



White Down and Dunley Hill

Distance: 4½ km=2¾ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Woodland, heath, grassy meadows

In Brief

This is a most unusual walk using rare local paths which will probably be unknown even to regular Surrey ramblers. It is excellent in late spring or summer when the woodland paths are relatively firm. This walk is an ideal companion for the *White Down Bluebell Walk*, making a very satisfying five mile figure-of-eight circuit.

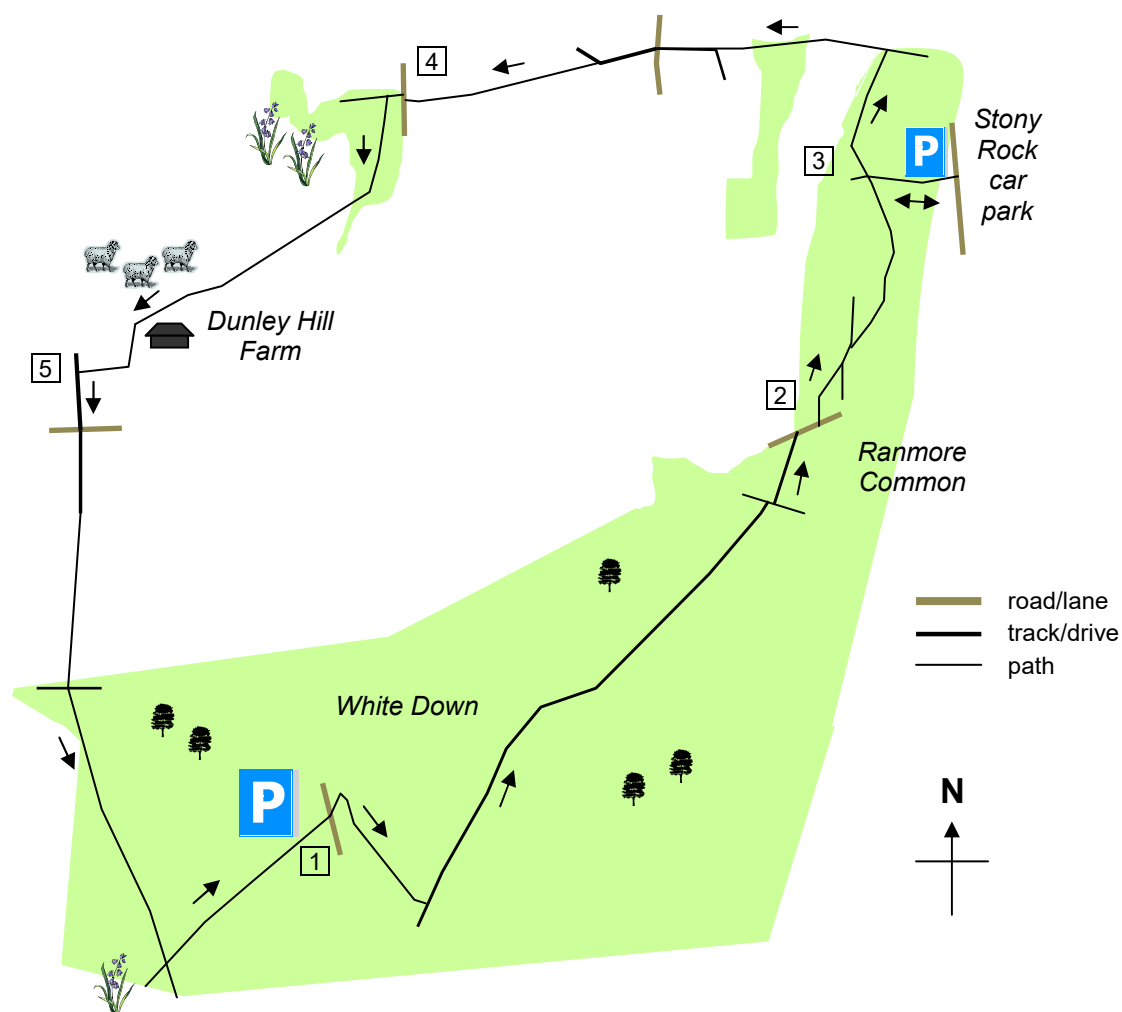


There are no nettles or brambles to speak of on this walk, so any sensible clothing is fine. Boots are advisable because of the forest paths (sections of which can be quaggy, but skippable, in winter), except in very dry weather. Your dog can come, with a short lead to cross a sheep field. Because of one option of a wooden gate, and the many replacements by kissing-gates, this walk is now **stile free**.

Because both car parks are in open ground, the postcodes below are *very approximate* and you may need a map (online or otherwise) to find them. (If you are versed in the latest tech, the three words pinpoint the spot.) The walk begins at the **White Down** car park, grid ref TQ 114 495, nearest postcode **RH5 6SL**, www.w3w.co/mice.poems.brave, in Whitedown Lane, north of Abinger, Surrey. An alternative start is the **Stony Rock** car park in Hogden Lane, nearest postcode **RH5 6SY**, www.w3w.co/lofts.cuts.pillow (see next). To arrive from the London area you can use either of the routes at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

If starting in Stony Rock: from the back of the car park, with a notice board away to your left, take a path past a National Trust sign for Ranmore Common. Keep ahead for 150m across an open area, near trees on your right to a crossing path where there is a more open area ahead. Turn **right** on the crossing path, staying close to the trees. Now join the walk at section 3.

The Walk



- 1 Starting at the White Down car park, go back out of the car park, cross the road and take a narrow path on the other side, a fraction right. The path wheels right and snakes its way up over the hillside for 150m or so, to meet a wide bridleway, obviously much used by forestry. Turn **left** on the bridleway. The bridleway runs along a good, fairly straight route through birch and gorse, gradually widening. *There may be a few muddy patches, even in summertime, but you can nearly always skip round them.* After 750m on this path, you meet a wide crossing path, with a road visible (or audible) on your left. Turn **right** on the crossing path and then sharp **left** on a wide path to continue in the same direction. In another 150m you reach the Ranmore Common Road, opposite *Ranmore Lodge*.
- 2 Turn **right** on the road for 20m, then **left** between two wooden posts (or skirting them on the left) on an unmarked path into the woods of Ranmore Common. In just over 100m, another path joins you from the right and, 25m after, your path forks. Take the **right** fork, the more uphill choice. In 100m you come out into the open on a glowing heath dotted with oaks and silver birch. Continue straight across until you reach a 3-way junction in the middle of the heath. Turn **left** here heading for a wooden post. When you reach the post, you will notice that it has red and white bands and the characters "1" and a red "E", a marker on a rider's trail. Keep straight on past the post, on a clear grassy path. When you reach the corner of some woodland, keep straight on, passing the woodland on your right.

3 You reach a large green meadow where horses graze. Your path wheels **right** to run beside the meadow on your left. Soon you meet another marker post, with the characters "10" and "Z". Keep **left** past the post. Your path runs close to the horse pasture again and soon reaches the far corner where it comes between two wooden posts to a T-junction. On your right is a very muddy horse path, but fortunately your course is **left** on a nice dry path, with the horse field still on your left. Soon you have a view across sheep fields on your right ([and on a clear day you can see the Wembley Arch](#)). Your path descends to meet a tarmac drive coming from a house on your left. Keep ahead uphill to meet a tarmac lane at the top. Cross straight over the lane, a fraction left, onto a surfaced drive for *Friars Elm*. Where the drive curves right, **leave** it by going straight ahead through a kissing-gate and along the right-hand side of a large meadow. At the end of the meadow, go through a kissing-gate and continue ahead. Near the next corner, go through a kissing-gate and steeply down the grass slope to a wooden swing-gate and a road, Critten Lane.



4 Turn **right** on the road for only 5m. Cross the road where there is a wooden gate on the other side and take a path diagonally **left** up the slope. After only 10m or so, your path meets another woodland path coming from the right. Turn **left** on this path, parallel to the road you crossed. [In late spring, you will see a fine show of bluebells here](#). Your path gradually climbs, with the road down on your left, zigzagging past woodland debris. As you approach a meadow, your path bends right and goes through a metal kissing-gate and up into a large meadow. Cross the meadow diagonally left, heading a fraction to the right of the large house prominent on the other side. This is *Ranmore Manor* with its belvedere tower. At the other side, go through a kissing-gate into a small sheep field and cross it diagonally. Exit the sheep field just before the opposite corner, **left** through a kissing-gate. Your path is a narrow passage which comes out into a yard in Dunley Hill Farm, with various businesses to the left. The path turns **right** by some cattle sheds. You come out to a driveway. On your right (not on your route) is a small business/retail park. Immediately next to you is a sentry box, one of the few clues to what was Dunley Hill Camp.

Dunley Hill was a WW2 camp where Canadian soldiers were barracked. The camp housed around 300 men and was used from 1941 to 1945. Nissen huts were hastily erected giving a muddy and uncomfortable way of life, punctuated by battle-drill and exercises, with lectures on gunnery and gas. The Canadians wandered into Dorking, raised some high jinks and a few married local women. Some nissen huts have survived because they were pressed into use for farm storage.

5 Turn **left** on the drive, out to the Crocknorth Road. Cross straight over the road through an open wooden gate (or over a stile) onto a driveway, then through a small wooden gate on a grassy path. Keep ahead on an avenue of hollies to reach a very wide crossing track. [The following is an improvement on the "standard" wide path, to avoid the "ocean of mud" that you may see here](#). Turn immediately **left** on the wide track for only 20m (30 paces) avoiding any puddles. Now turn **right** onto a narrow path which goes past two stumps and over a hump. In 50m, fork **right** and shortly turn **left** to re-join the main wide path. (Or you can simply keep straight on along a pleasant winding narrow woodland path which meets the main path about 30m to the left of the 4-way junction.) You have reached Old Simms Copse, famous for its bluebells. In 400m you reach a 4-way junction with a 3-way fingerpost [\[Aug 2021: grounded\]](#).



You now have the opportunity to do the *White Down Bluebell Walk*, by turning **right** at the fingerpost. Otherwise ...

Turn **left** at the fingerpost. In 250m, you reach the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: From **Dorking**, follow signs for *Ranmore*. Go straight 2 miles, passing the Denbies car park. Hogden Lane is 1 more mile, the first on the right. For Whitedown Lane, ignore another road on the right and turn **left** at a **cross-roads** on Whitedown Lane. The car park is 600 metres on your right.

You can also start at the **A3-M25** junction. Take the *slip road* signposted A3 *Guildford* but, in 100m, turn **left** on a road signposted *Effingham* that runs past a lake through forest. Follow the road to a T-junction and zigzag right-left over a humpback bridge, passing *Effingham Junction station*. At Effingham village, go straight ahead over two mini-roundabouts. Go through traffic lights over the main A246 road and follow a winding road to a crossroads with Ranmore Common Road and Crocknorth Road. For Hogden Lane, turn left and take the second road on the left. For Whitedown, give way (!) and cross straight over. The car park is 600 metres on your right.

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