

Old Down Circular

Distance: 3.25 miles

Walking Time: 1 1/2 hours

GRADE : Moderate/Hard 4

28

This walk starts and finishes on the A38 close to Rudgeway. After crossing a fertile valley used for growing crops the route explores an attractive limestone ridge, rich in wildlife and covered in a patchwork of calcareous grassland and ancient woodland. There is an opportunity to stop at the Fox Inn, a popular free house in Old Down. Please take care, as some sections of path are steep and can become slippery in wet weather.

Maps:

Explorer 167

Thornbury, Dursley & Yate

1:25 000 scale

Landranger 172

Bristol & Bath

1:50 000 scale

Grid Ref:

ST 624 864



PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

Only certain 309 journeys operate to/from Dursley providing a two hourly service, Monday to Saturday.

No service on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Get off the bus at Willis Brake woodland, this is the stop just past the lay-by opposite Rudgeway Park. If in doubt ask the bus driver to tell you where to get off.

At the end of the walk you will return to the same spot on the A38. Walk in the direction of Thornbury and Gloucester for approximately 300 metres and cross the road to the bus shelter. The return journey to Bristol is via the same services as the outward journey, with buses running at similar frequency.

Please check the above timetables by phoning Traveline on 0870 608 2608 or log on to www.firstgroup.com

PUBLIC HOUSES/CAFES

Fox Inn Public House, Old Down 01454 412507

CREDITS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

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traveline
public transport info
0871 200 22 33

PLACES AND FEATURES OF INTEREST

Sheepcombe Brake Ancient Woodland

Ancient woodland is defined as having continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD, although some may be much older. Since ancient woodlands have existed for so long they have developed a rich ground flora and provide a diverse habitat for wildlife. This is certainly the case for Sheepcombe Brake which has been actively managed in recent years. Trees have been thinned; some have been coppiced and much laurel has been removed. As you walk through the woodland note the dead hedge on the right which was created to provide cover for small mammals. Plants, which carpet the woodland floor, include hart's tongue and other ferns, bluebell, wood anemones, spurge, wild garlic and red campion. The largest trees are oak and ash with hazel, hawthorn and holly growing underneath. Birds which may be seen in the area include: nuthatch, green woodpecker, greater spotted woodpecker, tree creeper, long tailed tit, great tit, blue tit, robin and blackbird.



The Fox Inn Old Down

Return to the meadowland through the kissing gate and bear left to follow the path. After a while bear right and follow the path down slope through the woodland. At the foot of the slope re-enter Sheepcombe Valley and retrace your footsteps back to the A38. Follow the instructions in the public transport section to catch the return bus to Bristol.

At the noticeboard, turn right immediately into a wood and continue straight ahead along the overgrown path into Old Down Quarry. Follow the steps and posts to reach the upper quarry then turn left towards the gate. Turn right to follow the road uphill. At the cross roads turn right then immediately right.

The dry, calcareous grassland supports a wide range of flora. Note the fine views of the Almondsbury Ridge and Bristol Channel.

From the kissing gate follow the path round the edge of the cricket pitch. Note the clumps of pine trees on the ridge. Buzzards and kestrels can sometimes be seen circling above the slopes. Follow the fence on the right which guards the edge of the quarry until you reach Old Down Hill.

Old Down Quarry

The lower part of the quarry contains rich in-filled soil, providing good conditions for a variety of herbaceous plants and trees. Mature trees include ash, spindle, hawthorn, elder and oak. Other plants include wild privet, dog rose and wild clematis. The area provides good habitat for small mammals and insects. Following the steps to the upper quarry we find the rock very close to the surface and the soil very thin. Mature trees include hazel, hawthorn, field maple, ash and sycamore. Other plants include catmint, marjoram, stonecrop, musk mallow, knapweed, green alkanet, pyramidal orchid and wild privet.



Old Down Village

At the T-junction turn half left towards the Fox Inn. The Fox sell snacks, meals and a range of drinks. Opposite the Fox is a hedge of sea buckthorn, common in coastal areas. Yew Tree Cottage on the left is said to be the oldest in Old Down. At the end of Inner Down turn left past Shumac Cottage (Old School House). After 50 metres turn left and then right, into the pastureland.

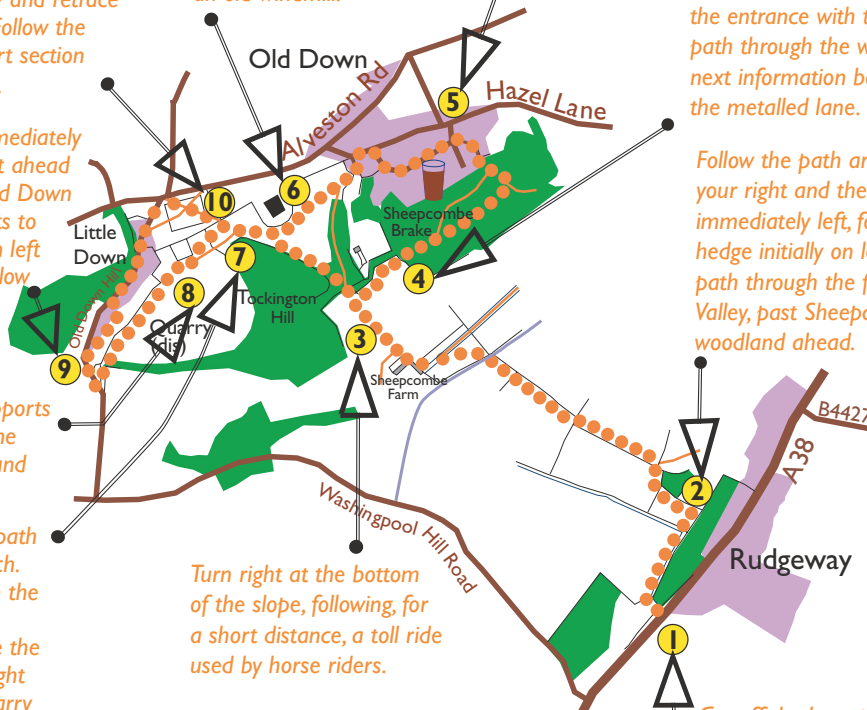
Follow the footpath towards Old Down Pavilion. The large house on the right (Windmill House) is built on the site of an old windmill.

Enter Sheepcombe Brake woodland by way of the entrance with the notice board. Follow the path through the wood and turn left at the next information board to climb the path to the metalled lane.

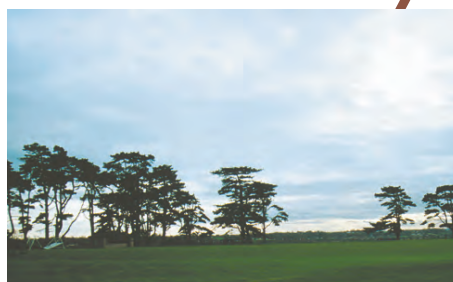
Follow the path around with the wood on your right and then cross the stile and turn immediately left, following the path with the hedge initially on left then on right. Follow the path through the fields across Sheepcombe Valley, past Sheepcombe Farm to the woodland ahead.

Turn right at the bottom of the slope, following, for a short distance, a toll ride used by horse riders.

Get off the bus opposite Rudgeway Park and walk back in the direction of Bristol. After 100m turn right along the public footpath, following the path down slope through the wood and turn right to follow the path along the woodland edge.



- Key**
- public house
 - walk route
 - other paths
 - field boundary
 - road
 - urban area
 - woodland



View over Little Down

