

5. Cleeve Hill Common ring

This breathtaking walk leads you over open hilltops, across streams and through woodlands, immersing you in one of the country's most fascinating and precious habitats – limestone grassland. Over half of this wildflower and butterfly rich natural resource is within the Cotswolds and some of the finest examples are on Cleeve Common. The unsurpassed views along this route therefore, are the perfect backdrop for getting even closer to the outstanding natural beauty of the Cotswold Way.

Distance:

6 miles or 9.7km. Shorter route 4 miles or 6.4km.

Duration:

3½ - 4½ hrs (Shorter 2 - 3 hours)

Difficulty:

Moderate, no stiles but some steep sections. (Shorter: Easy, no stiles and mostly level)

Public transport:

No. 606 or W1/W2 from Cheltenham/Winchcombe - ask for golf course junction. (See the 'Explore the Cotswolds' public transport guide or visit www.traveline.info)

Start/Finish:

Grid reference SO 989/272
(OS Explorer sheet 179)
Postcode GL52 3PW

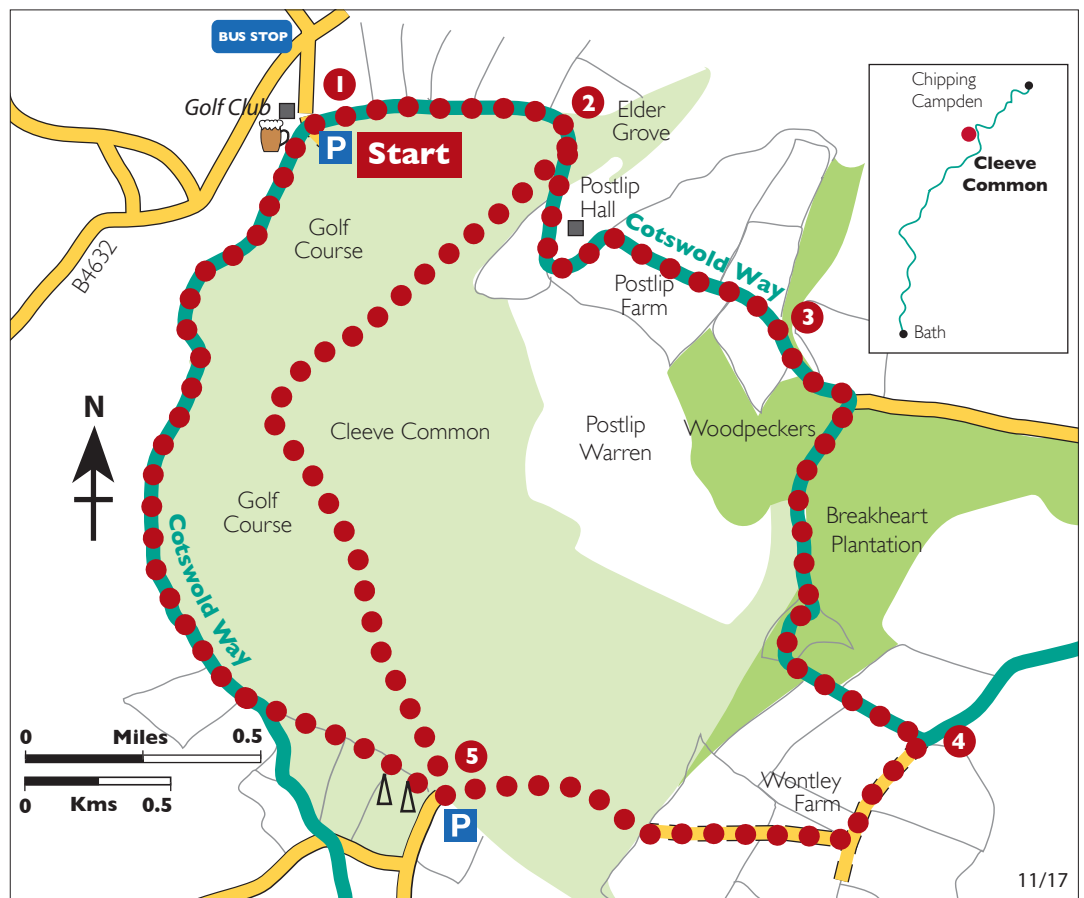
Refreshments:

Bar café/restaurant at Golf Club. Toilets and extra parking for customers.

Parking

Drive up narrow lane signed to gold club and at the top cross a cattlegrid and turn left then right into old quarry car park.

1 Start at the quarry car park across the track from golf clubhouse. Leave the car park and turn right to follow the track with the golf course on the right and a stone wall (and a wonderful view of Winchcombe nestled in its valley) on your left. Through a metal



field gate and along a hedged section, taking care to follow the Cotswold Way markers, to a second metal field gate.

2 Through the gate and then the decision – for the short cut see the last paragraph. For the main walk follow the Cotswold Way which is the middle of the three tracks facing you, angling downhill. Through the gate at the bottom, past the high stone wall of the 17th century Postlip Hall, past various farm buildings and out onto a driveway. Turn right, still on the Cotswold Way, and pass through Postlip Farm (There is a detour signposted for when the farmyard is busy!) down a field to a stream at the edge of a small wood.

3 At any time of the year, the shade of the woodlands and the calming sound of peacefully flowing water make this little bridge the ideal spot to stop and rest awhile before the climbs ahead. When you are ready, cross over the bridge and follow the path up to the right. At

the top, pass through the gate and across the paddock, turning right when you meet the road. Carry on past the stable, and continue to follow the signs through the woods. After the steep climb snaking up the wooded hillside the path will take you along a field edge and under some pylons before arriving at a kissing gate and a track.

4 Now leave the Cotswold Way by turning right, and follow the track down to reach the deserted Wontley Farm buildings. Turn right through a gateway and follow the path slowly uphill through the fields towards the radio masts in the distance. Pass through a gate back onto the common and take the path on the right towards the waymarker post, and continue to head for the masts.

5 At the masts, turn right to follow the fenceline until you meet the Cotswold Way. Continue right along the edge of the escarpment, past some of the finest views in England. Take care crossing over

the golf course for flying gold balls and head down towards the reward awaiting you at the clubhouse. A rest at the end of your walk is a chance to plan the next...

For a shorter route that avoids the steep climbs but doesn't miss out on the views, turn sharp right immediately after the second gate to leave the Cotswold Way and follow the track. The track splits into three after about 100 metres. Keep to the lowest track on the left and walk along the side of the hill. Eventually, the track merges with another track rising from the gully on the left. At this point, continue in the same direction, ignoring the steeper path to the left and the indistinct path rising steeply to the right. Continue a gentle ascent to reach a broad stone track.

Turn left and follow this track across the common towards the three radio masts. As the track peters out head directly to the masts and rejoin the route at point 5.