

Walk 1: Downe circular

Tread in Charles Darwin's footsteps on this walk among woods and meadows in the North Downs. Easy walk, good for kids. Combine with trips to Down House and Christmas Tree Farm

How long? 45mins-1hr
2.5 miles (4km)

Start of walk: footpath next to Christmas Tree Farm, Downe
Public transport: 146 bus runs hourly every day until late from Bromley North and Bromley South (25-minute bus journey from Bromley). R8 bus runs every 80 minutes from Orpington railway station (20mins). 12 mins by taxi from Hayes railway station.

Parking: easy, in Downe village
Steep slopes? None

Walk highlights

Superb meadows (at their best in early summer). Christmas Tree farm. Darwin's garden and house, hedgerows, the chance of seeing Spitfires from Biggin Hill airport, beech trees and old, flint and wooden houses and a great church. Two pubs with decent food, tea and coffee. An easy walk, no steep inclines. Great to combine with a visit to Down House, where Darwin wrote Origin of the Species, and to High Elms nature centre a mile to the north east. Forty minutes' drive from East Dulwich.

Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map



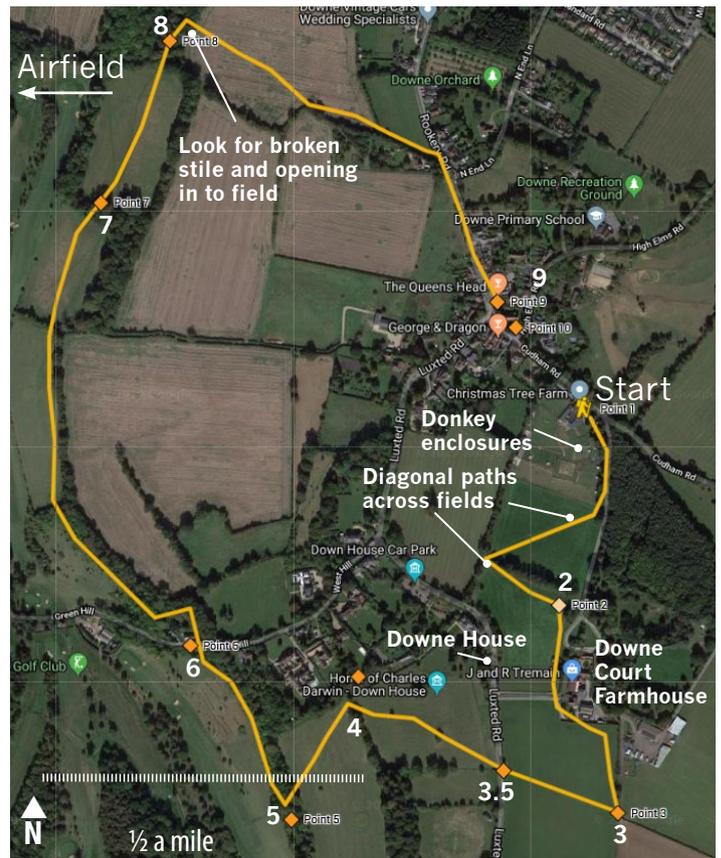
St Mary the Virgin church, Downe

Point 1-2 (about 500m): Take the narrow path right just east of Christmas Tree farm on Cudham Rd, passing over a stile (don't inadvertently take the second path signed to Cudham). Walk past Christmas Tree farm paddocks (on your right) then head diagonally across centre of meadow to right, heading south-westish. After passing through trees at the field's right-hand corner head diagonally left (south-eastish) across the next field towards a farm. (Ignore sign to Down House.)

Point 2-3 (480m): Ignore another sign pointing to Down House and pass through a metal gate. Look for Stable Cottage sign and walk past it; see 'Footpath' sign pointing right (south) with a row of cypress trees on your right. Join this path past Downe Court farmhouse crossing over surfaced driveway and passing monkey puzzle tree (look for the yellow marker ahead). Enter a crop field and follow its inside edge first sharp left then right. Soon arrive at path junction with signposts.

Point 3-4 (450m): Turn right (west) across middle of field heading towards country lane (Luxted Rd) through gap in the hedgerow. At Point 3.5 on my map cross road and enter lovely meadow adjacent to Downe House. Pass between small trees in centre of this meadow and reach north-western (far top right) corner of field where there's an entrance into the garden of Downe House.

Point 4-5 (180m): Pass through a metal gate with the back entrance to Down House garden on your right (crossing the great man's 'sandwalk' - a nice little side excursion). Then immediately pass through a wooden gate into another lovely meadow. Cross this field on the path diagonally to the left (south east). Deer often seen here. The path increasing heads



Nearing Point 3

downhill then reaches a hedgerow, goes over a stile, then down steps to a junction with a north-south path and signpost.

Point 5-6 (280m): At this junction turn right (north) and follow the path through light rather jumbly woods to a country lane (West Hill). The path turns to the right just before this lane.

Point 6-7 (850m): Cross the lane and continue on the path nearly opposite signposted to Holwood Farm, heading north. Very soon it turns sharply left downhill (west) (ignore metal gate and path on the right) before continuing north and after a few hundred metres emerging in a glorious hillside meadow

with golf club house across the valley to left. This is the first of three hillside meadows with beech trees to the right and separated by hawthorn. Beyond the golf course and woods is Biggin Hill airport.

Point 7-8 (350m): Cross the final field on the centre, higher path (ignoring what looks like a path slanting downhill to left) and enter woods ahead. Watch for a right turn ahead where quickly you will find an opening by a broken down stile into a field to return to the village. (There are two paths that enter these woods, if you choose the lower one then take care not to miss field opening to right; if on the upper path the right turn is clearer.)

Point 8-9 (650m): Head east on the path across this crop field (muddy in winter). Aim for far-right corner (south-eastern corner) where the path narrows amid holly with a barbed wire fence on left and emerges suddenly on to the road (kids take care) into Downe by a bus stop. Turn right for pubs etc.

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For a GPX track of this walk for your phone [click here](#). For a four-mile Downe circular, with the same start and end points as this walk, [click here](#)