

Bruce Trail Friendship Trail - Beacons, Commons and Woods

This spectacular walk leads you along peaceful woodland tracks and out onto windswept hillsides with breath-taking views. A true jewel in the Cotswolds crown.

Distance:
6 miles or 9.7km

Duration:
2 - 2½ hrs

Difficulty:
Moderate - This is a stile-free route with moderate slopes

Public transport:
No. 63 Stroud to Gloucester bus, stops at 'Bird in Hand' (no.2 on map). (See the 'Explore the Cotswolds' public transport guide or visit www.traveline.info)

Start/Finish:
Shortwood National Trust Pay & Display car park SO 832/084 OS Explorer sheet 179) Postcode GL6 6PP

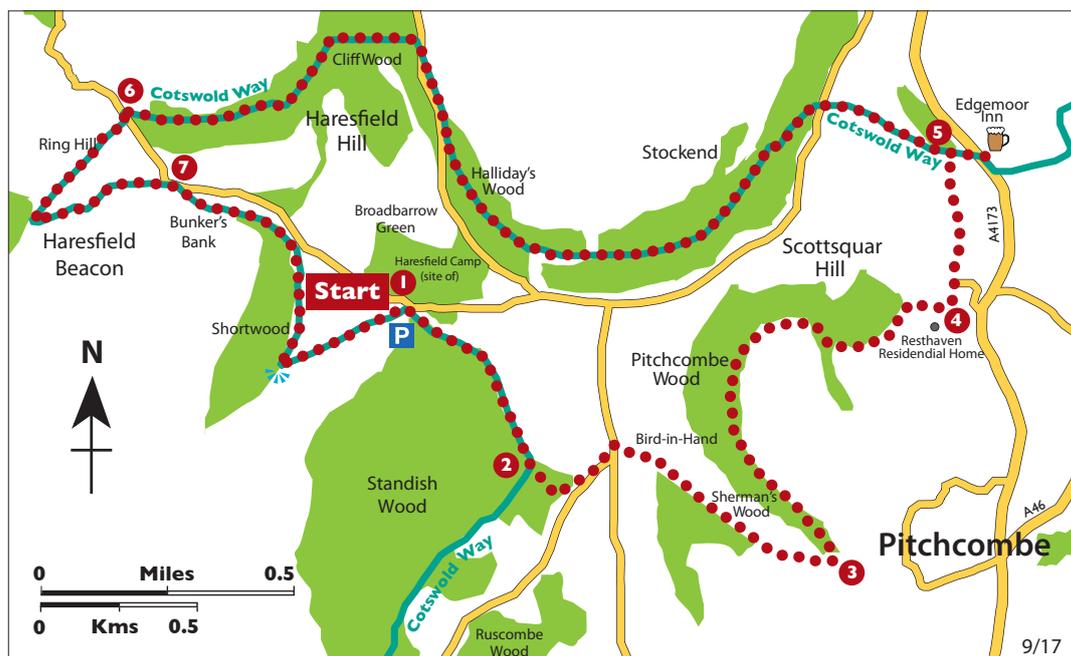
Refreshments:
Edgemoor Inn (short detour across road). Check opening times.

Parking:
Shortwood National Trust car park. Charges apply.

This part of the Cotswold Way is twinned with a section of the Bruce Trail, located in Ontario, Canada, as a mark of friendship and international cooperation between our two trails.

The 890 km long Bruce Trail is Canada's oldest and longest marked footpath and is maintained by volunteers. The trail spans beautiful and varied landscapes as it passes through Canada's most densely populated region, and is the only continuous public access to the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. For further information on this wonderful trail, visit: www.bruce-trail.org

The following route description below is even easier to follow, the friendship trail has been signed at key points with a special marker disc (pictured right).



1 Leave the car park through the wall near the main entrance and follow the Cotswold Way along a broad path into Standish Wood. At a fingerpost, fork left on a permissive path to join a lane via a gap next to large gates.

2 Turn left and, where the lane joins another road, cross over and enter a track to the right of a letter box. At the end of this track, enter a large field by a gate alongside a stile. Keeping to the right hand boundary, head downhill ignoring the first path on the right, but at the second path, divert diagonally left across the field to a kissing gate in the bottom left hand corner of the field.

3 Pass through the kissing gate and join a broad track through Pitchcombe Wood. All along this path there are fine views down to Pitchcombe village with its small church and across the Painswick Valley. At the end of the track, enter a field by a metal field gate and follow the left side of the field to the next field boundary then turn right down to a gate in the corner. Continue down to a metalled lane.

4 Turn left and, where the lane bears right, keep straight on to a

kissing gate onto Rudge Hill /Edge Common. This area of unimproved limestone grassland is grazed by cattle to preserve the habitat for several varieties of orchid and the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly. To the right, beautiful views open up of Painswick and the spire of St Mary's Church. Continue straight ahead to a Cotswold Way marker post.

5 At this point, you may turn right to the Edgemoor Inn or turn left to follow the Cotswold Way all the way back to the start. Proceed uphill following a series of waymark posts to the top of the common. When you reach an old quarry, head down the stone steps and cross the road to descend through woods and turn left onto a track. From here there are clear views to the Malvern Hills and, on a clear day, to the Brecon Beacons.

Continue to another road and turn right downhill. Turn left at an old well and horse trough to climb steadily. Three slabs of stone under yew trees are known as "Cromwell's Stone" and bear the date 1643 which corresponds to the Siege of Gloucester. Continue through the woods towards Ringhill Farm.

6 At the road, turn left uphill and

almost immediately right. Climbing steadily, take in wonderful views across the Severn Vale to the Forest of Dean and May Hill. On entering the grassland, follow the fence on your right then head for the trig point on the tip of Haresfield Beacon with more spectacular views. Turn left to follow the escarpment ridge to a flight of steps which descends to a lower track leading to Shortwood.

7 Head left uphill through woods to emerge onto open grassland. Bear right and continue to the end of the promontory where a topograph sets out the surrounding countryside in relief. To your left, the escarpment runs south towards Uley Bury and the Tyndale Monument. Further right is the Seven Estuary where, on a clear day, the twin bridges can be seen. Finally, to the west, lies the Forest of Dean with the Welsh hills in the distance. Once you have drunk your fill of one of the Cotswolds' finest views, put your back to the topograph and follow the trodden path back to where you began.