



# Walk on the WILDSIDE

## JO VAUGHAN HEADS WITHIN THE M25 RING FOR A STROLL AROUND THE NORTH DOWNS



**D**ESPITE not being far from London (in fact it's situated just inside the M25) the Club's Alderstead Heath site feels incredibly rural. Only a constant slight hum of road noise from the distant motorway disturbs the peace and quiet – not that this seems to worry the birds and wildlife that thrive on the site and its surrounding woodland.

Just a short walk away from the site, however, there is a true rural idyll – Happy Valley. Cutting its way through the gently rolling Downs, Happy Valley offers both great views and a reasonably strenuous hike. If you want to avoid many of the steep hills, however, you can walk along the valley floor – although don't miss the right-

hand turning that brings you back on to our route. This is found just before a wooden post with a yellow arrow that's missing its centre, where you can just see some wooden steps to your left and a gap in the woods to your right. Then continue from the start of instruction 13.



### General information

**Nearest Club site:** Alderstead Heath Caravan Club Site, Dean Lane, Merstham, Redhill RH1 3AH. Tel 01737 644629. Open all year

**Distance:** 4.2 miles/6.8km

**Terrain:** Some muddy and uneven paths

**Number of stiles:** 2

**Essential equipment:** Ordnance Survey Explorer 146 – Dorking, Box Hill & Reigate. Good stout walking shoes or boots

**Level of difficulty:** Moderate (some strenuous hills)

**Refreshments:** Only in Netherne On-The-Hill

**Toilets:** None

## DIRECTIONS

**1** Leave from the site reception area, passing the visitors' car park, and continue straight ahead over a stile situated to the left of the short brown fence. Cross the field following the muddy path.

**2** Continue ahead through some woodland, sticking to the main track until you reach the road. Turn right to walk along this, taking care as initially there's no pavement. Cross onto the pavement as soon as possible, and pass to the left of a 'Beware – Elderly People' road sign. Cross the road ahead to walk down Stoney Croft (sp 'No Through Road Except for Access').

**3** Continue past two wooden gates, and then a village shop on your right. After this, keep ahead along the road before soon veering right to join a footpath marked with two wooden bollards, opposite the entrance to Cayton Road. Cross another road ahead and continue through some more wooden bollards down a footpath, which widens into a road.

**4** When the road bends to the left, turn right, following the public footpath sign down Park Lane. As this road curves sharply to the right, continue ahead down an alley to the left of a metal fence, following a yellow public footpath arrow.

**5** Continue downhill, following the fence, and being careful of slippery patches. But when you get to a wooden post with a yellow arrow turn to the left. Head through the woodland, following the intermittently painted yellow spots daubed onto trees that mark the correct track. At one point, where the path seems to disappear, continue ahead, past an old knarled tree, and head through more trees beyond.

**6** Soon you emerge into a field. Follow an arrow along its left flank. At the corner of the field continue straight ahead between two hedgerows and then turn right down a gravel bridleway. Continue up a steep hill past the Farthing Downs sign, and, close to the top, continue ahead ignoring the paths that head to the left and right.

**7** Cross a small road and continue ahead following the arrows down a hill, veering right when you get to the trees, following a white arrow. Soon, however, veer left (sp 'Bridleway – Happy Valley'), ignoring the green arrow to your right. Continue down the steep hill, unless the way is too slippery. In this case, turn left (sp Bridleway 471), which is less steep, though less direct, way to the bottom of the hill.

**8** Once at the bottom continue ahead (sp 'Bridleway 742 (Circuit)') and climb up another steep hill. When almost at the top, next to a 'Corporation of London – Farthing Downs and New Hill' sign, turn right so your back is to the sign. Follow the path, which has a wire fence on its right side. At the end, where the path forks at the mouth of Happy Valley, turn around 45 degrees to



the left and walk up the path that runs to the right side of a hedgerow.

**9** Walk along the left flank of Happy Valley, following the tree line on your left. Where the path forks, keep to the right and continue along the hedgerow, keeping the open valley to your right. Continue as the path soon disappears into woodland, however, following the main track through the trees.

**10** Having emerged into another open field, but before the path disappears back into the trees, turn right at a cross-road of paths (where there's no public footpath sign) and head between two hedgerows down a slight hill. Continue across the path of two tracks, walking along the left flank of a field and past some push-up bars.

**11** Veer left to exit the field at its corner, where the track meets with another larger track which is partly gravelled. Turn right down the hill, but very soon turn left (sp Public Footpath – 1/2 Chaldon Church). Head down the hill via the wooden steps to the valley floor.

**12** Continue past the 'Pedestrians Give Way to Horses' sign, across two small footpaths, and up the side of the field, keeping the hedgerow to your left. At the corner of the field continue straight ahead (sp Public Footpath – 1/2 Chaldon Church).

**13** Follow the field's faint double track. Pass into another field where you'll find the way more clearly defined. At the end of this field continue ahead through a gap in the trees and turn left onto a lane. Very soon, fork right at the 'Chaldon AD1086' sign and the public footpath sign. Walk past the St Peter and St Paul Church, but soon, before the lane bends to the right,

## Local attractions

- **Denbies Wine Estate and Vineyard**, London Road, Dorking RH5 6AA. Tel 01306 876616. Website denbiesvineyard.co.uk. The largest privately owned vineyard in Europe
- **Chartwell Historic House**, Mapleton Road, Westerham TN16 1PS. Tel 01732 868381. Website nationaltrust.org.uk. Home of Sir Winston Churchill from 1924 until his death
- **Croydon Clocktower**, Katharine Street, Croydon CR9 1ET. Tel 020 8253 1030. Website: croydon.gov.uk/leisure. Temporary exhibitions and galleries. Disabled access: Full facilities

cross a stile beside a metal gate (sp Alderstead Heath 1/2 mile).

**14** Follow the track through the next field, and continue past the disused stile at its end. Veer slightly right to continue following the trodden path through the next field (passing some barns to your right). Continue past another disused stile, and at the far side veer left, keeping to the field's perimeter. But soon turn right into the woodland, passing between two gateposts.

**15** Walk to the public footpath sign on the main track (just a few paces away), and continue straight on across the track, following the arrow which is facing away from the way we've just come. Just past the metal posts turn right and walk through another set of posts. When the path opens out into a concreted clearing keep right. You'll find yourself back at the campsite's entrance.

## Tourist information

Croydon Clocktower, Katharine Street, Croydon, Surrey CR9 1ET. Tel 020 8253 1009

## ALDERSTEAD HEATHWALK: 4.2 miles/6.8 km

