



Hop On The Bluebell Line Horsted Keynes to Sheffield Park

Distance 11½ km=7 miles easy walking with a steam train ride

Region: West Sussex, East Sussex

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Refreshments: The Sloop, Sheffield Park station

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest) *but maps in this guide are sufficient*

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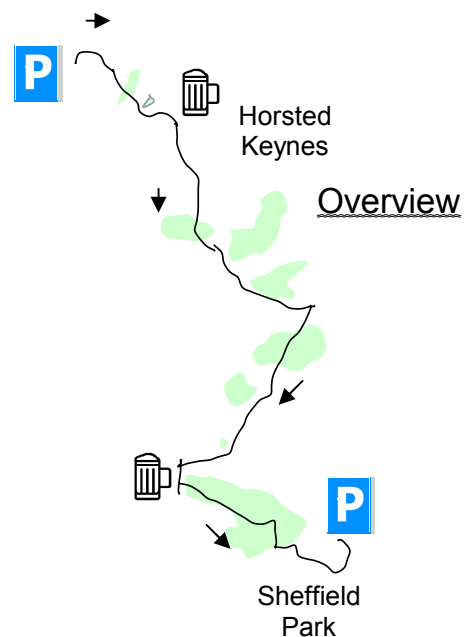
Meadows, woodland, steam railway

In Brief

This is a gentle stroll through amazingly varied Sussex countryside with a return by steam train. It begins either in **Horsted Keynes** railway station on the Bluebell line and ends in Sheffield Park station. Alternatively you park at **Sheffield Park** station (postcode TN22 3QL) and take the ride first. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). At the end of the walk, Sheffield Park Garden is close by for a wonderful finish to the day.



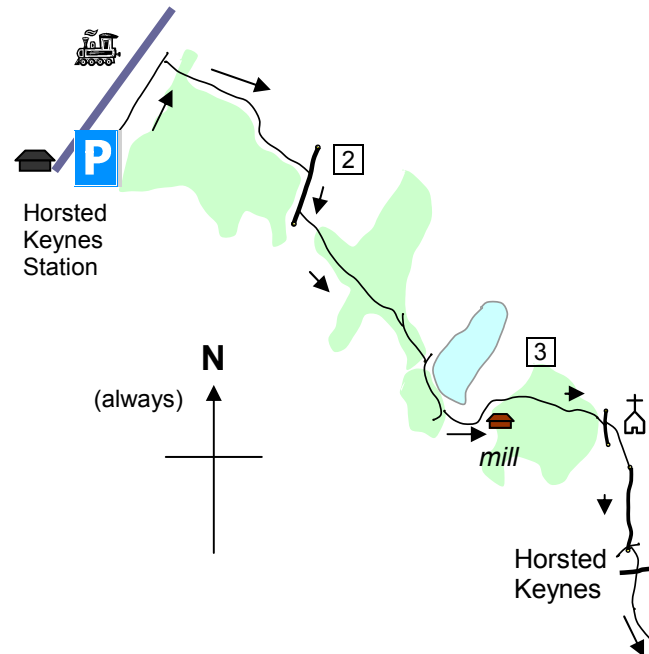
There are a few tiny patches of nettles that might catch you and just a few muddy patches that are easy to get round. This walk should be fine for a dog with a lead and the Bluebell railway welcomes your dog but he will need his own ticket.



The Walk

Leg 1: Horsted Keynes Station to The Village 2 km=1 mile

- 1 If starting from the station entrance, turn **left** signposted *Car Park & Picnic Area*. Go north up the track between the railway on your left and the car park, passing the little memorial garden. At the top of the slope, at a *no through road* sign, turn **right** on a track. Go past a kissing gate onto a path running beside pastures, with woods on your right. Keep to this perimeter path, ignoring any stiles in the fence. At the end, go down some natural steps to a road. Turn **right** on the road.



- 2 In 80m, go **left** over a stile that can be side-stepped. Follow the narrow meadow under tall trees to another stile that can also be side-stepped. The path leads down into woods. It straightens, winds a bit, gets narrower and goes over a brief muddy patch. At the bottom, go over an assembly of three two-plank bridges and turn **right** on a wider path. The path runs beside the Mill Lake, much used by anglers. At a fingerpost, turn **left**. Soon you reach the cluster of venerable buildings at Horsted Keynes Mill, beginning with the half timbered barn, then the old mill and the beautiful mill house and garden.

*A water mill stood here as early as the 1100s but the Mill House you see here was built around 1450. The water wheel was **overshot**, an efficient way of feeding water forward over the top of the mill wheel from mill ponds running down from a lake in the village. It still milled flour in 1951 and is in working order to this day.*

- 3 Passing the mill house on your right, follow the path as it curves right, round the garden and goes gently uphill. In about 250m, you reach a lane. Cross straight over the lane, up the narrow gravel path in front of *Spring Cottage*, to enter the churchyard of St Giles.

The church makes an immediate impression from its tall shingle spire and its lonely position at the foot of the old village. It is dedicated to St Giles, the "saint of the wounded knee". More detailed information will be found at

meadow and keeps to the edge as it curves left. As you approach the far corner, look out for a gap in the hedge on your right. Turn **right** here and **right** again, almost going back on yourself, and continue along the left-hand side of the next meadow. (The gap in the hedge is a shortcut to avoid a stile a few metres further on.) In the far corner, go over a stile and continue through Northland Wood. (The *keep out* message on the tree really means *private wood: please keep to the path.*) At the end of the wood, the path goes left-right round an enclosure and passes next to Northland Farm on your right. Continue ahead past a reedy pond and join the drive coming from the farm. Continue straight down the hard-surfaced drive to a lane and cross straight over.

3 The path directly opposite leads into woods. In just 10m, turn **right** at a fingerpost onto a path through the birches. Do not miss this turn – the fingerpost is small and hard to see. In about 120m, you come to a junction of paths where a path comes in from the left. Keep straight ahead here, ignoring a right fork. The path runs through more woodland and then comes out into a large field. Turn **right** for 5m and then immediately **left** again so that you are walking straight ahead along a boundary between fields. When you reach a grassy strip that runs across the centre, turn **right** for 50m, passing a group of trees on your left that conceals a pond. At a fingerpost, go half-**left** in the direction of the pointer. The path may be unclear after tilling, so you simply aim for the left-hand corner of a small wood.

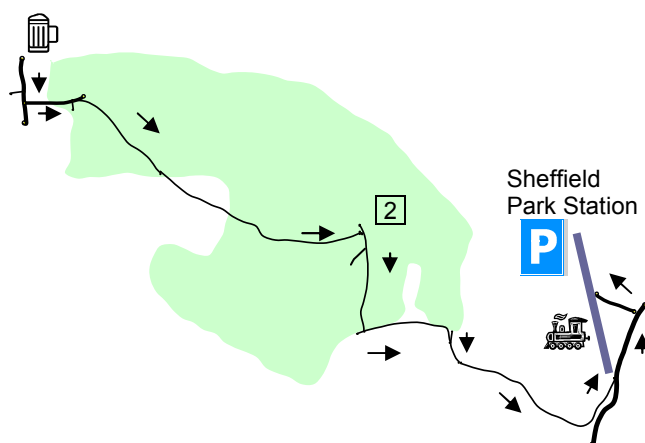
4 On reaching the wood, follow the track with the wood on your right. The track soon dips to go under the Bluebell Railway and through a large metal gate. Keep straight ahead along the right-hand side of a meadow. In 150m, turn **right** through a large metal gate into a large pasture. You are back in West Sussex. Aim for the farm buildings of Freshfield Mill Farm in the opposite corner. (Depending on the livestock that may be in the field, some walkers keep to the right-hand perimeter.) Go over a bridge across a ditch in the middle of the pasture. Now head for a two-plank bridge about 20m to the left of the corner of the farmyard enclosure. Go over the bridge and go diagonally across the tiny grassy area by a barn, then diagonally across a small sheep meadow to a wooden gate in the corner, beside the driveway to the farm. You have reached a road, Sloop Lane. Turn **left** on the road, immediately going over a bridge across the River Ouse and then another over the old canal, reaching the Sloop Inn.



The Sloop is named after a type of boat that used to sail the canal. The Sloop prides itself in being an unposh country pub, serving real food and real ale. It also serves tea and coffee, a point worth remembering for people who always assume a pub-stop means taking on booze. You may have to share the small bar with a crowd of colourful types and trippers from the Bluebell Railway who often spill out into the garden and the car parks. Recently the cigarette stubber on the outside wall was taken over by a family of blue tits. The car park opposite has a remnant of an old engine, whether agricultural or something to do with the canal is uncertain. The Sloop is open all day at weekends.

Leg 3: The Sloop to Sheffield Park Station 3 km=2 miles

- 1 Continue along the road for 100m and turn **left** on a driveway marked as a footpath through gates leading to the oddly-named *Bacon Wish*. Go past a large wooden gate and soon, at a junction, keep ahead, a fraction **right**, on a narrower path through a rather dark woodland of birches and conifers, still following the footpath sign. After the wood, go through a gate into a meadow used by campers and keep straight ahead across the centre. Ignore a footpath right, thus leaving the SBP, and follow a line of young trees to a small wooden gate into woodland. You are in East Sussex once again. You are now in a wild forested area with coppices, scattered birch and chestnut trees. After some distance, as you approach a T-junction ahead, you will see a signpost pointing right marked *WOWO*. Fork **right** here and turn **right** at the T-junction. In 30m, fork **left** still in the direction of *WOWO*.

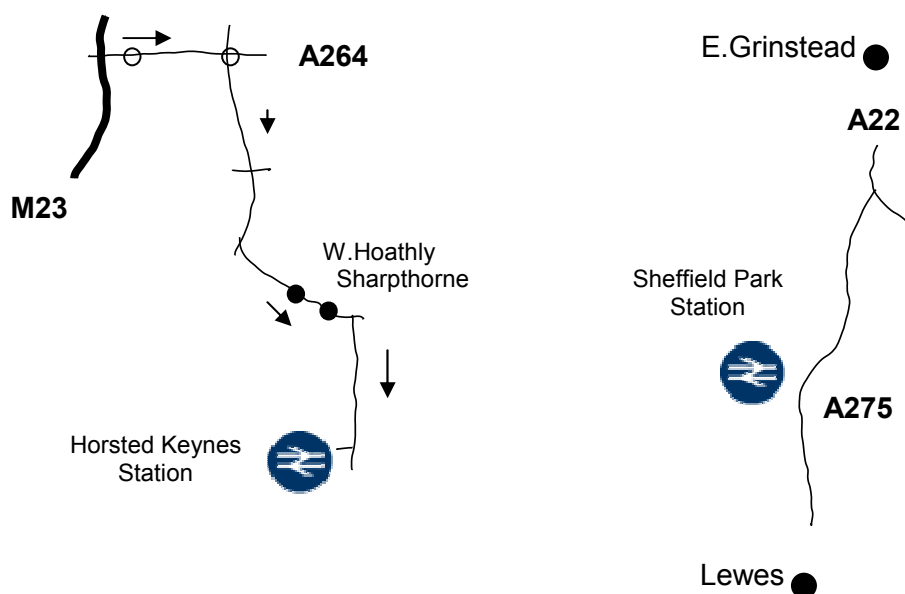


- 2 The path descends through beautiful Wapsbourne Wood. On emerging, go through a small wooden gate and over a bridge and turn **left** along the edge of a field. At a corner, the path continues across the centre of the field and then regains the edge. In the far corner, go over a stile and through a swing-gate and merge with a gravel track coming from *Keepers Cottage*. Veer **left** on the track, going past, on your right, the magnificent historic timbered *Wapsbourne Farm House*. A little later on your right is the explanation for the signs for *WOWO*: *Wowo* is a huge camping and family adventure site; it offers musical events, a stay in a themed “yurt” (so you don’t need to bring a tent) a farm and many arts-and-craft. The track becomes a concrete drive and soon follows a linden avenue towards the main road. Just before the main road, turn left on a permissive path along the edge of the field, parallel to the main road. The path reaches its end down steps to the main road. Cross the road and turn **left** on it, soon arriving at Sheffield Park station on the left, just before a bridge. The station has a restaurant and buffet. You can follow signs here for a worth-while trip to nearby Sheffield Park Garden, less than 1km away.

Sheffield Park Garden is a wonderful 107-ha (265-acre) landscape garden, belonging to the National Trust, laid out in the 1700s in typical natural style by “Capability” Brown (no less) and developed in the early 1900s by its owner Arthur G. Soames. At the centre is a dramatic centrepiece of four lakes. Different vivid seasonal colours make this an unforgettable place at all times of the year.

Getting there

By car: if coming from London or Brighton, one way is via exit **10** of the **M23**. Turn onto the A264 **east**, signposted *E. Grinstead*. In about 2 miles=3½ km, turn **right** at the **second** roundabout, signposted *Turner's Hill*. A mile after Turner's Hill the road forks. Take the **left** fork signposted *West Hoathly and Sharpthorne*. Pass through both villages and, just after Sharpthorne, turn **right** at a rather hidden signpost marked *Horsted Keynes, Bluebell Railway* onto Horsted Lane. Look out for signs for the Bluebell Railway. Park in the station car park. For a start in Sheffield Park, the station is on the **A275** 15km=9 miles north of Lewes and 16km=10 miles south of East Grinstead.



By bus/train: there are dedicated buses: check the Bluebell Railway website www.bluebell-railway.com, click on *directions*.

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