

COMPTON CIRCULAR ROUTE

Long route: 5¾ miles (9¼ km) - allow 3 hours if walking

Short route: 5 miles (8 km) – allow 2½ hours if walking

See map on final page

Introduction

This route is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and starts from the village of Compton in the heart of the downs in Berkshire, about 5 miles (8km) west of the River Thames at Goring-on-Thames. It follows lovely rolling downland tracks and a stretch of The Ridgeway. It can be enjoyed by walkers, cyclists and horse riders.



The route is waymarked with this 'Recreational Route' mark

Terrain and conditions

- Mostly on downland tracks.
- This route is moderately strenuous for walkers but with no steep sections. Long Route: 150m (485 feet) ascent and descent. Short Route: 120m (390 feet) ascent and descent
- No stiles or gates.
- Some paths can be muddy and slippery after rain.
- There may be seasonal vegetation on the route.

Preparation

- Wear appropriate clothing, and helmets if cycling or horse riding. Walkers wear strong, comfortable footwear.
- Carry water.
- Take a mobile phone if you have one but bear in mind that coverage can be patchy in rural areas.
- If you are alone it's sensible, as a simple precaution, to let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.
- Cyclists carry a puncture repair kit, a spare tube and bike tools.

Getting there

By Car:

The walk starts in the centre of Compton at SU521799. To find it online, visit www.gridref.org.uk, enter 'SU521799' in the box and click 'find a place'. Please park considerately in the village

By Bus: (Please note these details were correct in October 2012 but bus services can change with little notice so do check before travelling)

Newbury buses service 6/6A provides a regular service to Compton from Newbury on Monday to Saturday (no Sunday or bank holiday services). ☎0118 959 4000 for further details.

Facilities and refreshments

- Refreshments: The Swan, Compton, open every day and serving food from 12noon to 11pm. ☎01635 579400
- Accommodation: The Swan, Compton. See above for contact details.
- Village Shop: Compton, open daily Monday to Saturday, and Sunday mornings until 10.30am
- Toilets: In the Swan only

Things to remember

- If you bring your dog with you, keep it under close control and on a lead when near to livestock.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Remember that the countryside is a working place; leave crops, buildings, machinery and livestock well alone. Leave gates and property as you find them and please keep to the line of the path.
- Park your car responsibly: do not obstruct gateways, narrow lanes and village facilities. Consider leaving valuables at home.
- Please enjoy your walk or ride and spend your money in the local facilities - they need your support!

Walk directions

1. Start in the centre of Compton on the High Street and just east of the Swan turn north into Horn Street. As the road bears left, turn right into Wallingford Road.
2. When you reach the old railway bridge, pass under it and turn right on to a bridleway. This climbs gently uphill to a junction of tracks called 'Crows Foot' – a look at the map will show how it got its name. Turn left and after a short distance bear right. At the next junction, in a few metres, take the left track that makes the central 'claw'.
3. At the next junction of tracks either:
 - a. For the short route, turn left along The Ridgeway and follow it to point 4 passing a junction of tracks about half way along and then Roden Downs, or
 - b. For the longer route go straight over and pass Lowbury Hill on the left. At the next junction of tracks turn left and follow this track to join The Ridgeway at point 4.
4. Continue west along The Ridgeway and over a disused railway line.
5. Turn left at the next junction and follow the bridleway down a track for 600m and then right across a field. It soon rejoins the track which then ends at a metalled road on the outskirts of Compton.
6. Continue down the road bearing right which will take you back to the High Street.

Points of interest

The Ridgeway is one of only 15 National Trails in England and Wales. It's thought to be the oldest road in the country having been in existence since Neolithic (New Stone Age) times some 5,000 years ago and is surrounded by numerous prehistoric sites.

Starting in the Avebury World Heritage Site it travels for 87 miles (139km) in a north-easterly direction along a chalk ridge, bisected at roughly the mid-point by the River Thames and finishing in an Iron Age fort on top of Ivinghoe Beacon. Throughout its length it is within fine countryside: to the west of the Thames there's the open, rolling and remote downland of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and to the east it's in the more wooded and intimate landscape of the Chilterns AONB.

Compton

The origins of Compton stretch back to the Domesday Book and at the time had two manors which both fell into the hands of supporters of William the Conqueror. In the 19th century the railway was built from Newbury to the Great Western Railway depot at Didcot. Compton station became an important centre for the passage of sheep going to and from the sheep fairs in East Ilsley, which used to be the largest in England. The railway closed following the decline of the wool industry in the 1960s. The remains of an Iron Age hill-fort, Perborough Castle, lie about a mile south of the village and is one of a series of hill-forts close to The Ridgeway.

Lowbury Hill

There are fine views from here and the remains of a Roman temple on the summit along with a previously unknown Roman military outpost. From Lowbury Hill, 12 other entrenchments occupied by Roman forces were visible.

Roden Downs

There are dykes and ditches dating from the Iron Age on Roden Downs indicating it was farmed at this time. After the Roman invasion of 43AD the land around Roden became a cemetery and fragments of pottery, human bones and a multitude of coins have been discovered.

Views along the route



Looking towards point 3



The Ridgeway west of point 3 in spring



Clematis, or Old Man's Beard,
in the hedgerows in October



The Ridgeway on Roden Downs

COMPTON CIRCULAR ROUTE MAP

