



Ashdown Forest, Visitor's Centre, Colemans Hatch Pines, Views and Woodland Trails

Distance: 15½ km=9½ miles

easy walking

Region: East Sussex

Date written: 3-jun-2012

Author: Stivaletti

Last update: 24-sep-2015

Refreshments: Colemans Hatch

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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Heath, woodland, views

Our *sixth* walk in Ashdown Forest, in a central spot so you have some of the best views in all directions. It makes brief contact with the other five walks and also takes you to the Ashdown Forest Visitor's Centre and an excellent gastropub. This walk is an ideal introduction to Ashdown Forest.

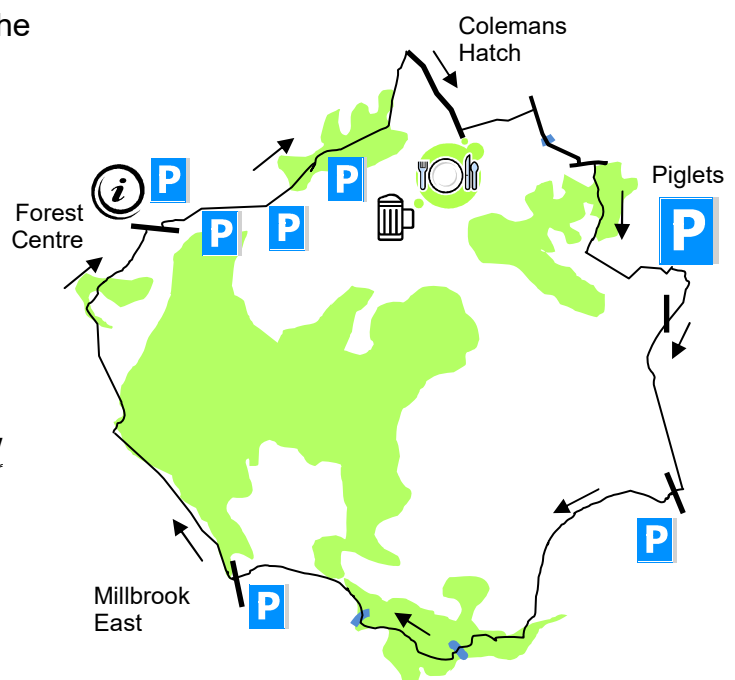
As usual with the walks on this site, you follow some lesser-known paths that you would not find in any other guide.



There are no nettles to worry bare legs and any type of clothing should be fine. Your dog is welcome on this walk.

The walk begins at **Piglets car park** on the B2026 Chuck Hatch Road nearest postcode **TN7 4WW**, grid ref TQ 469 322, 2½ miles south of Hartfield. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

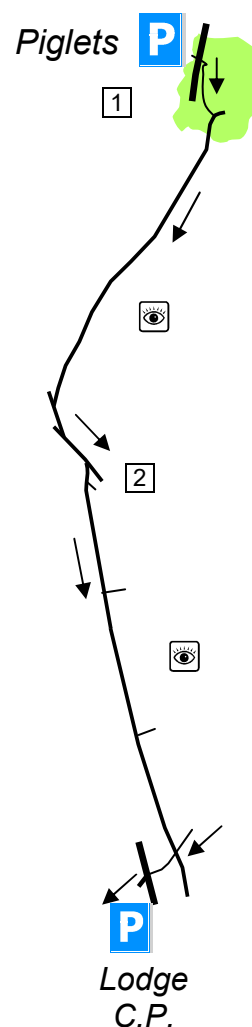
Overview



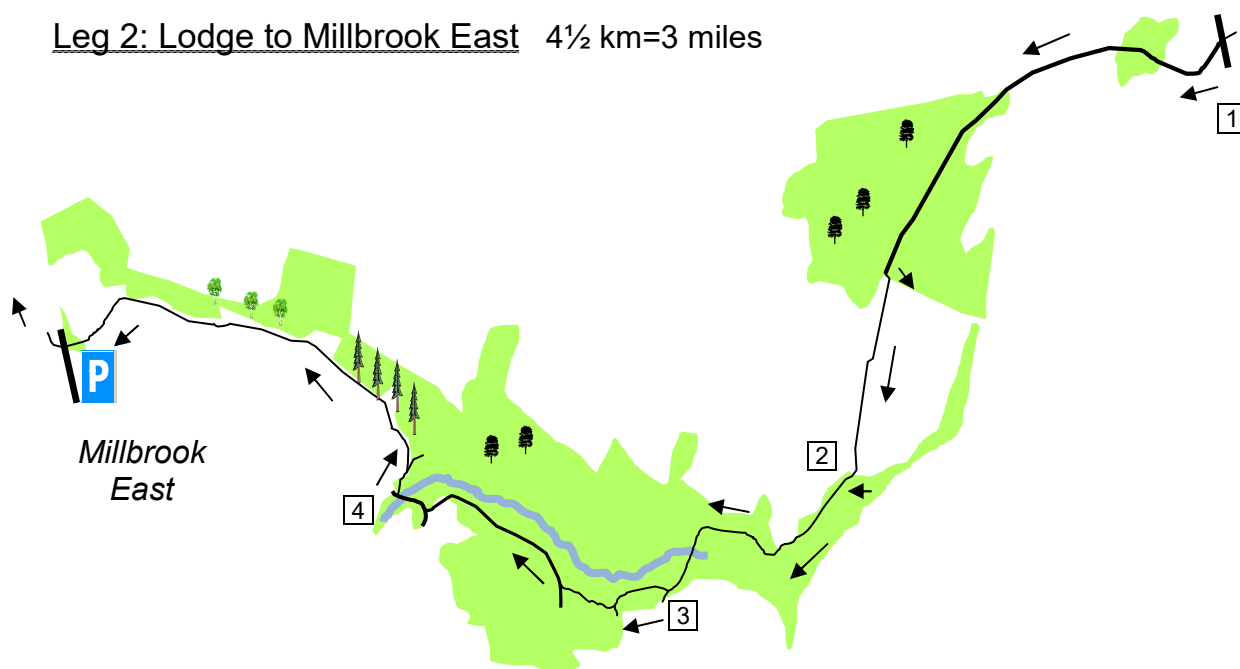
The Walk

Leg 1: Piglets to Lodge 2 km=1 mile

- 1 From the car park, go back to the road, cross the road, a fraction right, and take a narrow path opposite into the woods. Immediately veer **right** on a path parallel to the road. Soon the path comes down to meet a wide track at a bend. Turn sharp **right** uphill on the track. *For some way now you will have a magnificent view left to the eastern forest and the High Weald, one of many views that characterise this walk.* The great wood on your left is the Five Hundred Acre Wood (see the other walk in this series [Ravines and Parkland](#).) After some distance, your wide track veers left as it meets a track coming from the right, followed by another similarly. 80m later, at a wide gap in the gorse, fork **right** and keep on uphill on a wide track.
- 2 Continue between lines of gorse. *Note that you are on part of the Vanguard Way, a long-distance path from London to the sea.* You pass a junction on your left after 250m and another after another 250m or so. Eventually, about 750m from that right fork, just as you approach the highest point, you arrive at the **third** junction, which is the Wealdway, another long-distance path, crossing your path at an angle, indicated by [\[2015: now missing\]](#) wooden posts with the letters *WW*. Turn **right** here on a grassy path leading quickly to the main B2026 road. Cross the road and take a tarmac drive opposite, marked *Private Road to Old Lodge*, which is also a bridleway. The Lodge car park is close by on your left (see the walk [Rock Wood and Purple Heather](#) in this series).



Leg 2: Lodge to Millbrook East 4½ km=3 miles



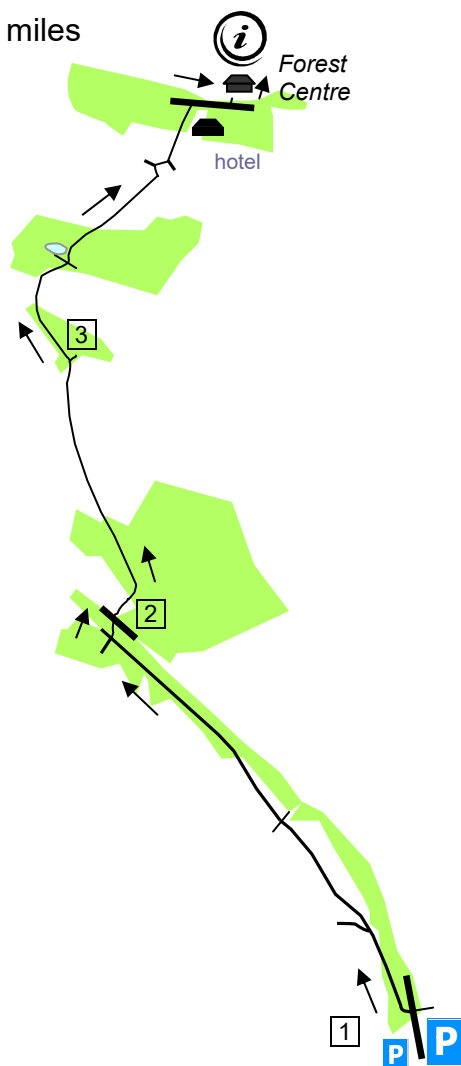
- 1 Follow the tarmac drive, going between pillars by *The Lodge*. The bridleway takes you long a fenced driveway across the heath with a nature reserve on each side. Soon the drive runs through mature mixed woodland with some elegant tall scots pines. You may also see deer on this path. About 50m before the wrought iron gates of the *Old Lodge*, you are directed **left** through a tall wooden swing-gate and then **right** along a grassy path with more views left to the heath and horse pastures. Go through a large metal gate, or over a stile, and straight ahead through another metal gate, avoiding a metal gate on your right. Your route is now down a similar grassy path. At the bottom, go over a bridge **right** together with a stile.
- 2 Keep straight ahead between fences avoiding a tall swing-gate on your left. The path bends right and takes you through a tall swing-gate on the **left**. Follow the path straight ahead away from the fence going downhill between pines. In 50m, at a yellow arrow on a pine tree, turn **right** on a path which can be muddy in the damper seasons. Your path goes over a 2-plank bridge and continues for some distance with ground dropping away on your left. Your path now descends and crosses a stream via a long bridge. *This Ashdown Forest stream is one you encounter often: it's the same one that runs under the Pooh Sticks Bridge*. Your path veers left and gradually rises with the stream now down on your right.
- 3 At a fork, avoid a path on your left rising onto the heath and stay by the stream, going through a wooden barrier. Shortly, the path curves left away from the stream and reaches a fork. Avoid the wide path curving left uphill onto the heath and fork **right** on a narrower path into woods. Your path undulates over several dips, still with the stream on your right, and rises to meet a wide path at a T-junction. Follow this pleasant clear broad sandy path through birches. When you reach a marshy area, keep on the left side and pick up your path, now grassy, straight ahead. Your path curves left around a line of trees with open space on your left. It meets a muddy horse path at a curve. Turn **right** on the horse path, down a slope and over a heavy-duty bridge across the stream. *This bridge is crossed, in the opposite direction during the other walk "Turnstile and Windmill"*.
- 4 **Immediately** after the bridge, turn **right** on a narrow path beside the stream. The path along the edge of a bank, over a small fern-banked stream and up a steep bank. Keep straight ahead now, avoiding a path forking right, and thus leaving the stream and heading up into the open. Your path runs along the edge of the heath with a thick pinewood on your right. Continue alongside this fringe of pines, soon passing a post with the word *horses* on the other side. Where a space opens up on your right, keep ahead, soon rejoining the fringe of trees. Your path becomes wide and sandy and the trees change to silver birch. *Near the top, there are two tree stumps near a metal gate on the right which form a perfect picnic spot with views of Nutley Windmill and Friends Clump*. Finally you come out into an open area. Veer **left** to go through a wooden gate ahead, next to Millbrook East car park and to the main A22 road. *There is usually a vendor of icecream, hotdogs and drinks here in the car park*.

Leg 3: Millbrook East to Forest Centre 3½ km=2 miles

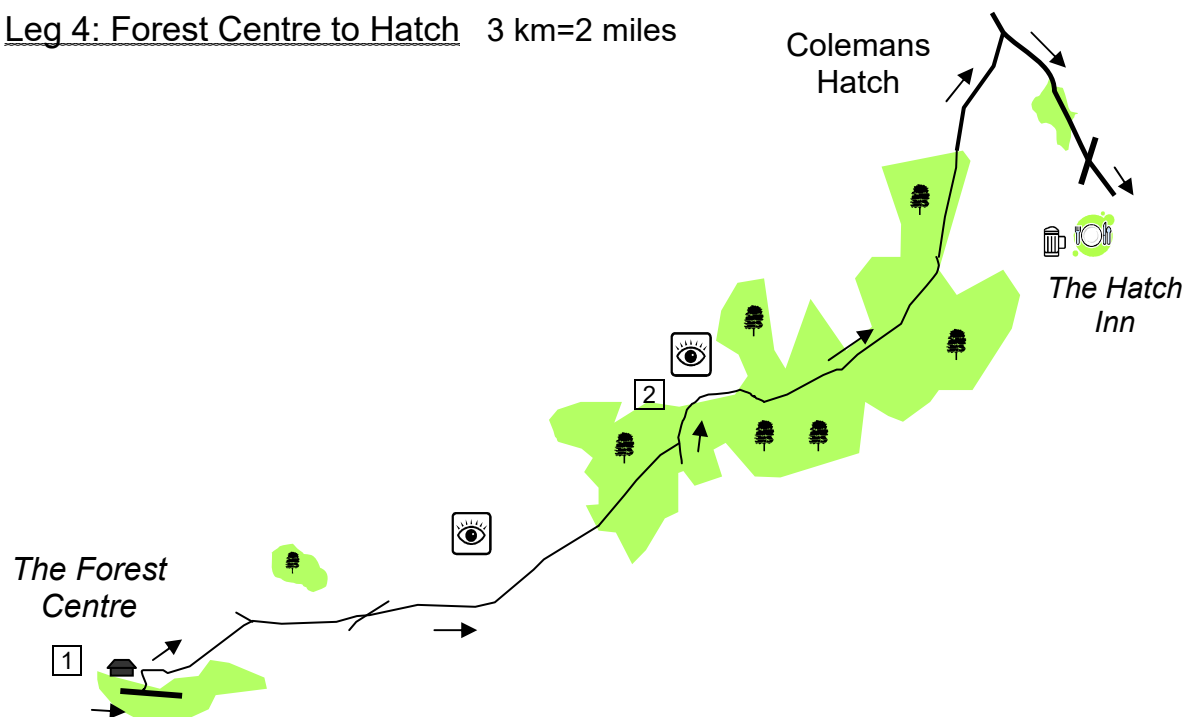
1 Cross the main road carefully to a wide path opposite which immediately bends right parallel to the road. At a fork, keep **right**, staying near the road. Your path crosses a tarmac drive coming from Chelwood Vachery, continuing past a wooden barrier. Shortly on your right is the Trees car park and, not long after, you are joined from the left by another wide path. Here, turn **right** through the trees on an indistinct path to the main A22 road. Cross the road carefully, a fraction left, to a signed footpath on the other side, going beside *Lewes Park Cottages*. *From here to the hotel, this walk shares its route with another walk in this series [Hindleap and Vachery](#).*

2 The path goes past cottages into trees and curves left, running past a few small buildings until suddenly you pass by an unneeded stile and reach a fine grassy path with the wide open landscape of Ashdown Park Hotel all around. The hotel itself with its church is now in full view ahead to the right.

3 On the other side of the meadow, the footpath keeps ahead on a grassy track between woodland on the right and pastures on the left, grazed by the animals of the nearby Llama Park. In early summer, these pastures have a spectacular coating of buttercups. It then joins a tarmac drive with a pond on the left and various walks with alluring names signposted for hotel guests. Continue past the pitch 'n' putt to pass the main hotel building on your right. The footpath zigzags left-right and follows the yellow arrows through the car park and up a grassy slope between posts on the other side. It comes out via a small yard to the Colemans Hatch road.



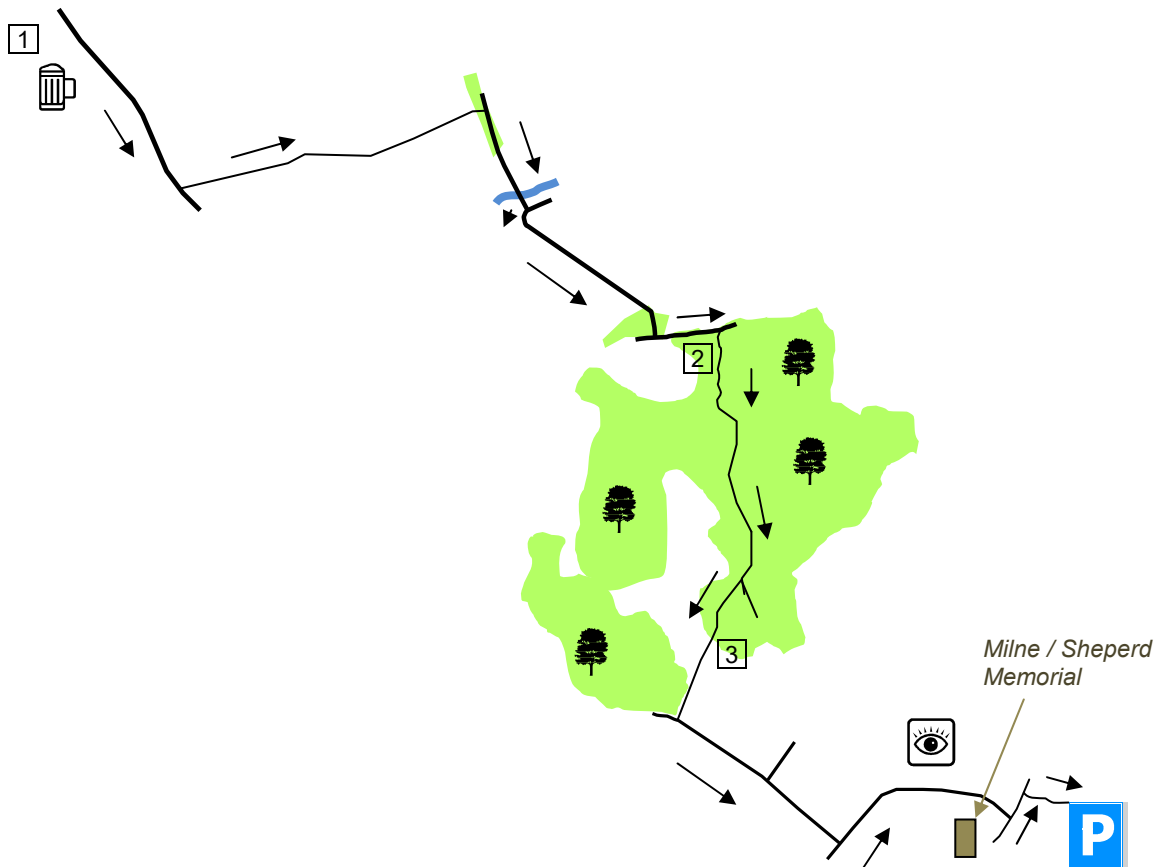
Leg 4: Forest Centre to Hatch 3 km=2 miles



- 1 Turn **right** on the road, arriving in 100m at a large grey rustic barn and go **left** into the entrance. *This is the Forest Centre, filled with visitor's information and various exhibits about the wildlife and geography of the Forest.* Exit through the back of the building and turn **right** through a wooden gate into the car park. Cross the car park and take a narrow path on the other side, going past a post with a slanting information tablet and a picnic table. You are on a level path with splendid views left as far as the North Downs. Your path merges with a grassy path coming from the left. On your right soon are the Broadstone Car Park, the Millennium Clump and Linton's Car Park. Soon this pleasant path descends to enter woodland. It veers **left** where it meets a path coming from Townsends Car Park and comes out to a bench with another viewpoint.
- 2 Veer **right** along the ridge and follow the path as it wheels right near the road and crosses a track, followed by a horse track. Soon your path approaches a field ahead and crosses another track. It now veers left by the field and eventually joins a residential drive as it passes some of the first houses of Coleman's Hatch with the church spire visible ahead. You come out to a road in the village. *A short diversion to your left takes you to the late Victorian Holy Trinity church, often called "the church on the edge of the forest"; unfortunately it is usually locked.* Turn sharp **right** on the road. In 200m go straight over a road junction onto another minor road, Kidds Hill, taking you to immediately to *The Hatch Inn*.

Apart from the church, The Hatch Inn is by far the most celebrated building in this sleepy rather thinly-spread village. It was originally a line of three cottages in the mid-1400s and became an inn, originally called the "Cock", in the 1700s. It still has the low beams and the traditional old bar. The Hatch serves several ales, including Harveys and Larkins and is a Camra local. There is a pretty beer garden in the rear and it's useful to note that you can take cream teas here. The menu, prepared by a noted chef, is not cheap with ploughman's at £8.50 and fish and chips, by another name, at £13.50. To reserve a table, ring 01342 822363.

Leg 5: Hatch to Piglets 3 km=2 miles



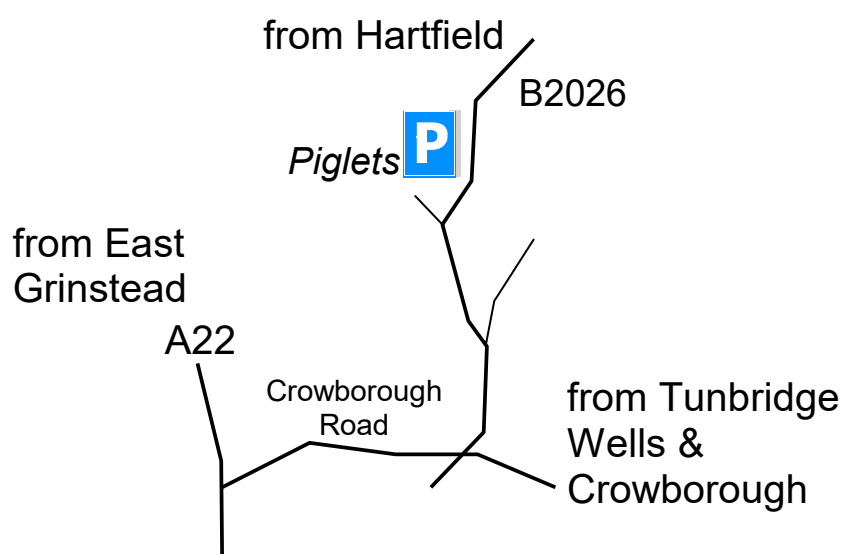
- 1 Continue down the road past *The Hatch* and in about 300m, in a dip, go **left** through a metal swing-gate onto a footpath. Keep straight ahead, passing a large oak and continue with a fence on your left. At the far side, go through a modern kissing-gate and along the right-hand side of the next meadow. Go over a stile into the next meadow and, at the other side, go through a wooden swing-gate and down steps to a lane, Harts Lane. Turn **right** on the lane, across a bridge over that same familiar wide Ashdown Forest stream. Here at a road junction, go **right** and immediately **left** on a quiet narrow lane uphill. At the top, the lane zigzags between banks and comes to a T-junction with Chuck Hatch Lane. Turn **left** on the lane, passing the entrance to *Spring Farm*.
- 2 In 120m, only 2m before the wooden gate into *Claypits*, turn **right** over a bank on a narrow unmarked path into the woods. *The route that follows is one of those navigational nuggets that make this site unique. The path is clear but twisty at first and you need to be alert. As a guide along the way, you can look down for the marks of horses' hooves: this is the only way into the forest from here and it is a secret known only to local riders.* After 50m, the path veers **right** into a shallow dip and **left** again to resume direction. 25m further, the path veers slightly **right** down a bank and then quickly zigzags **right-left-right**. You can see the house of *Spring Farm* over on your right. The path immediately veers **left** again round a tree. The house will now be directly behind you. Your path now leads up into the woods, passing a deep pit on your left. As the path rises, it gets more distinct. You come within about 50m of the open heath visible on your right, which recedes and then comes close again. Here, at a distinct fork in the path, ignore the left fork and keep straight ahead, still a stone's throw from the

open heath. Finally your path leaves the forest and reaches an open plateau, full of bracken.

- 3 Keep straight ahead, passing a small wood on your right and reaching a T-junction with a very wide track. Turn **left** on the track uphill. Keep going ever upwards for 350m until, at the top, you reach a T-junction. Turn **left** on a wide grassy path with unforgettable views left, some of the best in the whole of the Forest. Your path wheels right and right again and soon passes a clump of assorted trees on your right surrounding a plaque commemorating A.A. Milne and E.H. Shepard, creators of Winnie-the-Pooh. (*For more information, see another walk in this series [Poohesticks and Sandpits](#).*) At a T-junction, turn **left** on a sandy path. In 40m, turn **right** on a narrow path leading back to the Piglets car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car:



Piglets car park is off the west side of the B2026 nearly 3 miles south of Hartfield. [2015: walkers report that the *Piglets* sign is missing. As a guide, the car park is immediately next to a large white “40” in a circle in the road.] One way is through Edenbridge and Hartfield in which case the car park is on the right. If coming from the A22 London-East Grinstead – Eastbourne road, go east on the Crowborough Road and north on the B2026, signposted *Hartfield*. The car park is 2 miles on the left. The car park is small and is in a wide break in the trees.

There are several alternative starting points, indicated by the symbols on the overview map. However, Piglets is by far the most satisfying because of the interesting finish and the position of the refreshment break.

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