

Ashdown Forest on the Bus



Welcome to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty an unspoilt medieval landscap.

Ashdown Forest is one of the great heath lands of Southern Britain. It sits on the highest ridge top of the High Weald and is the largest free public access space in the South East. Sadly it is infested with cars. But this walk lets you explore the Forest using frequent buses.

Grateful acknowledgement to Travel Log Lewes (Chris Smith) for the loan of this walk

Distance and duration	6 miles / 10 kilometres - 3 hours
Level	Leisurely
Start point	By Bus. Start Crow and Gate pub bus stop on the A26 south of Crowborough. By car lay-by opposite Crow & Gate pub on A26 outside Crowborough. TN6 3TA. Finish Five Ash Down bus stops
Map reference	OS Explorer 135 map Map Ref TQ493289
Other information	The 29 bus runs to both the start and the finish points from Lewes. It runs hourly in the day Mondays to Saturdays and hourly on Sundays. You can travel on the top deck and have lovely views of the countryside on your way to and from the walk. The buses have "next stop" indicators. To get off for the staff ring the bell when "Crow and Gate" comes up on the indicator. For bus and train times see Traveline South East

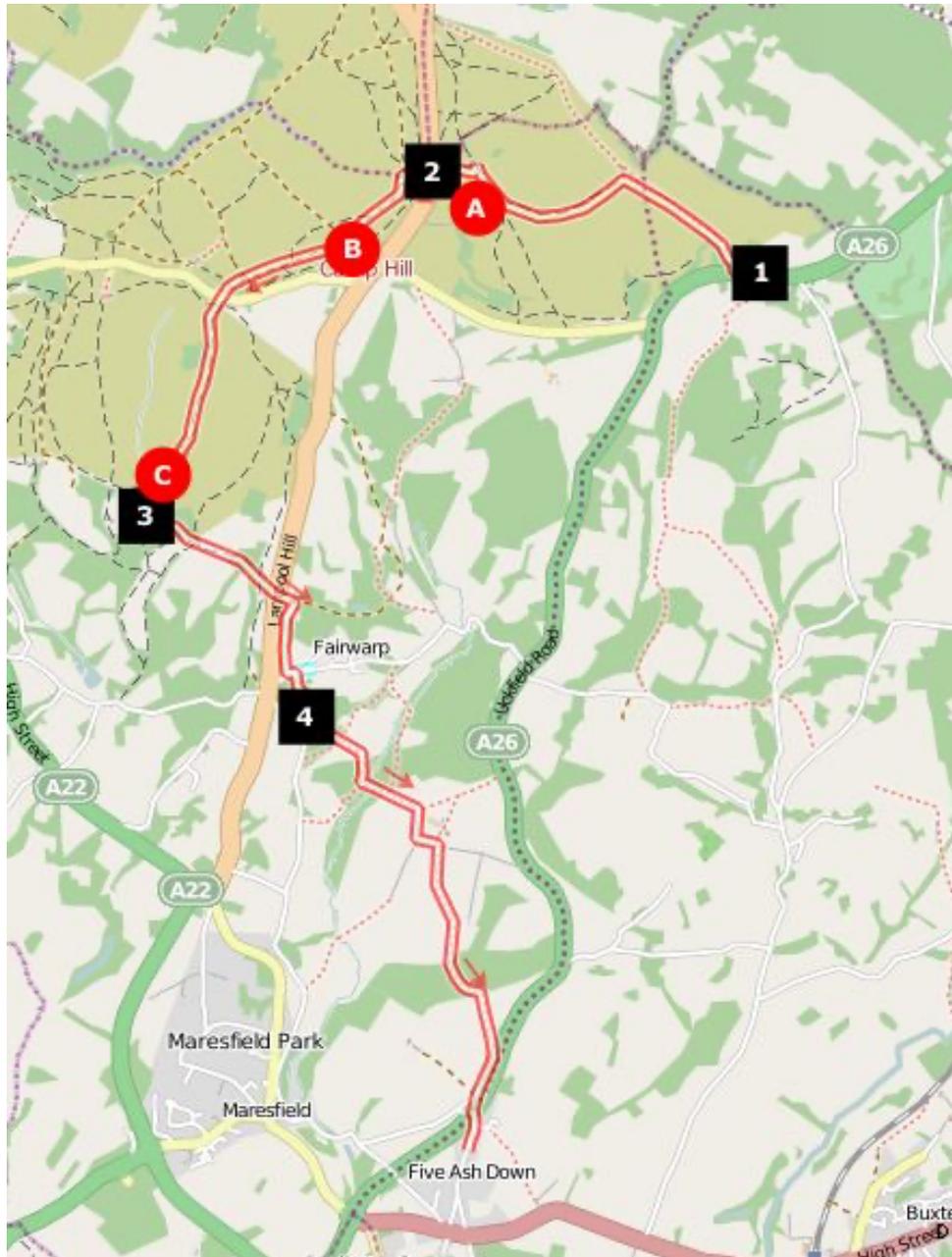
I-Spy - Things to look out for in the landscape

A). *The fence originally encircled a set of radio masts where broadcasts were made to occupied Europe during the 2nd war. In the 1980s a great bunker was built to be a seat of regional government after an atomic war. This became redundant and the site was handed to the police.*

B) *This is one of a number of clumps planted by the De la Warr family in the early 19th C. The family owned the forest at the time and may have wanted to have signalled their ownership to the people who had common rights to use the forest. This seems to have worked, for the commoners, in their anger, destroyed many of the trees that were planted. Camp Hill clump seems to have survived this treatment and today the trees are mature. There are tremendous views and two seats have been planted to enable you to enjoy them. This would be a good place for a picnic.*

C) This is the “airman’s grave”, which is actually a memorial to Sargent Sutton and his crew-mates who were killed here returning from a bombing mission. The memorial was erected by his mum. Every year on remembrance day a large group of walkers and others gather here.

There are many sites on the higher parts of Sussex which mark the deaths of airman in the war. Within living memory the sky above you was a battlefield.



Route Directions

1). The bus stop from Lewes is on the same side of the road as the Crow and Gate Pub. Walk west (back in the direction you came) from the pub on the pavement. Just before it ends you will see a track to the right with a Vanguard Way sign. Take this and come quickly to a junction of tracks. Bear left and walk to the right of trees. The way opens out and you can see your route in front of you descending into a valley and then up the other side. Arrive at the bottom of the valley and start to ascend. You come to a junction. Take the track to the left. Follow it for about 0.5 kilometre until you come to a fenced area that marks off a Sussex Police training facility (A). Turn right here following the fence, but not before noting the fine views of the South Downs to your left.

The fence begins to curve away to the left. Keep straight ahead for about 40 metres and then take a track which turns very sharply left to return to the fence. The track then turns right to follow the fence. We take this alongside the fence until it reaches the road.

2). Cross the road carefully. There can be a lot of cars here. You have probably heard them as you approached the road. Opposite there is a gate. Go through this and take the path ahead.

Come to a junction. Go straight ahead, downhill. At the next junction turn left and follow the track up the track to Camp Hill Clump (B).

From Camp Hill continue in the same direction, descending gently. After two ponds you come to a car park (Ellison's Pond). Cross the road beyond it to another car park (Hollies). On the opposite side of the car park from the road you can see an interpretive board. From here you can see a broad track which heads south away from the car park, descending gently. Come to a stone wall enclosing a tree in the middle of the path.

After the grave (C), continue downwards in the same direction to the bottom of a valley.

3). Cross a stream by a bridge to your left and walk left, uphill, on a wide track. At the top of the hill, by some houses, the track divides. Take the right hand track and follow it, ignoring cross tracks, until you reach the road.

The character of the walk now changes. You turn your back on the open heathland and enter a more intimate landscape of woods, streams and small fields.

Cross the road carefully. A lot of the traffic will be ignoring the 40 mph limit.

Continue straight ahead for about 80 metres. Come to a crossroads. Take the track that turns sharply to the right. This track narrows and then comes to a junction. Turn right towards Fairwarp Church. Pass the rear entrance (calling in if you wish).

A driveway comes in from the left. Continue straight ahead on the driveway, which goes down the side of some houses with large gardens. Come to the little road to Fairwarp. Turn left. Then on the first turning on your right, turn right on a drive. Signs suggest that this is only a private drive to houses, but notice that there is a bridleway sign as well.

If you continue straight on for about 100 metres instead of turning right you come to the centre of Fairwarp and the Foresters Arms pub. Return to the same point after your visit.

Follow the drive as it winds through posh houses, to emerge at a lane.

4). Turn left here onto a track. After about 50 metres see a footpath sign leading off to the right. Take the path indicated by this sign. You come to a four way junction. Keep straight ahead. The path bears slightly to the left and you are funnelled into a path that descends to another signed junction. Turn left here. Descend steeply to a stream. There is a well-made bridge built by East Sussex County Council's maintenance team. Cross this. Climb steeply uphill.

At the top of the hill a path comes in from the left. This is the Wealdway. The route follows the Wealdway from here to the end point, making navigation generally easier from now on. Continue straight ahead, now following the Wealdway. The path turns right and, despite what I've just written, the navigation becomes a little difficult. After some rock outcrops the path turns left and sharply uphill. The way round the trees can be a bit difficult to find. Look for a gate above you.

Go through the gate and follow the path straight ahead, keeping a house on the right. After this house turn right on a track. At a junction turn left with the main track. At the next junction turn right down a track. Come to an open area with sheds to your left. Do not turn sharp left here. Instead cross the open area diagonally to the left to enter a field. Walk diagonally to the left across this field (in 2013 there was a temporary fence for your to follow)

Walk through the next field with fences on either side of you. Come to a new bridge and cross this. Climb upwards, straight ahead through the wood. At the top of the wood enter a field. Walk straight ahead across the field. You will probably be able to hear the sound of the main road.

Bear right into a wood. Shortly the right of way turns left, but do not follow this. Instead follow the path through the wood that runs parallel to the main road. Come to a small tarmacked lane.

If you are in a hurry to get your bus or it is raining, turn left here. Quickly reach the main road. Turn left. Bus shelters and bus stops for buses in both directions can be seen a few metres ahead of you. Buses to Tonbridge Wells stop this side of the road. Buses for Lewes and Brighton stop on the other side.

If you are not in a hurry cross the lane and take a path in the same direction that you have been travelling. (It starts slightly to the right of you) Follow this path until it reaches the main road further down.

Carefully cross the main road to walk meet a lesser road which turns off to the left. Follow this. Pass a car showroom. Shortly after this come to the Pig and Butcher pub on your left. Buses for Lewes stop outside. Buses for Tunbridge Wells stop a little further down on the opposite side of the road, by the post office. There are no shelters or seats at these pubs but you can pass the time in the Pig and Butcher.