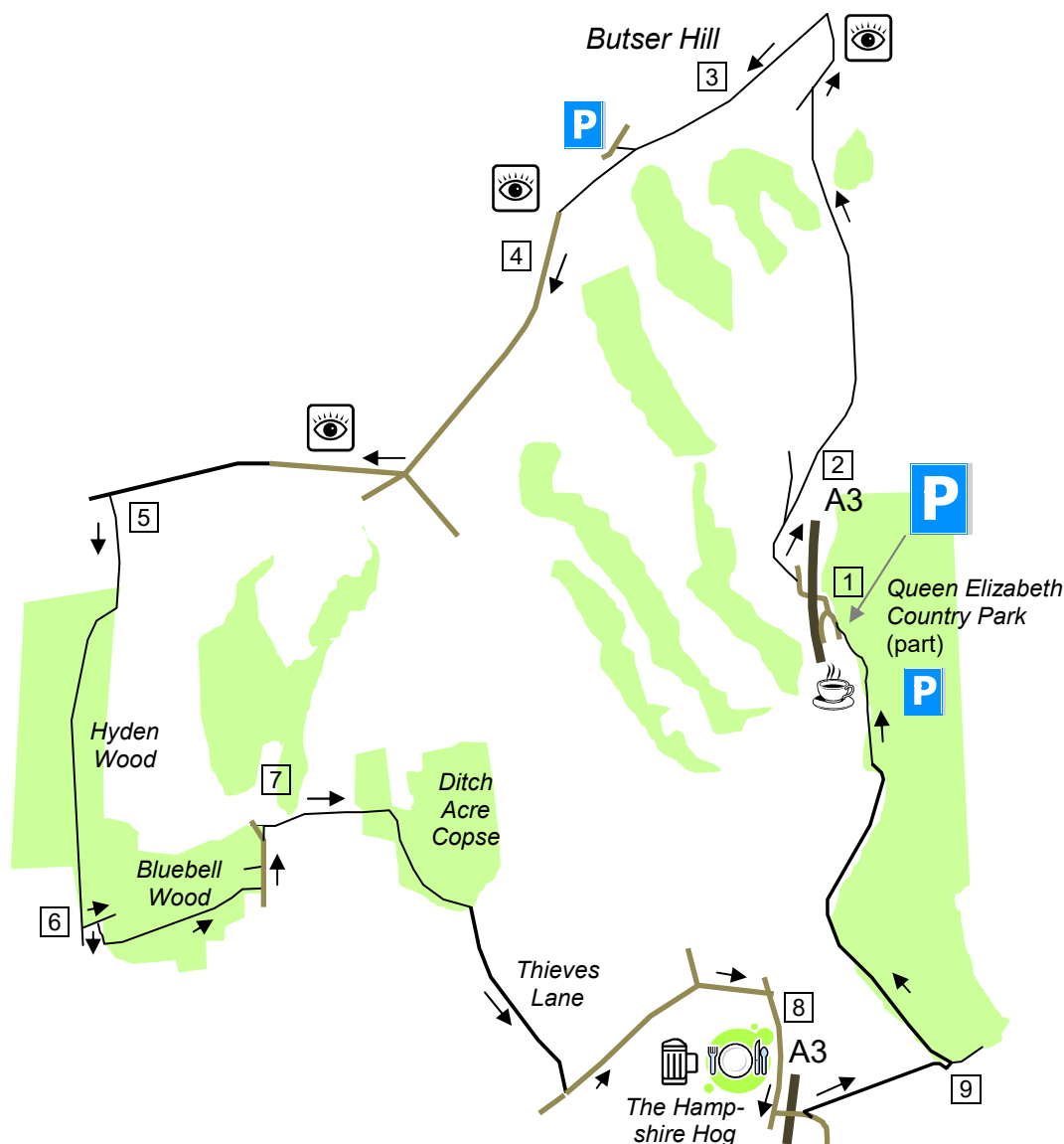
There are no nettles to speak of on this walk so shorts should not be a problem. When this walk was researched in September, after one rainy day, there were a few patches of mud in the woods, but in wetter seasons boots are to be recommended. With only a few sheep and just a short stretch of main road, this walk would be fine with your dog.

The walk begins at the car park of the **Queen Elizabeth Country Park**, Hampshire, www.w3w.co/riverside.mice.garden, postcode **PO8 0QE** (numberplate recognition, £9 for the whole day in summer). If the main car park is full, you can park on the huge grassy space beyond the Visitor Centre or continue further to one of the additional car parks. You can also park in the car park at the top of **Butser Hill** (no nearby postcode). However, the parking charge is the same, the hill is hard to get to and you would have a taxing climb at the *end* of the walk.

The Walk



Before you set off, it is worth noting that the Visitor Centre has a loo, a café (open after 10 am), a vending machine and displays of information on other walks and facilities available here.



- 1 Beginning in the QE Country Park car park, go back in the direction from which you arrived, to the entrance near the main road. Keep straight ahead at a junction of slip roads and follow the slip road as it bends **left** under the main A3 road. About 30m after coming out on the other side, immediately beside a tarmac path and some metal posts, fork **left** on a wide gravel path. Stay on the gravel as you cross over a sandy driveway and over a tarmac track, all the time following acorn symbols and some posts topped with light blue. Your path veers right, down under trees, and takes you through a wooden gate onto a vast grassy space, with the crest of Butser Hill and its aerial mast magnificently displayed ahead. *You can see the popular path leading straight up towards the mast on your left. However, this being FFW, that would be too predictable. The eastern route used in this walk is chosen to give you some of the best views, northwards across Hampshire, which you would miss on the other routes.*



The Butserfest takes place here annually in early September in this grassy space. There are three stages and performances by close to a dozen bands. The Butserfest is notable for its complete exclusion of alcohol and drugs.

- 2 Ignore the rising path on your left and stay level, along the grass, close to the main road, until you come through a wooden swing-gate into a large sheep pasture. Take the **left** fork, a path leading uphill to the top. You now have a steady one-km climb up to the top, the most taxing part of this walk. After 750m you come through a wooden swing-gate. There are two paths leading up the slope ahead. The left-hand path leads direct to the mast but the route used in this text is the **right** fork. [The hill is a maze of interesting paths with views all around and you can wander at will, remembering to go past the mast, to the car park for the next section.](#) In 200m, veer **right** at a slanting T-junction on a level path. This path curves left towards a line of bushes. Aim for a gap in the bushes ahead - a right fork - to see one of the best views from the hill, northwards. [To your left are the Hampshire Hangers, to their right the outline of Black Down \(the highest hill in Sussex\) and Bexley Hill. Closer, to your right are more of the South Downs, with Kingley Vale and the Mardens.](#) All these areas are featured on other walks on this website. At a crossing path, turn **left**, heading back to the aerial mast.



Butser Hill forms the western part of the chalk South Downs. It is the second highest hill in Hampshire (after Pilot Hill - see the "Inkpen" walk in this series) and, apart from Black Down which is really in the Western Weald, it is the highest on the South Downs, at a rather modest 271 metres. Butser Hill easily qualifies as a "Marilyn" (a pun on the actress's name). These are the counterpart to the "Monros" of Scotland and any isolated hill over 150 metres qualifies. Several Iron Age earthworks have been found here. The area is a rich source for archaeologists and Butser Ancient Farm (just south of here) is one such site. The hill and its surrounding spaces were bought by Hants C.C. in 1966 and they now form part of the QE Country Park. The slopes are now popular with hang-gliders as well as countless families enjoying the spectacular views.

- 3 You pass a trig point over on your right, then the aerials. Keep to the main path, joining a tarmac drive coming from the mast. [You now have great views south to Hayling Island, Portsmouth, the Solent and the Isle of Wight.](#) Where the tarmac drive curves away right, keep straight ahead on a narrow grassy path heading for a wooden gate. After the gate, you meet a fingerpost telling you that you have re-joined the South Downs Way. Keep **left** on the main path and, in 10m, take the **leftmost** of three paths, following the white acorn symbol. (The right-hand path leads to the car park. Further right along the road there is an information hut, modelled on the ancient farm – it has loos and serves refreshments at weekends and during the school holidays) The path leads through trees and emerges at the entrance to the car park. Turn **left** here on the tarmac lane leading away from the car park, using the grass verge where possible.



- 4 Stay on the tarmac lane as it curves left towards the crest of a low hill. As the lane curves right, there is a footway on the left for some of the way. Opposite a 2-way fingerpost, ignore a junction sharp right and continue on the lane for another ½ km. You reach a fork where the main lane bends left. Take the **right** fork and immediately fork **right** again on a tarmac track. You pass a garden fence, a farm and a 3-way fingerpost. Keep straight ahead here, ignoring the path on your right. [Once you are clear of the electricity pylons, you have a magnificent view to your right across the valley to East Meon where the church is clearly visible \(see the "East Meon" walk in this](#)



series). In another 400m or so, as the sheep meadow on your right ends, look to your left for a partially hidden 3-way fingerpost by a line of trees.

- 5 Turn **left** at the fingerpost on a path that runs down the right-hand side of a crop field, with the line of trees on your right, with more good views ahead. In the next field, continue as before but for only 40m. Look to your right in the trees for a modern kissing-gate and go **right** through the gate into the dark canopy of young trees of Hyden Wood. Your path curves left resuming your original direction and takes you through a fine stretch of mixed woodland. On your right is a fenced-off area of tall beeches. After about 750m in the woods, a field appears on your right as you pass a large wooden gate on your right and cross beneath power lines. In another 200m, you pass a metal post in the middle of the path, just as you meet a junction on your left with a partially hidden 3-way fingerpost.

- 6 Turn **left** at this junction into a wood, privately owned and known as Bluebell Wood, for very good reasons if you come in late spring. In 75m, you meet a fingerpost (with the right-hand finger missing)) [Apr 2019: lying broken on the ground]. Turn **right** here on another path. (You can instead keep straight on here, but after the next junction this path was found to be very muddy and narrow.) In 50m, keep to the main path as it turns **left**, thus regaining your previous direction. You come through a small clearing in the forest dominated by a small group of majestic beeches. Continue through this wood for a total of ½ km till you emerge through a metal kissing-gate out to a narrow tarmac lane. Turn **left** on the lane. You pass another exit from the wood on your left (the alternative path above). Where the lane curves left shortly, leave it by forking **right** on a track.

- 7 Turn **right** immediately at a T-junction on a stony path leading uphill. After 100m, at the start of a meadow on your left, keep straight ahead between hedges. Your path enters the deep woods of Ditch Acre Copse. After 100m, opposite a large metal gate, your woodland path makes a definite **right** turn. After a long forest trail about 400m in length, you come out to a junction by a field hedge by a post with blue arrows. Turn **right** on a wide path between fields. This ancient trackway is known as *Thieves Lane*, for whatever reason we can only speculate. You come out by a house to a road. Turn **left** on this *fairly* quiet road and follow it for ½ km uphill where you meet a junction with Hogs Lodge Lane. Continue onward, now using a welcome grass verge, passing a house or two, until you reach a major road, Chalton Lane, which goes parallel to the A3 trunk road. Turn **right** on the main road, immediately reaching the *Hampshire Hog*, a bright clean Fullers pub / hotel, with a menu of well-portioned comfort food and a patio which looks out onto the road but also across the South Downs. (This pub does not seem to be related to the other "Hampshire Hog" in Hammersmith.)

- 8 After possible refreshment, continue along the road, using the footway. In 200m, just before a roundabout, cross the road to the footway opposite and turn **left**, going across a bridge over the A3 trunk road. The next section need some care! Immediately after the bridge you will see a signpost pointing left into the bushes. 15m after the bridge, you should be able to go through a division in the steel barrier and turn **very sharp left**. (However, recently there is no longer a way through and you have to clamber over the barrier; problem reported to Hants CC.) Go down a highly overgrown (but short!) path to a wooden swing-gate leading into a large crop field. Your passage across the crop field is dead centre, although you may need to follow vehicle tracks in case the farmer has ploughed over the footpath. As

a guide, look ahead to the forest on the other side: it narrows to a point on the right; just to the left of that point, you can see a fingerpost - your destination. *As you cross you have good views again of Butser Hill.* At the other side of the field, go over a stile onto a pleasant green hillside. Go up to a stile by the fingerpost you saw. *Looking back, to your left you have a good view of Windmill Hill and Chalton Windmill, rescued from dereliction and now in fine shape.*



- 9 *[Care! some walkers go immediately astray at this point.]* After crossing the stile, your route is a wide chalky woodland path running close to the field on your left. But to reach it you need to turn immediately **right** for just 5m to find a gap in the hedge, then **left** and **left** again on the wide path. This path will lead you back to the QE Park. You pass a bench with a view of the terrain you crossed. After more than ½ km, you are walking beside a wire fence on your left and you pass another bench as a wide path joins from your right. At a fingerpost, you join the South Downs Way. Keep straight on all the time, going over a tarmac drive coming down from a car park on your right. Go through a wooden barrier on a path which runs along the fringe of the forest on your right. (If you parked elsewhere, or prefer the grass, you will divert left here.) You pass the Visitor's Centre and its café before the path finally descends to the car park where the walk began.



For other nearby walks, try "East Meon low path high path", "Queen Elizabeth Park and Buriton", "Buriton and the South Downs".

Getting there

By car: the Queen Elizabeth Country Park is clearly signed off the **A3 road**, about 3 miles south of Petersfield or 5 miles north of Waterlooville.

By bus/train: bus 37 comes from Petersfield, including on Sundays, stopping at the QE Country Park. Check the timetables.

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