

Walk 5: Otford circular

A slightly off-piste-feeling walk through quiet woods and exposed hilltops on the high chalk downs with memorable views. Great train access

THE WALK IN SHORT

Points 1-2: 215m. Leave Otford station and turn right. Next, turn right at Pilgrim's Way East. After a few metres take the path opposite, uphill signposted North Downs Way (looks like a private drive)

Point 2-3: 1km. Path enters light woodland and has some steps in it. Seat on left to admire view. After gate is grassy field. Keep on right hand side and pass through trees to lane junction

Point 3-4: 700m. Continue along lane heading east (Birchin Cross Rd) until you rejoin the North Downs Way on right. After a few metres at path t-junction turn left (east). Walk alongside field on your left, past large isolated house to Shorehill Lane

Point 4-5: 340m. Turn left down Shorehill Lane to Birchin Cross Rd. Turn left (west-ish) then after a few metres look for path through woods on right, across the lane

Point 5-6: 800m. Walk through woods (great pines) and emerge in secluded field. Walk uphill diagonally across field to top left hand

How long? 3hrs/5½ miles (9km)

Public transport: Otford and Shoreham railway stations are served by regular daily services from London Blackfriars, London St Pancras, ie easy from Peckham Rye, Catford, Bromley South etc. Otford has more trains (some Maidstone services stop there too)

Parking: in Otford village in car park by recreation ground
Start of walk: Otford station
Steep slopes? two steep sections

Walk highlights

Medieval echoes from Chaucer's times, lofty viewpoints, ancient, quiet woodland, untouched chalk upland wild flower meadows. Otford and Shoreham villages contain many very old buildings. Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map



Blue line is alternative Darent path - actually a bit nicer than the standard Darent path

corner. Pass through two more fields separated by stiles, hedges/trees until you reach a lane (Magpie Bottom)

Point 6-7: 740m. Turn left on lane then very soon look for footpath resuming on right. Take path through woodland and fields to Romney St (there are several paths as you approach Romney St – doesn't matter which you take)

Point 7-8: 650m. Turn left (west) at Romney St (if Fox and Hounds is still closed) and continue along path/alley beside a large house with a hangar and airstrip. Path opens out on to chalk upland. Great views. Continue on path down very steep hill where golf course used to be on floor of deep valley

Point 8-9: 400m. Pass through hedgerow 'corridor' then up very steep hill to copse

Point 9-10: 380m. Leave copse, walk diagonally across field then another field to join farm track

Point 10-11: 300m. Walk up track through little valley to Dunstall Farm. Turn right at farm buildings and just before a circular cattle barn, turn left on footpath across field to woods

Point 11-12: 850m. Enter woods, walk down steps, then to A225 road by Shoreham station

Point 12-13: 260m. Walk under railway bridge down Station Rd, past Darent Valley golf club and take footpath on left

Points 13,14,15: 2km. Go past cricket pitch, across narrow lane and continue to Otford

This superb walk, probably the longest on this website, can be shortened by returning from Shoreham station.

It's notably quieter than, say, Ide Hill and the Shoreham walks and so is the best one for a bit of solitude, if that's your mood.

It's a real shame the Fox and Hounds pub at Romney St has shut (for now). The pub entertained shot-down German airmen in the second world war on a couple of occasions, according to the Shoreham Aircraft Museum and had a great beer garden. Its closure means that Ye Olde George, opposite Shoreham's church at the bottom of Station Rd close to



The secluded field (points 5-6)

Point 13, is best placed to quench walkers' thirst.

I particularly like the woods and secluded field between points 5-6, the views between points 7 and 9 and the ancient woodland after point 11. The little valley just prior to Dunstall farm is very pretty too.

The lower Darent Valley path is a nice add-on. It can be found by turning right on the lane by Point 14 and then taking the first path on the left. It comes out further down Otford High St. It adds another ½ mile or so (see Walk 8, too). If you have time, enjoy Otford's surprising medieval buildings too.

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View from on high (points 7-8)