

Walk 9: Hever circular

A few miles south of Ide Hill is this gem on the Weald with quiet meadows, woods and a sandstone outcrop. The castle and church set a Tudor theme. Great for woodland birds

How long? 4.5 miles (7km), 3 hours

Public transport: Trains serve Hever hourly (sometimes more frequently) on London Bridge to Uckfield line via East Croydon. Parking: easy, at Hever Castle car park opposite church (free) Start of walk: St Peter's Church next to entrance to Hever Castle Steep slopes? None Easy to navigate? Yes, because until Point 3 you are following the waymarked Eden Valley Path. At Point 3 the right turn is obvious and from there it's straight on to Point 5.

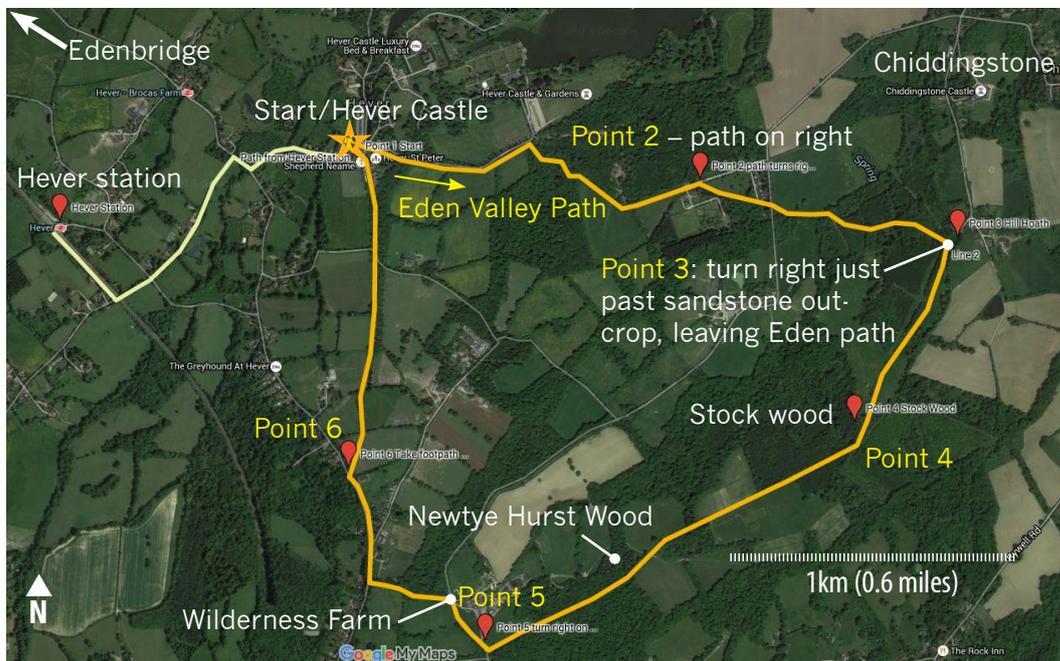
Walk highlights

Sandstone outcrop and holloway on Eden Valley Path at Hill Hoath, St Peter's church in Hever, Stock Wood, wildflower meadows, beautiful woodland

Description (and pub)

A lovely walk without any steep inclines through quiet woods and meadows with a great variety of trees and birdlife. The route starts at the medieval church of St Peter right by the entrance to Hever Castle. Just before Hill Hoath there is a really fun section of path between tall green sandstone boulders, a hidden Wealden rocky outcrop. Later on there's a bit of the walk for a few hundred metres on Uckfield Lane so take care (especially with kids), but the final stretches are back on footpaths and pleasant, cutting through fields and woods. At the end of the walk a large historic pub, the Henry VIII, beckons you in for Shepherd Neame beer and some decent food. The walk is one for spring, summer, early autumn – appallingly muddy bits from December to April.

Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map



THE WALK

Points 1-2: 1.3km

Start at Hever Castle car park by St Peter's Church and Henry VIII pub or walk to the start point from Hever station on the Eden Valley Path. Walk through St Peter's churchyard on the Eden Valley Path and exit by a gate then across a little bridge. Follow the path through woods, parallel with a lane with a glimpse of Hever's lake to your left before turning away, going through more woodland and over another bridge then back out of woods with two houses ahead.

Point 2-3: 1km

When you reach the second of two houses continue on the Eden Valley Path, which turns off the track to the right, next to the second (white) house (look out for the yellow EVP marker). Pass a lovely, small meadow with very tall pine trees (look out for llamas!), cross a lane, over a stile then walk by a larger, attractive field with woods to your right. Watch out for birds here like blackcap, tree creeper, goldcrests, coal tits and nuthatches. Soon the rather rutted path becomes enclosed by woods and goes slightly uphill on steps, before passing a huge ancient yew tree and passing between large green sandstone rocks – an ancient holloway used perhaps for thousands of years. After you emerge from the holloway you are about to leave the Eden Valley Path – look out for a path heading south west to the

right. If you reach a lane or Hill Hoath Farm you've gone too far. You'll see a wide strip of meadow (used for showjumping practice?) on the right and the footpath through a kissing gate to the side. The path is marked with a blue sign (as opposed to yellow).

Point 3-4: 750m

You've found the aforementioned path heading south west so turn right on it and follow to Stock Wood. Enjoy the views. This is a quiet stretch and my favourite part of the walk. Enter Stock Wood (you'll see the sign) which is being managed as a nature reserve.

Point 4-5: 1.5km

Walk through Stock Wood, ignoring paths off to the right and left (so plough straight on, don't deviate) emerge, cross a meadow and another copse and enter more signed woods (Newtye Hurst Wood) passing young pines on the way. Continue all the way to a junction of country lanes. A long stretch, but a lovely one.

Point 5-6: 0.8km

Turn right down the quiet lane a few hundred yards to Wilderness Farm. Turn left on the lane opposite the farm house, then right again on the busier Uckfield Lane. Carefully continue down this lane and ignore the road forking right you soon come across and follow Uckfield Lane for a few hundred metres looking out for a slightly hidden marked footpath in

the hedgerow on the right. If you miss this path you have another chance to join it a few hundred metres further on, next to the Greyhound pub.

Point 6-7: 1km

Follow this footpath through several fields, above a stream, through a little light woodland, across a lane, past a primary school, back to the church and the Henry VIII pub.

Choice fact

Anne Boleyn's dad (Elizabeth I's grandfather) is buried at St Peter's church with other members of the Boleyn family. It's great inside with a wonderfully decorated 1419 tomb of someone called Margaret Cheyne. Read more about the church and Hever Castle at this very attractive website: onthetudortrail.com.

Pop in on way back...

Bough Beech reservoir (kentwildlifetrust.org.uk) has a great little nature reserve on the lake at its northern tip and short trails. Hever Castle is of course worth visiting but is a whole day itself. Check out St Peter's church though and the Henry VIII pub which looks really good. Ide Hill and Emmetts Garden is covered on the eponymous walk on this website.

Please email me with your experiences of this walk

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