

Last checked			
2 December 2023			
	Document last updated: 3 December 2023		
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Stonegate to Robertsbridge

The High Weald, Kipling's home, and panoramic views

Length: **14km (8.7 miles)**

17km (10.6 miles) using the morning of the Stonegate Circular walk

Toughness: 4 out of 10: some hills, but relatively gentle gradients

Maps:

- **OS Landranger 199** covers the whole route from Stonegate to Robertsbridge
- **OS Explorer 136** covers all but the last mile into Robertsbridge
- **OS Explorer 124** covers Burwash to Robertsbridge

Features

This is a hilly – but relatively gentle – walk through the High Weald, which is particularly beautiful in April and late October or early November. In April it offers plenty of wild flowers and has hornbeam trees throughout the walk, which become a mass of catkins at this time. The same trees also produce fine yellow or golden tints in autumn.

The walk shares a very short section of the Stonegate Circular walk on this website and like that walk visits the pretty ridgetop village of Burwash for lunch and Batemans, the former home of the writer Rudyard Kipling, now owned by the National Trust. But its route is otherwise quite different.

In the morning it takes a shorter route across the valley to Burwash and from Bateman's onwards, the walk strikes out into completely new territory, climbing by gentle stages up onto a ridge that gives you a fine backwards view towards Burwash. It then crosses the country estate of Socknersh Manor before descending via another ridge with fine views into Robertsbridge.

Walk options

For a **longer morning** of 6.6km (4.1 miles), use the standard morning route of the Stonegate Circular walk on this site. This lengthens the walk to **17km (10.6 miles)** in total.

Transport

Stonegate is on the Hastings line and is served by hourly trains from **Charing Cross** and **London Bridge**, taking one hour ten minutes. **The first train after 10am** will be quite adequate to get you to lunch in time, and as this walk has a short morning, you could even take a train after 11am. **Buy a day return to Robertsbridge**, which is two stops further down the line. There is ample paid car parking at Stonegate.

Lunch and tea

There are two pubs in Burwash for lunch, 3.6km/2.2 miles into the walk. The most convenient is the **Rose & Crown** (01435 882600), which has both inside and outside seating, and serves food from 12pm-3pm daily, remaining open all afternoon for drinks: food is also served from 5.30pm to 8.30pm Wednesday to Saturday. The **Bear Inn** (01435 882 540), 150 metres to the west, serves food 12-2.30pm Monday to Friday and all afternoon Saturday and Sunday. It is also open all afternoon Monday to Friday for drinks.

Burwash also has a cafe, **Blacksmiths Tea and Coffee Shop**, open till 4pm Wednesday to Sunday and serving sandwiches and paninis.

If you are planning to visit **Batemans**, it is only 1.1km beyond Burwash and has a National Trust tea room serving hot meals at lunchtime (until 2.30pm or so) and tea and cakes until 5pm March to October and 4pm November to February. To access the tea room, you have to pay to go into Batemans, however – unless you are a National Trust member.

For **picnics** Burwash churchyard or the fields between the village and Batemans are a good spot.

After Batemans there are no further refreshment stops until you reach **Robertsbridge**. Here the **Ostrich** by the station is a pleasantly quirky pub with a nice garden, or you can walk up to the village centre for the **George Inn**, a somewhat smarter and more modern pub. **Judges Bakery** in the village centre also serves hot drinks and has two or three tables: it is open until 4pm Monday to Saturday.

Robertsbridge also has two **convenience stores** if you want to get snacks or supplies for the train. The larger **One Stop** has a Costa coffee machine (no tea though!) and is open till 10pm daily, but the smaller **Village Store** has a better selection of snacks, cakes and pastries: it is open till 7pm Monday to Saturday.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Stonegate station to Burwash (3.6km/2.2 miles)

1. Coming out of Stonegate station into the station car park, turn half right up a fenced-in concrete track that climbs gently uphill between fields.
2. In 200 metres go through a metal fieldgate (usually open) with a house directly ahead, and in 40 metres more curve right with the track, with a pond to your right
3. In 50 metres more ignore a track to the left and carry on along the track towards a farmhouse.
4. In 200 metres, 50 metres **beyond** the farmhouse, turn right with the track through a fieldgate. Keep on down the left-hand edge of a field.
5. In 130 metres veer left through the leftmost of two metal fieldgates into a field to the left. Carry on down its right-hand side, with a tree boundary to your right.
6. In 280 metres, at the bottom of the field, pass through a metal gate into a small wood (which has a nice display of **wood anemones** in late March or early April).
7. In 30 metres cross a stream, pass through a wooden gate, and carry on up the path beyond.
8. In 40 metres curve right with the path along a fence, and then in 60 metres curve left, still with the fence to your left.
9. In 150 metres a fence forces you to turn right and then left to come to a

- railway crossing. Cross the line with care.
10. On the far side, go through a metal gate and keep straight on downhill between two fields.
 11. In 100 metres you pass a house on your right and in another 30 metres, you come level with a pond on your right surrounded by trees. Here **veer left** across the open field, heading for a field corner jutting out on the opposite side.
 12. In 100 metres, when you get to the field corner, the right of way keeps straight on, cutting across the corner of the field to a wooden bridge 80 metres distant, 30 metres to the right of the field corner, but if crops are planted it is just as easy to go around the field edge.
 13. After crossing the bridge, veer very slightly right across the next field, aiming for the right-hand side of a clump of trees (concealing a pond). *(Once again if crops block your way, you can turn right and then left around the field edge to come to the bridge in the next paragraph.)*
 14. In 180 metres, at the **end** of the tree clump, **turn right** across the field, aiming for a car-wide bridge with metal railings.
 15. In 100 metres cross this bridge and continue in the same direction on the left-hand side of the next field.
 16. In 130 metres, at the far end of the field, turn left over a stile to the right of double metal fieldgates, and turn right along the edge of the field beyond.
 17. In 250 metres, at the far end of this field, cross a footbridge with metal gates at either end, and turn half left, aiming for a gate leading into a wood in 100 metres.
 18. Pass through this gate and across a plank footbridge, and follow the path up through the wood.
 19. In 180 metres pass through a metal gate to emerge from the wood and veer half right up across the field beyond.
 20. In 250 metres, in the top right-hand corner of the field, go through a wooden gate (**not** the metal fieldgate a bit before it and to the right) and turn right on a track.
 21. In 350 metres the track turns hard left, slightly more steeply uphill, and in another 400 metres you come to the **Rose & Crown**, a possible lunch stop on your right-hand side. *(See paragraph 23 and 24 for other lunch stops.)*
- Burwash to Socknersh Manor (5.1km/3.2 miles)**
22. Emerging from the Rose & Crown (or carrying on past it if not stopping), you come in 50 metres to the main road in the centre of the village.
 - **To picnic in Burwash churchyard** (which has nice views from benches on the right-hand side of the church), **turn left** on the road for 150 metres.
 - Otherwise, **turn right** on the road
 23. In 30 metres on your right you pass **Blacksmiths Tea and Coffee Shop**.
 24. In another 40 metres **turn left** up a signposted footpath, just after a row of cottages on your left and just before Chaunt House.
 - For the **Bear Inn** ignore this turning and stay on the road to find the pub in another 80 metres on the left.
 25. Having turned left off the road, in 30 metres go down a narrow path between garden fences. In another 30 metres enter a field and go half right, diagonally down across it.
 26. In 200 metres cross a footbridge and pass through a metal gate to continue along the right-hand edge of the next field.
 27. In 120 metres pass through a metal gate and again carry on along the right-hand edge of a field.
 28. In 170 metres pass through a kissing gate and continue downhill diagonally across a field, passing between clumps of trees left and right.
 29. In 250 metres go through a car-wide gap into the next field and veer left downhill, with a hedgerow on your left.
 30. In 100 metres cross a stile to emerge onto a lane.
 - **If NOT visiting Batemans**, turn left on this lane and refer to paragraph 31.

- **If visiting Batemans**, turn right on the lane to come to the house in 250 metres. Turn right at the lane T-junction just before it to come to the visitor entrance. **After your visit** retrace your steps along the lanes until you pass the footpath from Burwash on your left. Carry on along the lane from this point and refer to the next paragraph.
31. After 300 metres on the lane you pass Dudwell Farm on the left and in 200 metres come to a T-junction with a busier road, where you go right, signposted to Woods Corner. **Take care of the traffic on this road**, which sometimes comes a bit quickly.
 32. In 150 metres ignore a turning left to Riverdell Farm but go left up a track beyond it, a signposted footpath.
 33. In 60 metres, where the track curves left to a bungalow, go straight on up a grass/earth bridleway.
 34. In 170 metres pass a rusting old agricultural rake (*Who left it here? Why?*) and cross a stile into a field. Beyond the stile, turn left, roughly in your former direction, gradually diverging away from the field edge towards the far corner of the field 150 metres away.
 35. Once in the corner pass through a gap into the next field and carry on downhill with a hedge to your left.
 36. In 150 metres pass through a gap and follow the path straight ahead across a strip of wood, with a field to the left.
 37. In 70 metres cross a stile and turn right uphill along a long field. Veer gradually left away from the wood edge towards a clump of trees sticking out on the left-hand side of the field some 250 metres ahead.
 38. Pass to the right of this clump (which hides a large hollow with a pond) and carry on in the same direction, slowly converging with the field edge to the left.
 39. In another 300 metres, in the far left-hand corner of the field, turn left across a stile and follow a faint path down into a wooded dip.
 40. In 30 metres, at the bottom of the dip, veer half right to climb up the far side of the dip, with a small side gully to your left.
 41. In 60 metres cross a stile into a field. Turn left up the edge of the field, with the wooded gully to your left.
 42. Where the gully ends in 70 metres, veer slightly right, diagonally across the field, passing between two trees in 50 metres and beyond them heading for a metal fieldgate in another 70 metres.
 43. Pass through the fieldgate and veer slightly right towards the left-hand edge of a white house on the hill.
 44. In 120 metres cross a low wooden hurdle just to the left of the house's garden – but first turn around for a **wonderful view** all the way back to Burwash, which can be seen as a line of houses on a distant hill.
 45. 20 metres after the hurdle emerge onto a road at a T-junction. Turn left here, ignoring roads ahead and to the right.
 46. You stay on this road for 1.6km (1 mile): *for details, see paragraphs 47-49 below*. It is generally quiet, but listen out for any cars as some may come along it a little fast.
 47. Initially there is a wood to your left (with some bluebells in late April/early May) but in 300 metres after a gentle descent, you emerge between fields, with the occasional glimpse of a fine view to the left.
 48. In another 800 metres a wood starts again to your left and there is a driveway to the left to Old Brick Farm. Ignore this and stay on the road.
 49. In another 300 metres you pass Glydwish Place on the left. In another 200 metres, **turn right** up a tarmac driveway to Socknersh Farm signposted as a public bridleway.
 50. In 250 metres you pass a small house right and in 400 metres more you come to the centre of the farm complex, with barns right and the formal entrance to **Socknersh Manor** left. (*Jointly owned in the 1960s by singers Tom Jones and Englebert Humperdink and used by them as a party venue, though neither of them ever lived there full time.*)

Socknersh Manor to Robertsbridge (5.3km/3.3 mi)

51. Go straight ahead through the manor complex, passing a stone barn on your left.
52. 30 metres beyond the barn veer left to pass through a black metal gate in 10 metres, and carry on across the grounds on a fenced path, with a lake soon visible downhill to the right.
53. In 400 metres, at the far end of the lake, you pass under trees.
54. In another 200 metres cross a stile to the right of a fieldgate and carry on down a grass track between hedges.
55. In 100 metres the hedge ends to your right and you pass a house on the right (*formerly derelict, but now being refurbished*). Keep straight on, following the hedge to your left.
56. In another 100 metres ignore a double gap into fields to your left and keep on with the hedge to your left, picking up a line of trees to the right in 80 metres.
57. In another 80 metres pass into a field and keep to its left-hand edge as it climbs uphill.
58. In 200 metres, at the top of the hill, veer right to cross a stile to the left of a fieldgate into the next field. Beyond, keep to the right-hand side of the field, following a line of trees downhill.
59. In 300 metres, in the bottom right-hand corner of the field, cross a wooden footbridge and go half left to pass through a fieldgate in 20 metres.
60. Veer very slightly right across the next field, crossing a ditch on a plank bridge in 50 metres. Beyond this veer slightly right with a wood edge on your left.
61. In 40 metres turn left across a stile to enter the wood. In 5 metres fork right, directly uphill. This is a **bluebell** wood in late April/early May.
62. In 90 metres ignore a high metal gate to your right and carry on uphill, with a wooden fence to your right in 15 metres.
63. In another 100 metres, at the top of the hill, pass through a gate into a field and carry on in the same direction, diagonally across it.
64. In 100 metres more exit the field by a kissing gate to the left of a metal fieldgate.
65. In 120 metres you come to a road. Turn right on this, taking extreme care. **Traffic on this road comes quite fast** (at least on weekdays) **and there are blind bends**.
66. In 100 metres, just past a house called Wyland Wood to the right, turn right over a stile. Go straight on down the length of a field.
67. In 300 metres cross a stile and turn right on a road. (There is also **fast traffic** on this road, but sight lines are much better).
68. In 60 metres you pass Keeper's Cottage left. In another 80 metres turn left down the tarmac drive to Scalands Farm.
69. In 300 metres you pass a house right and curve left with the drive.
70. In another 80 metres go left through a metal kissing gate and turn right beyond it, heading across the top of the field to a kissing gate at the left-hand edge of the garden hedge of a farm in 120 metres. You now have a fine view of Robertsbridge ahead.
71. When you get to the kissing gate, you in fact find it is two, with a track in between. Pass through both and keep on along a fenced path along the edge of a field.
72. In 60 metres the path turns right. In 50 metres more pass through a kissing gate and turn left along the top of the ridge on a gravel path between wire fences.
73. In 350 metres, after passing along the edge of two fields, the path merges with a gravel track from the right and veers slightly left downhill into a part-wooded area.
74. In 120 metres another track merges from the right. In 130 metres ignore a further track to the right (a signposted footpath) and keep straight on downhill towards houses. (*The complex of buildings ahead and the land you are currently on is the home of the Darvell Bruderhof Community, a group of Anabaptists who hold property in common.*)
75. In another 90 metres, just before the houses, turn left downhill at a track T-junction. Follow the track which soon

- becomes a tarmac road downhill, ignoring ways off to the right.
76. In 150 metres, at the bottom of the hill, keep straight on through stable buildings, still on the track.
 77. Beyond the stable complex, turn right with a ditch and line of trees to your left, ignoring a track over a concrete footbridge straight ahead.
 78. In 80 metres turn left across a car-wide bridge. Beyond, a track forks left through a fieldgate and a path goes directly uphill between fences. 10 metres up the path, **turn right through a kissing gate** and keep to its bottom edge of a field with a line of trees to your right.
 79. In 170 metres pass through a kissing gate to the right of a fieldgate to join a track. Keep straight ahead along this.
 80. In 120 metres cross a road and go through a gap in the tree boundary beyond and up steps into a field. Keep straight on across this, converging with its left-hand edge.
 81. In 180 metres exit the field through a gate on its left-hand edge and turn right on a road.
 82. In 10 metres there is a pedestrian path on the left leading to a suburban road.
 - **In winter if you are losing the light or in wet conditions when the low lying field ahead may be waterlogged, turn left up this path** and follow the road beyond it for 300 metres to a T-junction with a main road. Turn right downhill on this and **Robertsbridge station** is on your left in 60 metres. Keep to this side of the tracks for the platform for London. The **Ostrich pub**, a possible tea stop, is just beyond the level crossing on the right, and carrying on down the road for 300 metres brings you to the centre of Robertsbridge.
 83. Otherwise **ignore** the pedestrian path to the left and stay on the road.
 84. In 70 metres pass under a railway bridge and immediately beyond it turn left up a footpath between the railway embankment left and the field right.
 85. In 60 metres cross a stile and then a track and another stile. Keep straight on up the left-hand edge of a field.
 86. Cross another stile in 80 metres and another 100 metres beyond that. Keep straight on across a sports field.
 87. In 150 metres pass through a wooden gate and veer left towards an embankment. Slant left over this on a footpath to reach the road.
 88. Turn left ****** on the road to reach the **Ostrich** pub, a possible tea stop, on the left in 100 metres. The entrance to the **Robertsbridge station** is opposite on the right.

*** To see the old centre of Robertsbridge, which is quite pretty and which has other refreshment options, turn right on this road. In 100 metres you pass the **Village Shop** on the right. In another 100 metres you come to the main street of the village, with **Judges Bakery** on the corner to your left, and the **One Stop** convenience store 60 metres beyond it to your left. Turn right onto the main street to find the **George Inn** in 200 metres.*