

Horsted Keynes and Highbrook

Welcome to the High Weald National Landscape, an unspoilt medieval landscape. This is a walk between, and around, two delightful High Weald villages with some excellent views. There is one significant climb, and the total ascent is 330 metres. There are several stiles along this route, a few of them quite tricky and not very dog friendly. You are likely to encounter sheep or cattle in a number of the fields, so maybe not ideal for dogs.

Distance and duration	A 7½ (12 km) mile walk, taking about 4 - 4½ hours.
Level	Moderate
Start point / Post code	MSDC car park, Chapel Lane, Horsted Keynes, West Sussex, RH17 7AE
OS map reference What-3-Words	Explorer 135, TQ384281 https://what3words.com/nightlife.archive.until
Other information	Parking in the free village car park just off the top end of Lewes Road, adjoining the Recreation Ground. The start can also be reached using the 270 bus https://www.metrobus.co.uk/routeinformation/search?q=270 from East Grinstead, Haywards Heath and a number of towns and villages towards Brighton. There are public toilets available next door to the bus stop, a very short distance along the road heading towards Haywards Heath. Click here to download a GPX file of the route

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



Two

We are grateful to [Mid-Sussex Ramblers](#) for their permission to use this walk.

Leave the car park by the way you came in, then walk to the right in front of the Social Club, across Chapel Lane and past a house to reach the Green.

Follow the path in front of houses as far as the Crown Inn, where you should cross the road.

Take the signed access road to the Village Hall shortly after the Village Shop. Keep to the right of the Village Hall, and the allotments, to reach the first of four metal kissing gates.

The path will be very obvious on the ground, following the boundary of the first field, more or less straight across the next field and heading towards the far corner of the last field.

After going through the last kissing gate, turn right on the path up the side of the field, shortly entering a patch of woodland.

Follow the twisting course of the path through the trees, then turn left onto a concrete access road serving the reservoir.

After a partial stile turn left onto the Birchgrove Road, which is usually fairly quiet outside peak times.

Follow the road past Warren Farm House and then for a further 150 yds before turning left onto a signed bridleway. You are on the Greenwich Meridian Trail (GMT) for the next section on the walk.

Follow the path downhill to swing right to enter woods. Again, dogs need to be on leads as game birds are raised in this area.

Follow the pleasant path, ignoring all paths going off to the left or right, for around $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.

On meeting a narrow road, turn left to go down to the Splash, which you can cross using the bridge if the water level is anything other than very low.

The road climbs steeply and, although it is not much used, you need to be prepared to get right into the side if any traffic does come along.

At the top turn right onto another narrow road and follow it round a left-hand bend, from where there are excellent views across towards Twyford, to continue slightly uphill for about 200 yds to a point where there are signed paths to both sides.

Turn left to walk across four fields, where the gates are likely to be open initially. The stile between the third and fourth fields has been replaced by a wooden kissing gate, so this too is easy to negotiate.

There are likely to be sheep in the fourth field. As you walk across the last two fields, the Highbrook ridge, our destination, will come into view and you should be able to see the church spire.

Cross a stile to reach a minor road, which you cross to go through a small gate to the footpath opposite, joining the Sussex Border Path.

Follow the path downhill and then follow it to the left alongside trees for about 60 yds to reach a signed path going right, into the trees.

Three

Follow this rough path downhill, taking extra care in wet conditions, as you approach the footbridge.

Climb upwards a short distance to come out into a field. The path follows the boundary of the field and at the highest point you should get views of the Downs in clear weather.

This path swings left at the bottom of the field and after about 200 yds turns right into trees. The waymark sign was missing here as of August 2022, but you will see the waymarker post.

Again, descend through trees to reach a dark pond, which you cross using a concrete raised path, making use of the handrail/chain for safety.

Go through a gate to come out into a field, where the landowner has set up an unofficial diversion. This is being pursued with the local authority, but it is probably easiest for now to walk around the boundary of the field as indicated.

You are heading for the top left corner of the field to join a fairly busy road through a small gate.

Turn left and cross the road with care, at the point where you have maximum visibility.

After 60 yds turn right, in front of Vox End, onto a signed footpath.

After a short distance, the path swings left, and you enter a field over a stile.

Follow the path to the left across three fields through stiles and gates.

Cross the driveway, keeping the bridge on your right, to enter another field over a stile.

Follow the path along the field boundary for about 250 yds and then go to the right over another stile and through a kissing gate to cross the Bluebell Railway to another kissing gate.

The Railway operates every day between April and October, so please heed the warnings.

Do not turn left but carry on ahead to cross another stile onto a fenced path to a further stile.

After the stile, the path heads downhill and you need to follow the direction indicated by the fingerpost to arrive at another stile going into woods at the bottom corner of the field.

There is quite a big drop on the far side, before descending to cross another footbridge.

Climb up to the gate and then follow the field boundaries steeply uphill. There are good views behind, so I encourage you to stop and look back once or more.

Towards the top you go through a gate onto an enclosed track, which you follow, passing through another gate, until you reach a parking area.

On your left you will see the beautifully restored Highbrook Smokery, believed to have been built around 1780. Historically, pigs were driven into the High Weald in the autumn to feast on acorns. After slaughtering, the fresh meat was preserved by salting and then smoking. Nowadays, the Smokery provides shelter for walkers.

Four

The church opposite is also of interest as it has a carillon, a set of fixed bells which play a tune from a 14-day repertoire three times a day at noon, 3pm and 6pm.

Carry on reaching a road, where you turn left. Walk down the road for just over 100 yds, passing a telephone box.

As the road swings left, carry on straight ahead, over a stile complicated by wire netting on the far side, onto a signed footpath, gaining more fine views towards the Downs.

The footpath goes to the right and through a gate to go through a field in front of a house, heading towards the far corner.

Go through another gate to walk along the side of another field, again towards the Downs.

You will start to see the Ardingly ridge to the right and an extremely large, recently built house, Hammingden Place, appears ahead.

The path goes to the right of the house and to the left of a barn to reach a fenced track around a gate.

Walk along the track and through a further gate. Bear left almost immediately to go past a tree, keeping close to the hedge.

You very soon reach a gap in the hedge where you emerge through an ancient kissing gate onto Brook House cricket field. The path goes behind the pavilion and towards trees.

Head towards another iron gate and go through it to walk beside a vineyard, following the boundary.

A large country house, Brook House, is on your right and you should be able to catch glimpses of it.

Brook House is a noted Arts and Crafts house, greatly extended by the Stephenson Clarke family in the late 1800's. In the Second World War Brook House hosted both prisoners of war and evacuees. It has now been converted into apartments. The cricket ground at Brook House is one of the oldest in Sussex and when the Australians came to Britain in 1884, they played their second ever match on British soil here.

At the end of the vineyard the path descends very steeply down steps. Take care going down and on reaching a road.

Cross the road, turn right and after a very short distance follow a footpath sign to your left.

After a short stretch through shrubs go through a gate to be met by a delightful surprise.

The path then winds through the beautiful garden of Ham Cottage, open under the NGS once or more annually.

Follow the signs through the garden, descending to walk across a footbridge over a bog garden to ascend steeply through an arboretum. You leave the grounds of Ham Cottage through a gate at the top to go into woodland.

Follow the path through the wood, then through/by another gate to descend diagonally across a field to join a road.

Five

Turn left onto the road, keeping on the verge to the left as you go round the blind right-hand bend and then cross to the right before the next bend to the left.

Walk along the straight stretch of the road for about 300yds, to go under a railway bridge.

Immediately after the bridge take the signed footpath to the right over a footbridge and cross a stile into a field.

Head uphill, slightly to the left, heading for the buildings you see appearing ahead. You may need to go under a tape regulating the grazing area of the cattle.

Once you are near the top lookout for a muddy track, which takes you through a gate into another field.

Head for the right of the buildings and go through the narrow gate.

Turn left, possibly negotiating two gates with rather unusual fixings, and then turn right to walk down the side of the farmhouse.

Continue down a lane between hedges until you reach a signed metal kissing gate on the left.

After the gate you are likely to encounter deep mud in the winter, but it should be fine in summer conditions.

Head diagonally downhill through the field and as you get closer head towards a gate to which a concrete track is heading.

Leave the field by the extremely wobbly stile beside the gate, although this may have been fixed or replaced by another kissing gate.

Turn right on the road, crossing immediately, and walk along it with care for about 60 yds, before turning left onto a track beside a black barn.

Follow the track uphill, going straight ahead at a crossroad of paths, eventually coming out in front of the Mill House.

Follow the path round to the left, following the garden boundary and then continue on the track uphill.

On reaching a road, turn right and walk past cottages on both sides of the road.

The road swings round to the left and you can enter the churchyard of St Giles Church here. Harold Macmillan is buried in this churchyard and if you would like to see his grave head for the hedged area.

Continue downhill and then steeply uphill on Church Lane.

Go straight ahead at a crossroads to come out on the Green. Walk to the left for a short distance to gain visibility and then cross the road to return to the car park.

At all times please follow the Countryside Code



