



Wadhurst and Bewl Water

Distance: 7¾ km=4¾ miles

easy walking

Region: East Sussex

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Refreshments: Wadhurst

Map: Explorer 136 (The Weald) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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Village, woodland, meadows, water, views

In Brief

This walk links one of the oldest villages of the Sussex Weald with a new “lake” created in 1973 with a picturesque lakeshore, giving you sudden views of hills, woods and oasthouses.

Wadhurst has two excellent pubs* and other eateries, with good picnic opportunities by the lake. (* For enquiries at the *Greyhound*, ring 01892-783224; for the *White Hart*, it's 01892-782850.)

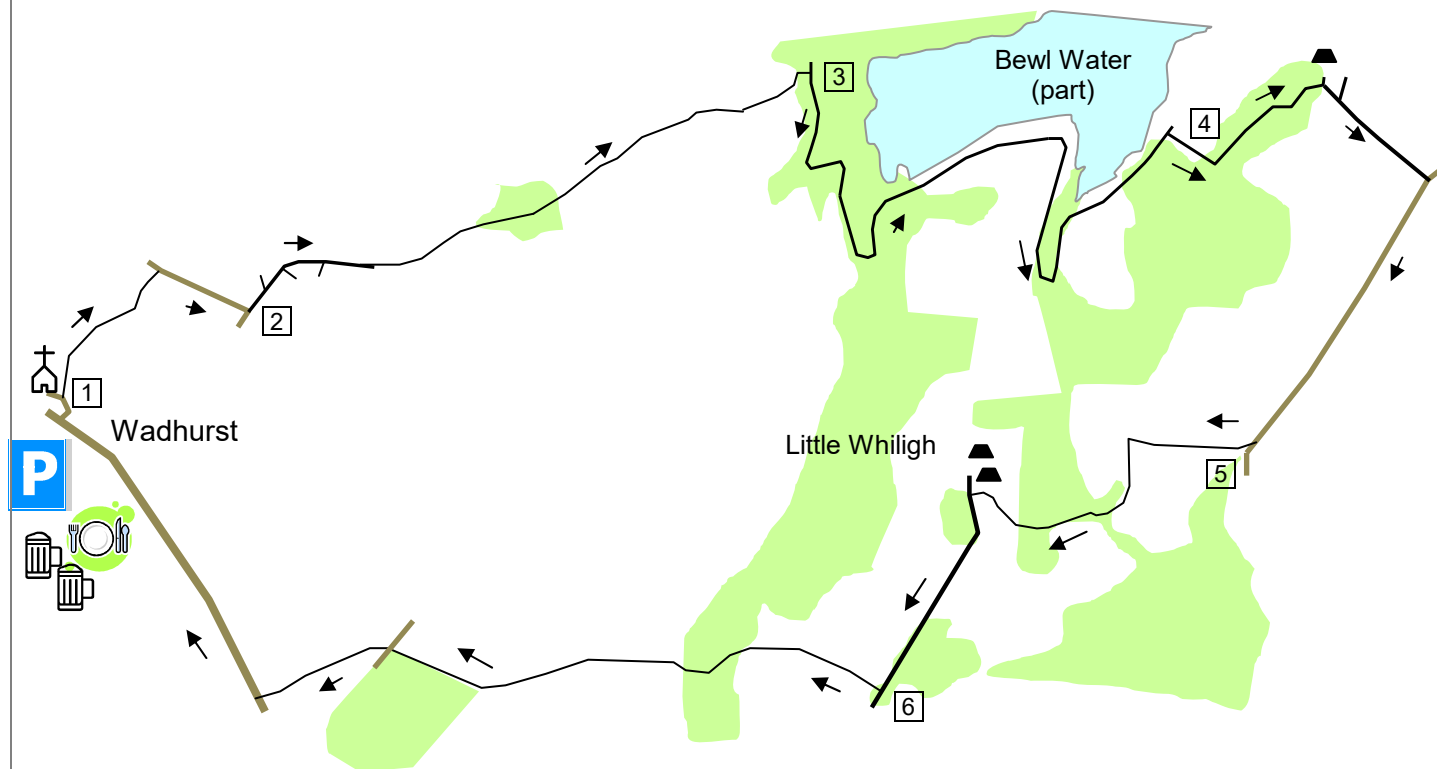


There are very few nettles and brambles on this walk, so shorts can be worn. The terrain is mainly good wide surfaced paths, with one cereal field and a couple of grassy meadows, none of which require boots, although many people wear them for comfort. Your dog will enjoy this walk too.

The walk begins in the village of **Wadhurst**, E.Sussex, postcode **TN5 6AP**. There are two free car parks just off the High Street, behind the two pubs. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Wadhurst goes back to Anglo Saxon times when Wada set up his family on this "clearing in the wood". The church of St Peter and St Paul, which you soon pass, is over a thousand years old. For more information on this historic village, see the walk 'Wadhurst and Tidebrook' in this series.



- 1 From the *Greyhound* pub, cross the High Street, e.g. using the little lane opposite Jackie Martel's delightful hats and handbags shop, to the church (which is definitely worth visiting). Take a tarmac path beside the wall on the right-hand perimeter of the churchyard. Just after you enter the wider part of the churchyard, fork **right** by an old kissing-gate on a narrow path with allotments on your right. You come down to a tarmac lane. Turn **right**, soon passing a small spectacular wildflower meadow on your left. At a T-junction, turn left on a gravel track.
- 2 Continue straight ahead past cottages of Little Pell Farm, on a sandy track with giant thistles abloom. Go through a large metal gate (easier than the stile), under trees, with a pond on your left, a vineyard on your right. Where the track bends left, keep straight ahead on a grassy path under trees. Your path becomes a pleasant winding woodland path, finally leading you over a stile into a meadow. Cross the meadow diagonally **right** and along the left-hand edge. You come down into a glade of tall trees. Hop over a stile here to meet a wide path at a T-junction. This is the Bawl Water Route, a route around the lake which you will be following part-way.

Bawl Water is the largest body of water in Southeast England. It was formed in 1973 by damming the valley of the Bawl and Teise rivers. It also draws water from the Medway. It serves as a reservoir for much of Kent and East Sussex. It is connected by a pipe to the Darwell reservoir and can transfer 35 million litres of water a day. It is also a major leisure centre, for sailing, bird watching and, of course, walking.

3 Turn **right** on the wide path. The path snakes through woods and bends left and right at a hairpin which skirts an arm of the lake. Suddenly you are out of the trees and Bewl Water unveils itself into the distance. Ignore a footpath right and follow the path along the waterside. Your path bends right, passing the other end of that footpath, and executes a tight loop round another creek, passing through more woodland, offering another view, followed by more woodland. In another 100m or so, suddenly you see a notice directing you **right** for the Bewl Water Route. You have no choice here but to turn right, as the path ahead is a dead end. But it is pleasant to walk ahead first to a small bench by the waterside where you have a view across the lake to the oasts of Little Butts Farm – a good picnic site.



4 The path goes steeply up and bends left at the top. Just before a house (*Newbarn*) turn **right** on a tarmac drive away from the house. In 50m, **ignore** a signed footpath on your left. This footpath leads to a promontory known locally as “The Nose”, returning on lanes. But there is an unofficial path which stays on the waterside. A brief summary of the Round-The-Nose walk is appended below. At the end of the drive, turn **right** at a T-junction on a quiet tarmac lane (Ward's). You pass a track on your right (for *Southfields*) and a drive on the left from Chessons Farm (the end point of the Round-The-Nose walk). In nearly 200m more, just as the lane starts to curve left under tall trees, go **right** through a large wooden gate into a high sloping meadow. The Bewl Water Route continues on the lane. In case you were thinking of doing the whole circuit, be warned: it is 17 miles!

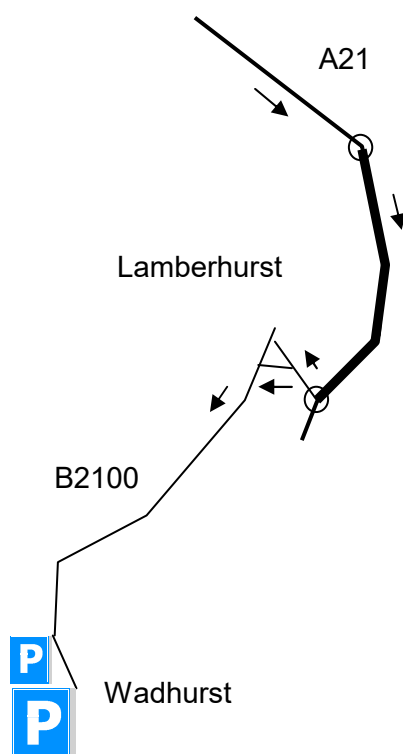
5 Your path bears right along the lofty grass meadow, keeping about 10m from the right-hand edge, with Wadhurst visible on the hill. You come under oaks to a second steeply sloping meadow. Turn immediately **left** along the top of the meadow on a path which quickly dips down under oaks and beeches, down to a pair of large wooden gates. Follow the right-hand edge of the next meadow, continue uphill and bear **right** in the direction of some houses, the hamlet of Little Whiligh. At the top of the slope, turn **left** to go through a large wooden gate onto a tarmac drive coming from the hamlet. Turn **left** and follow this pleasant easy way for 400m. As you meet a driveway from the left, with a large house on your left, look to your right for a small signpost opposite the house's small garden gate.

6 Turn **right** on this footpath, down seven steps, through an old kissing-gate, into a meadow. Go down the right-hand edge and, as you pass a thorn tree, veer **left** down the centre. At the bottom, go over a stile in the fence into an oak plantation. Keep **left** on a path through the oaks. A path joins from the left as you come over a stream into a crop field. Keep **left** along the edge, following the edge uphill as it turns a corner. In the top corner, go through a gap to a tarmac lane. Cross a stile (avoidable on the right) and take a path diagonally across an unkempt meadow. A band of oaks is followed by a stile onto the main road. Turn **right**, using the footway, leading back to the centre of Wadhurst where the walk began.

Round-The-Nose. This unresearched route is sketched here, giving you an extension to the route, with more extensive views of the lake on an unofficial path. At the footpath sign on the above-mentioned lane in section 4, turn **left** on a wide path. The path turns **right** before Bryant's Farm and **left**, following the waterside. Where you meet a tarmac lane, ignore it and stay by the waterside on an unofficial path. This path runs for 2 km round the promontory and sharply round an inlet, till you have a track on your right. Follow the track to a lane, cross a fraction right to a footpath. Follow the footpath through Chesson's Farm, out along their driveway to Ward's Lane. Turn **left** to resume the walk.

Getting there

By car: Wadhurst is easily reached from the A21 and Lamberhurst. If coming from the north on the A21, after the narrow section, at a roundabout, ignore the right turn for Lamberhurst and continue on the A21 dual-carriageway and under the "land bridge". Now turn **right** at the roundabout signposted *Wadhurst* and follow signs to the village, involving a left fork and a left turn onto the B2100. This road will take you into Wadhurst in 4 miles. Wadhurst is the last settlement of a long string of villages, after the main road makes a left turn. Park in the large free car park on the right behind the *Greyhound* pub, in a "23 hour" bay. There is a similar but smaller car park behind the *White Hart* pub.



By bus/train: Wadhurst station is one mile from the village and from the walk. There is an hourly bus service into the centre, e.g. bus 254. Check the timetables. On Sundays you may need a taxi (e.g. Chris on 07946-310662).

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