

# Guildford, Newlands Corner, Pewley Down and the Wey Navigation – a Rail to Trail walk

Beautiful Surrey countryside, sweeping views, open skies, birds, flowers and good paths

1. Leave the station, turn right and go under the underpass. Go beneath the road and up the steps on the left, angling right to the path between the buildings. Descend the steps to the river, turn right and go under the bridge, keeping left along the river bank. Keep going past the White House pub to the footbridge on the left and cross. Look for grey wagtails here on the water's edge. Follow the path past the Theatre to the road Millbrook.
2. Turn right. Walk along the roadside until you see Chantry View Road on the left. Enter this road and continue gradually climbing uphill to Echo Pit Road and turn left. Ascend this hill until you reach Warwicks Bench Road going off to the left. Do not turn but continue forward up into Northdown Lane. Follow this lane as far as you can until you reach Eden House.
3. Follow the path to Pewley Down on your right. Take the diagonal path up and across the meadow. Cross a wide track and you soon emerge on another track with a bench to rest from your hill climb. Now, crossing the down, pass the memorial to the gift of this land (by The Friary Brewery, later Friary Meux, closed 1973) to the public of Guildford and enjoy the fabulous views across the valley. Follow the long hedgerow across the Down. You can expect to see buzzards, red kites and I saw kestrels hovering here. This ridge attracts birds on migration in the early spring and autumn. There's a good chance of wheatear on the ground, stonechats on the tops of lower bushes and posts and skylarks singing above you. Wildflowers and orchids will be in the grassland with butterflies in summer. Heading to the end of the hedgerow and grassland take the path into the trees.
4. A signpost says Burgess Way. On your right is a thin, scrub, hedgerow and on your left a strip of mainly beech woodland. On my walks in early spring, I found this path a nicely sheltered place away from the wind. I found the fungus called King Alfred's Cakes along this path. Soon the garden fences to a few properties appear on your right-hand side. Further on you will meet a lane and continue going in the same direction to the crossroads.
5. Continue straight into White Lane. This is narrow but traffic is usually quite light and after a while there's a narrow roadside path on your right. In spring, you'll find primroses here. A little lane appears on your left, going up to a reservoir. Ignore this and continue along the road. When you reach the house called Whiteways Lodge a strong path with a marker post opposite enters the woodland.
6. Turn right on this path. This will now lead you all the way to Newlands Corner. You pass through a widening area of mixed woodland, mainly beech, oaks and many lovely old yew trees and plenty of holly. You can expect to find all our common birds here, including chiffchaffs, blackcaps, goldcrests and song thrushes. I also found several marsh tits here, a declining species. What seems slightly puzzling is that the moss on the trees seems to be mainly on the southside. This is normally a feature of woodland in the southern hemisphere but moss will grow anywhere where it's dark and damp. So, in winter these woodlands, are likely to be very cool and damp. Brimstone butterflies are to be seen in March. Newlands Corner has a takeaway café, visitor centre and public toilets and a further café a short distance away across the A25.

7. With your back to the Visitor Centre walk directly across the car park and go down the hill on the marked path which bends to the right through the trees then the path splits. Emerging from the trees look to the left side, look downhill for a metre-high path marker post and drop down to it. Continue straight against the hedge and into the hedgerow. You will quickly reach a metal gate onto open fields. In spring and summer these fields are alive with skylarks.
8. At the bottom of the valley follow the footpath signs past the cottage and chicken run. At the path junction turn right onto the public bridleway (this is part of The Pilgrim's Way). You will see many bluebells here in late April/early May. Green woodpeckers like the sandy fields with old trees on your right. Look for buzzards and red kites. Keep walking to the lane.  
***(On reaching the lane, you could choose to continue straight on and follow the path past the noticeboards for the steep climb to Saint Martha's church on the hill (see the map – follow the Pilgrim's Way/North Downs Way signs). You may miss some of the best natural surroundings but get some views and historical uplift and rejoin the main path at point 11.)***
9. At the lane, turn right down to the bottom where it turns sharply right and take the marked Public Bridleway track through the gate on the left. Do not follow the North Downs Way sign, keep going straight. You will now see wildflowers, some great trees and then signs of traditional hedge laying. I found my first wood anemone of the season here. Much of the land on this section of the walk is owned by Surrey County Council. To your right chalk grasslands have a south facing aspect. These are great places for butterflies, wildflowers and orchids. To your left on the north facing hills, you may see, after a kilometre, some considerable work going on to restore some acid grassland. This is preparation for a SANG designation (compensation recreation land for housebuilding). Rhododendron has been cleared properly by digging out the roots, cutting at ground level does not enable restoration. This area is being re-seeded with native wildflowers relevant to its location and aspect. (From 2023 for a year or two the valley bottom may be excavated for Thames Water to lay important pipework). Next you reach Tyting Farm and Halfpenny Lane.
10. Cross straight over onto another public bridleway. This is lined with bugloss, wild parsley and red dead nettle. You soon reach a path crossroads, and a huge sign telling you more about Pewley Down. Continue straight on past the sign. After a couple of hundred yards, you reach another big path crossroads.
11. Turn right onto the North Downs Way. ***(If you followed the Pilgrim's Way over Saint Martha's Hill this is the point at which you will rejoin the lower walk)***. Horses and jackdaws will probably occupy your senses here. Guildford appears on the hill over to your right. When you meet the lane, continue straight on but I prefer to follow the parallel woodland path. I found treecreeper here in the Norway spruce trees. When the woodland path drops down towards the lane, with large logs at a rough track entrance, continue on the lane itself and not in the woodland. The lane soon reaches The Chantries car park.
12. Pass this with the car park on your right to Pilgrims Way, turn left and follow this road to the A281 and cross directly over. Follow the path across the field and into the woodland opposite. Pass the information sign for the Shalford Water Meadows, pass the alder trees, once used for making charcoal and gunpowder, and at the riverbank turn left to the footbridge.
13. Cross the footbridge and turn right along the river/canal bank. This will eventually return you to a weir and a footbridge to the A281 Millbrook. Turn left and retrace your steps to Guildford station (1) and a well-earned rest.