

Guildford, North Downs Way and Wey Navigation

A short walk along the lush Wey Navigation then joining the beautiful countryside and woodland of the North Downs Way, returning via Loseley Park Lake. (There is an optional extension to the Watts Gallery adding 1 mile to the walk).

You can start this walk from Artington Park and Ride car park where there are public toilets. (The signs say you may only park there if you use the bus service, I never have but you could combine your visit with a bus trip). Alternatively, you could park in any of the Guildford town car parks or start from Guildford bus or train stations, walk or take the bus out to join the path via the A3100 (approximately ¾ mile - Stop is Chestnut Avenue)). You could also follow the Wey South Path in the town centre at Millmead Lock (behind the old Debenhams store) and turn right at the North Downs Way sign at the end of the houses on the right (approx. ¾ mile).

From the P&R go to the back of the car park and enter the footpath and turn left. At the end, turn right and go under the railway bridge down to the shallowest lock on the Wey Navigation. Turn left here and follow the towpath. This area has many old alder trees and wild meadows on the far side of the water. The path snakes around and there are signs of minor landslides of sand from the quarry on the left. You pass under a wooden footbridge and soon after there's a footpath sign to the left for the North Downs Way. Go up the path/drive to the A3100, turn right, then left into Sandy Lane.

About 200 yards/metres along the road take the track on the right signposted North Downs way. You will now stay on the North Downs Way undulating but on a mainly gentle incline for 1 ½ miles. You pass open land on the right with meadows, arable fields and lovely views. On the left is woodland first and then open fields, the path then turns sharply left on the lane and then right along a track with some lovely old oaks amongst the trees. The woodland on the left is now part of Loseley Nature Reserve, stock doves and great spotted woodpeckers are busy here and the usual residents like jackdaw, dunnock, robin and wren. Keep following the NDW signs whenever in doubt. Soon the track runs out and becomes a narrower footpath in places. The nature reserve continues on the left. Soon you find a crossroads signpost and, for the short route, leave the North Downs Way by turning left. Drop down the hill along a narrow path full of snowdrops in late winter.

For the long route option continue on the North Downs Way, mainly a wide sandy track with beautiful sides full of wild flowers until you reach the Watts Gallery, tea shop and Artist's Village. After your stop continue onto the lane and turn left. You will quickly see a lane appear to the right and opposite, on your left, a footpath sign. Take this path between trees and fencing and then mainly running parallel to farm tracks watching for the footpath signs continuously as you skirt fields, basically the route is straight on. You keep going until you reach a T junction, down some steep steps. At the bottom turn right onto the footpath and then follow the instructions in the next paragraph as you have rejoined the short route.

Soon you meet a lane and turn left up passing a gate and continuing along a track. This has a southerly aspect to the right of open fields beyond the hedgerow. The track has some lovely

old trees, some with a heavy burden of mistletoe. Ring-necked parakeets could be heard here using some of the old trees for nest sites. Also, I heard a raven calling. You reach a gate across the path and follow the public footpath sign turning left. Then the path turns right and crosses a track and heads along the right-hand edge of the field. Here skylarks can be heard singing in season.

Before long the path has a metal kiss gate and you enter the surrounds of Loseley Park lake. The owners have left a few benches here, some a little worse for wear! The lake has birds on it and apart from the usual geese, Canada and greylag, there are moorhen and some little grebes. The trees are likely to have goldfinch and in winter, siskin and redpoll. Continue in the same direction and exit via the next kiss gate on the path across the next newly-fenced meadow.

At the end of the meadow, continue past the cottages, cross the lane and the bungalows following the same direction. The path narrows and has lots of bramble with butterflies and the hedgerow has wildflowers including lesser celandine in spring. Do not divert from the same direction and before long Mount Browne, the HQ of Surrey Police appears on the hill top. Pass the grounds in a straight line and then you reach a minor road leading down to the A3100. Turn right here (or left for the bus stop back to Guildford) and on the roadside footpath you will very soon see the entrance to the P&R at Artington.