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Billingshurst to Amberley

Length 22.8km (14.2 miles)

Toughness 5 out of 10 – fairly flat, but with a stiff hill climb at the end.

Maps OS Explorer OL10 (formerly 121) and OL34 (formerly 134)
OS Landranger 197 (a tiny bit near the start on 198)

Features

This walk is an illustration of the maxim that a pleasure deferred is a pleasure intensified. It starts in very gentle countryside, from where there are occasional glimpses of the South Downs as a thin line in the distance. Gradually throughout the day, you get closer and closer to them, and finally there is an exhilarating finish along their crest, with panoramic views of the Arun valley. But way before you get to them, just before lunch, there is a surprise area of High Weald-like territory of steep hills and hidden valleys. Early in the walk there is a fine bluebell and wood anemone wood, making this a good excursion for late April or early May. The length of the afternoon section - 13.5 km (8.4 miles) - means this walk is not viable from November to February.

Walk options

This walk has a sister walk – **Pulborough to Amberley** - which shares the same lunch stop and a small centre section, and has the same finish over the Downs to Amberley. It is thus possible to do the morning of one and the afternoon of the other. The morning of the Pulborough to Amberley walk is **5.5km (3.4 miles)** versus 9.3km (5.8 miles) for this walk, and its afternoon is **11.2km (6.9 miles)** compared to 13.5km (8.4 miles) for this walk.

Transport

Billingshurst and Amberley are both on the Horsham-Littlehampton line, served by trains out of **Victoria**. Catch **the nearest train to 9.20am** from Victoria to get to lunch in time. Buy a day return to Amberley

Lunch

Rising Sun, Nutbourne (01798 812191), 9.3km (5.8 miles) into the walk. Described in one comment as "just how a village pub should be", it is a very atmospheric place, with a cosy interior and a pleasant garden. It offers a varied menu with good walker-sized portions from 12pm to 2pm (3pm on Sundays). It is open an hour later than these times for drinks.

A possible **picnic** spot is mentioned in paragraph 42 of the directions, although this is only 7.3km (4.6 miles) into the walk

Tea

The Crown Inn, Cootham (01903 742625), 15.6km (9.7 miles) into the walk, is a possible early tea stop at weekends in spring and summer, when the proprietor says he “usually stays open all afternoon”: an ideal choice to refresh yourself before climbing on the Downs.

The **Riverside Tea Rooms** (07765 790 414) by Amberley station provide a charming riverside location for tea, but are currently (November 2021) only opening Wednesday to Sunday and closing at 4pm: but hours may improve in the summer months

An alternative tea room, slightly off the walk route, and staying open till 5.30pm daily (in summer at least), is the friendly **Amberley Village Tea Room** (01798 839196). Details of how to reach this are given in the walk directions.

Otherwise, the friendly and atmospheric **Bridge Inn** (01798 831 619) across the road from the Riverside Tea Rooms and directly adjacent to Amberley station (though on the opposite side of the tracks from the station entrance: you have to go under the road bridge to find it) serves tea and coffee until at least 10.30pm.

For a **picnic tea** the fine viewpoint mentioned in paragraph 110 of the directions is ideal.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Billingshurst to Marringdean Road (2.1km/1.3 miles)

1. From platform two at Billingshurst (the platform you arrive at from London) exit directly off the platform and turn left down Lower Station Road.
2. In 100 metres ignore Chestnut Road to your left and in 150 metres cross Daux Avenue on the same side.
3. 25 metres further on, opposite Natt's Lane to your right, turn left following a footpath sign onto a path (sometimes muddy and overgrown) with a wooden fence to the left and a chainlink fence to the right.
*(In April, you should see increasing numbers of **wood anemones** and **bluebells** as you walk through this wood.)*
4. After 250 metres cross a two-plank bridge.
5. In another 200 metres, where the fence ends to the right and you come to a four way footpath sign, keep straight on, with houses visible through the foliage to the left.
6. In 120 metres more **fork right uphill** at a three-armed footpath sign, your direction 120 degrees.
7. In 200 metres join a path merging from the right, and in 20 metres go straight on across a crosspath.
8. In 300 metres the path curves left. In 20 metres more, **as you approach the edge of the wood** to the right, you come to a three-armed footpath sign. Here **turn right** onto a path, with the wood edge now to your left.
(If you miss this turning, you come to another junction with a two-armed footpath sign: if so, you have gone too far.)
9. In 70 metres the path starts to go gently downhill, still with the wood edge to your left.
10. In 250 metres more, at a footpath post, **turn left into an field** and right along its edge, with a bluebell and stitchwort wood to your right in season.
11. In 170 metres pass into the next field, with a two-armed footpath sign confirming your route. Keep on along the right-hand edge of this field.
12. In another 150 metres, where the wood ends, keep straight on across an open field, aiming to the right of an oak tree in 40 metres.
13. In another 30 metres pass through a wooden fieldgate and turn right onto a tarmac lane.

14. In 100 metres you come to a T-junction with a larger road: cross this and turn left along its pavement.

Marringdean Road to Gay Street Farm (3.8km/2.4 mi)

15. In 130 metres the road starts to curve right and in another 80 metres, at the top of the hill, the pavement ends. Keep on along the right-hand verge of the road, watching out for traffic.
16. In 180 metres ignore a footpath sign to the right, pointing up a driveway, and in 70 metres ignore another (easily missed) signposted footpath to the left into Fowler's Field.
17. In another 60 metres, at the end of a garden of a house walled in red tiles on the right, and level with a house called "Meadows" on the left, **turn right up a gravel/tarmac drive**, a signposted footpath.
18. Keep straight on up the driveway ignoring ways off. In 170 metres, where the driveway bends sharp right, keep straight on along the right-hand edge of a field.
19. In 200 metres go along a broad track, with a wood to the left, to pass in 120 metres pass through a metal fieldgate into a new field and keep straight on along its right-hand edge.
20. In 50 metres, at a four-armed footpath sign by a stile to the right, **turn left across the field**.
21. In 80 metres cross a stile and two plank bridges into a wood.
22. In 250 metres cross a plank bridge and a track and keep straight on, following a two-armed footpath sign.
23. In 50 metres cross a plank bridge and stile and carry on across a field.
24. In 70 metres pass round a fieldgate into the next field and turn left along its edge, following an arrow on a post.
25. In 60 metres, just before the end of the field, go right up its edge, following an arrow on a post.
26. In 120 metres, at the far end of the field, pass through a metal gate and cross a plank bridge, then turn left to cross another plank bridge in 5 metres, to continue along a fenced-in path (a bit overgrown) on the left-hand edge of a field.

27. In 100 metres pass through a gap (a broken kissing gate) and keep along the left-hand edge of the next field.
28. In 180 metres turn right up the far edge of the field.
29. In 120 metres pass through a line of trees, to keep on along a path fenced off from the field to your right.
30. In another 150 metres cross a plank bridge and a stile. **Cross a busy road with care** and turn left along its broad verge. There is another fine bluebell wood to your right.
31. In 100 metres, opposite a side road, turn right up a signposted bridleway.
32. Follow this bridleway, with a fenced-off wood to your right and a field through the trees to the left. In 150 metres the wood ends and there is an open field to your right, still fenced off.
33. In 300 metres you pass a pond to the left and cross into the next field. Keep straight on, still with the fence to the right, up a long gentle hill.
34. In 300 metres more, at the top of the hill, the path shifts slightly to the left so that there is a now a line of trees between you and the field.
35. In 60 metres more pass through a fieldgate and carry on down the right-hand side of a field.
36. In 300 metres pass through a metal fieldgate into the next field and keep on along its right-hand edge, with more bluebells to your right.
37. In 130 metres, by a small pond on the right, pass through a metal fieldgate into the next field and keep straight on, with a wooden fence to your left.
38. In 150 metres exit the field by a metal fieldgate to come to farm buildings. Here pass to the right of the pond and a hedge to keep straight on (south) down a broad grassy track, with a field fence to your right.

Gay Street Farm to Nutbourne (3.4km/2.1 miles)

39. In 180 metres, just before a metal fieldgate ahead, turn left through a metal gate to the right of a double fieldgate and then right onto a tarmac lane to continue southwards.
40. Stay on this lane, ignoring ways off, for 1km, until you come to a road T-

junction. Go right at this junction, uphill.

41. In 40 metres turn left at over a stile to the right of a metal fieldgate, and head straight uphill.
42. In 170 metres, at the top of the hill, stop to enjoy the panoramic view behind you (this is a nice **picnic** spot) and then carry straight on through a metal gate.
43. Veer right after the stile up a bank and on up the right-hand edge of a garden. In 50 metres you are alongside a brick wall.
44. In another 20 metres, where the wall ends, keep on up the right-hand edge of a lawn. In 60 metres turn left along its top edge
45. In 30 metres pass through a wooded strip, to emerge into a field, with a view of the South Downs ahead. Turn right here over a stile into an area of young trees.
46. Follow a path around the contour of the hill, watching out for the large badger/rabbit holes
47. In 250 metres cross a stile and pass through a gate in a deer fence into a vineyard. Look out for a **not very visible sign** on the end of the **seventh row of the vineyard**: the path here veers left, crossing **diagonally** across the vineyard rows.
48. In 150 metres you are directed to the left to emerge from the end of a vineyard row. Turn right here, to pass in 30 metres through a gap marked by a two-armed footpath sign (**not** an unmarked gap 5 metres to its right).
49. Beyond this gap turn left downhill on a fenced path. Pass through two high wooden gates and follow the fence around to the right.
50. In another 15 metres, level with a high (seven bar) wooden gate, **ignore** the tempting track to the left, but instead **slant left uphill**, following the fence and a two-armed footpath sign.
51. In 30 metres pass a metal shed and then in 30 metres a wooden building, to find a stile in 50 metres more. Cross and descend a bank on steps.
52. At the bottom, cross a shelf to descend steeply downhill through bracken.
53. In 50 metres or so you emerge into the open and bear slightly left, heading

for a footpath sign and gate at the bottom of the field.

54. In 80 metres pass through the gate and cross a stile immediately beyond, and keep straight on uphill, heading for the top right-hand corner of the field.
55. In 100 metres, at the top of the hill, cross another stile. In 20 metres, cross a concrete farm road and keep to the right of a concrete area by a shed, to carry on along a path with a hedge to the right and a fenced-off field to the left.
56. In 100 metres the field fence ends, and you carry on through a shrubby area, contouring the hill.
57. In 200 metres pass into more thickly wooded/scrubby area.
58. In another 60 metres, at a three-armed footpath sign, keep straight on, ignoring a path downhill to the left, to skirt in 10 metres round to the right of a plantation of new trees. Keep on along its right-hand edge on a broad path, with a wire fence to the left.
59. In 200 metres cross a stile and keep straight on downhill along a field edge, with a fence and newly planted hedge to the left.
60. In another 250 metres cross another stile and keep on down the right-hand side of a field.
61. In 100 metres follow the path as it descends into a shallow gully, and in 40 metres pass through a kissing gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate and curve left downhill on a sunken track.
62. In 150 metres merge with a tarmac lane and in another 40 metres, at a T-junction, go right.
63. In 40 metres at another T-junction, turn left downhill into the village of **Nutbourne**. The recommended lunchtime pub, the **Rising Sun**, is 100 metres further down the hill on the right.

Nutbourne to Cootham **(6.2km/3.9 miles)**

64. Coming out of the pub, turn right to resume your former direction. In 70 metres, just after Holly Tree Cottage on the right, turn left up a signposted footpath.

65. In 30 metres pass a redundant stile and in 15 metres turn right along path between hedges.
66. In 40 metres, where a gate blocks your way, turn left across a stile and carry straight on across a field.
67. In 150 metres, at the far end of the field, ignore a stile ahead and turn right along the field edge, following a footpath sign.
68. In 170 metres cross a stile and then another to the right of a metal fieldgate. Keep to the right-hand edge of the next field.
69. In 150 metres cross a stile down to a road. Turn left for 10 metres, and then right up a signposted footpath, climbing steps up a bank and on along a fenced path between gardens.
70. Follow this path when it turns right and then left again. 50 metres after this there is a field to the right.
71. In 60 metres more cross a stile into a field and veer to an ash tree 50 metres away.
72. Beyond the ash tree veer right to pass to the right of a water trough, and carry on along the contour of the hill, ignoring a faint path that seems to head for the stream to the left.
73. In 200 metres, at a three-armed footpath sign in mid field, turn right across a stile and head uphill.
74. In 250 metres cross a stile to the right of a fieldgate. In 25 metres, just beyond a house called "Horsecroft Tanners", turn left up an unsignposted footpath between a high wooden fence left and a tall beech hedge to the right.
75. In 120 metres cross a track and keep straight on through a gate to the right of a fieldgate along a signposted footpath down the right-hand edge of a wood, ignoring a path forking to the left in the wood.
76. In 150 metres pass through a wooden gate to exit the wood and keep to the right-hand edge of a field.
77. In 80 metres, 25 metres before the end of the field, go right through a metal fieldgate and cross the corner of the next field to a stile and a road in 60 metres.
78. Cross the road and turn left on it (**take care on this road**, as traffic comes quite fast). In 150 metres you cross a stream. In 20 metres more turn right across a stile following a footpath signpost into a wooded area by the stream.
79. In 150 metres cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and keep straight ahead, with the stream still to your right.
80. In 80 metres cross a ditch/stream and go left along its far side, following a two-armed footpath sign.
81. In another 100 metres cross a wooden footbridge and just beyond it a plank footbridge, and carry on uphill into a wood.
82. In 120 metres, at the top of the hill, go through a gate and onto a golf course (watching out for flying balls) following a signpost and aiming to the left of a silver birch 120 metres ahead. (A two-armed footpath by the birch confirms your route).
83. Beyond the tree cross the next fairway to a gate in 100 metres.
84. Beyond the gate, veer left along a fence on a signposted footpath. In 150 metres cross a stile to the left of a wooden fieldgate and turn left onto a tarmac road.
85. In 400 metres keep straight on across the car park of the golf club.
86. In 150 metres, at the end of the car park, keep straight on down a tarmac and gravel driveway.
87. In a further 200 metres go on through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate, and keep on along the driveway (which is a public bridleway).
88. In another 400 metres you come to a farm where you pass a barn, and then go through a wooden fieldgate. Merge with a track coming in from the left in 60 metres and keep on downhill.
89. In another 70 metres pass through a gate to the right of a wooden fieldgate and turn right at a three-way junction onto a track that soon becomes a tarmac lane.
90. In 40 metres the road crosses a stream and carries on in a cutting.
91. In a further 400 metres, where the lane curves sharp right, ignore a track to the left, but go straight ahead up a signposted footpath into a wood.
92. In 100 metres pass through a wooden gate. 5 metres later, at a three-armed

footpath sign, ignore a path to the right and carry straight on. In a further 50 metres curve left with the path between fences, with a field to your right.

93. In 120 metres turn left with the path along the field edge and in another 100 metres right again, still on a path fenced off from the field.
94. In 400 metres, where the fence ends, turn right uphill at a three-armed footpath post, with a wire fence to your right.
95. In 100 metres the fence ends and there is an arable field to your right. Keep to the edge of this. **The expanse of grass to your left is the runway of a gliding club, and gliders land silently on it**, so do not stray off the path. A wind sock soon comes into view that you can use as an aiming point.
96. In 800 metres, at the very far end of the airfield, turn left down a path separated by a fence from the airfield, which passes behind green sheds in which the gliders are kept.
97. Follow this path through various turns for 300 metres to a stile.
98. Cross the stile and walk more or less straight on to the main road, the A283, 70 metres away. **Cross this busy road with great care**, taking especial care of the **blind bend** to your right, and turn left along its far verge.
- For the **Crown Inn**, a possible early tea stop, stay on this road for 300 metres.

Otherwise, **to continue the walk without stopping for tea**, in 50 metres turn right up Clay Lane and continue with the next section.

Cootham to the South Downs (2.4km/1.5 miles)

99. Follow this minor road for 1km to a T-junction with another main road, the B2139. Despite linking these two busy roads, this lane doesn't have much traffic, and the occasional vehicles using it generally drive slowly: but watch out for ones coming faster. As you walk, you have a fine close-up view of the Downs ahead.
100. At the B2139, **cross the road with care**, taking particular care of the

blind bend to the right, and turn right along its far verge.

101. In 40 metres turn left up the driveway of the house and through a wooden gate 15 metres ahead, a signposted bridleway, to pick up a track along the right-hand side of the field beyond.
102. In 400 metres exit the field at its far end and turn left on a track, following the public bridleway sign.
103. In 70 metres, just before a metal fieldgate, fork right uphill, still following the public bridleway sign, your direction 140 degrees.
104. Follow the bridleway as it curves right up through the wood, until in 800 metres, near the top of the hill and just after a sharp left turn in the path marked by a footpath sign, you exit the wood through a wooden gate.
105. Keep on up the left-hand side of the field beyond for 40 metres until the field edge veers left, and then keep straight on across the field for 50 metres to another gate.
106. Beyond the gate carry straight on uphill. In 50 metres you come to Kithurst Hill car park. Ignore a road slanting back downhill, and keep straight on past double metal fieldgates 30 metres ahead. Beyond these, turn right onto a track, the South Downs Way.

Along the South Downs to Amberley (4.9 km/3 miles)

107. You can now follow the South Downs Way for the remainder of the walk (it goes all the way to the main road, the B2139, that leads to Amberley station), but note the diversion indicated in paragraph 109 which also gives you the fine view to the north that you may feel you now deserve.

For the moment, stay on the South Downs Way, and content yourself with the panoramic view to the south, which on clear days includes the sea and (sometimes) the Isle of Wight.

108. In 850 metres, after a long gentle climb, you enter a wood and in 100 metres you emerge from its far side. **Fork right** here to keep on the South Downs Way.
109. In another 100 metres, **fork right through a kissing gate** onto the Springhead Estate, a new open access

area. Slant left for 40 metres to two thorn trees, and then curve left to follow the crest of the ridge.

110. Carry on along the ridge, at last enjoying the fine views worthy of your climb. In 700 metres the ridge starts to descend, opening up a magnificent view of the Arun River and its floodplain below. This is a good place for a **picnic tea**.
111. In another 150 metres cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and carry on directly parallel to the South Downs Way with a barbed wire and electric fence to your left. In 30 metres, pass over a hummock.
112. Just beyond the hummock, **you have a choice**:
 - You can cross the stile ahead and **stay on the access land**.
 - Or you can turn left through the gate just beyond the hummock, and then turn right to **rejoin the South Downs Way**. *Look left for a fine view of Arundel Castle, roughly south west, which at this time of day should be a silhouette against the edge of the downs.*
113. Either way in 900 metres you come to a gate (a gate on the SDW, if you have taken that route, or a gate at the end of the open access area which lets you back onto the SDW). Beyond these gates keep on the South Downs Way as it descends more steeply..
114. In 350 metres, at the bottom of the hill, where a track joins from the left, keep straight on through a gate to the right of double metal fieldgates.
115. In 50 metres more **veer right off the track** to take a path between fences, following the South Downs Way signpost.
116. In 300 metres pass through a gate and in 70 metres more descend to a road, where you go right.
117. Follow the road around to the left, and in 80 metres, you come to a fork. Keep straight on here on a road that follows the line of the ridge. Continue with the directions in paragraph 118 opposite.
 - To detour to the **Amberley Village Tea Room**, *turn right* at this fork, on a road going steeply downhill. In 400 metres cross a main road and carry on up the lane into the

village, to find the tea room in 230 metres on the right.

After tea, return to the main road and turn right and follow it for 1.3km to Amberley station: **this adds 1.1km** to the walk.

It is also possible to come out of the tea room and walk straight ahead (west) down the very pretty Church Street, and out past Amberley Castle onto the water meadows beyond. On the far side of these find the River Arun and turn left along it to reach the station. This very pleasant route is 3.2km from tea room to station, **adding 2.9km (1.8 miles)** to the walk.

118. In 600 metres this brings you down to a main road, the B2139. **Cross this with care** and turn left along its far pavement.
119. In 220 metres follow the road as it curves right and in 150 metres, just before the railway bridge, you see the entrance to **Amberley station** on your left. At the station, cross the footbridge for London-bound trains.

For **tea**, keep on under the railway bridge. 40 metres beyond it the **Bridge Inn** is on your left and 20 metres further on the **Riverside Tea Rooms** are on your right.