



Round Weir Wood

Distance 13 km (8 miles), or 9 km (5½ miles), easy walking

Region: East Sussex, West Sussex

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Refreshments: Forest Row

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest)

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Lake, woodland, hills, country town

In Brief

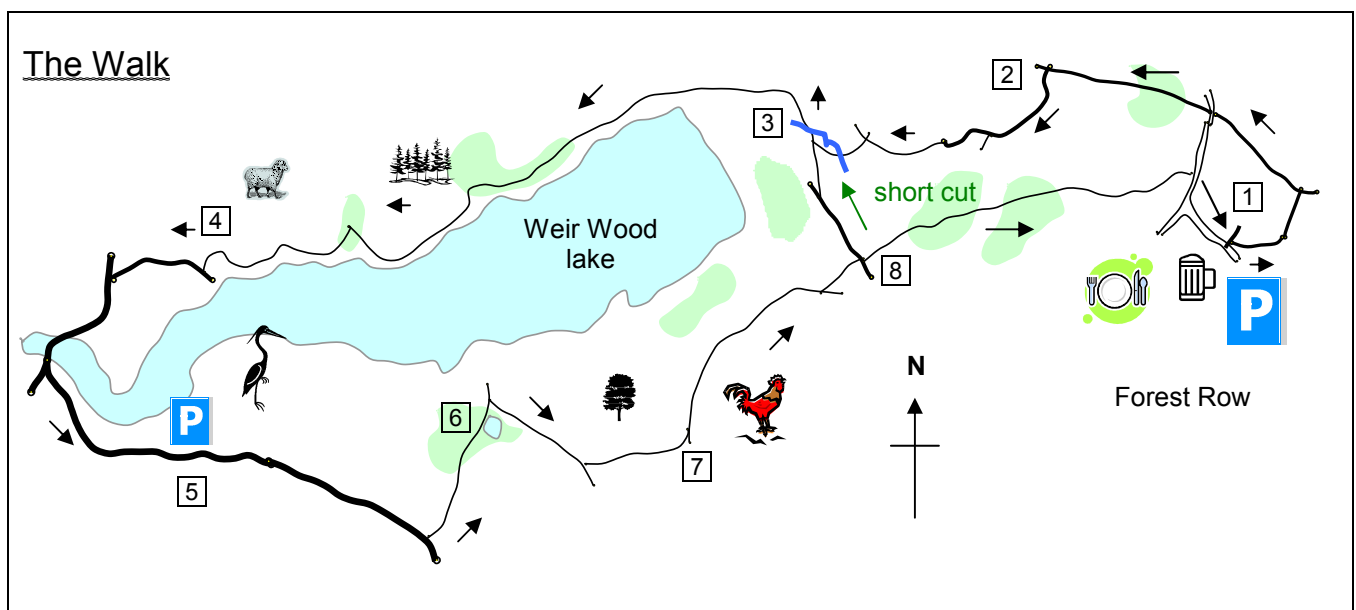
This is an easy walk round Weir Wood lake* in East and West Sussex, visiting the picturesque small town of Forest Row.

The walk begins at the 24-hour car park in **Forest Row**. An alternative start is the Weir Wood Nature Reserve car park on the south shore. For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



This is an easy walk, so boots are not essential except after a wet period. This walk is not nettle free, so bare legs are a no-no. Dogs should be welcome.

* It's called 'lake' in this account as that is much more poetic than 'Weir Wood Reservoir' to use its proper name. (Imagine "Tchaikovsky's Swan Reservoir"?)



The Walk

Forest Row gets its name from its nearness to Ashdown Forest. It has grown considerably from a small hamlet, due to the railway and its position on the old turnpike road. Forest Row has a colourful history involving smuggling and a notorious mail coach robbery. The church of Our Lady of the Forest that dominates the junction was visited by US President J.F. Kennedy in the 1960s. One notable former resident of this swish area for homes was Ben Elton the writer and comedian.

- 1 Near the *Forester's Arms*, between Hartfield Road and Station Road, go diagonally across the grass in the direction of the sign and join a wide stony path. The main path bends left in front of a sculpted tree trunk, passes a footpath on the right and goes over the infant Medway. Turn **left** onto the disused railway known as Forest Way, which soon veers right up to a driveway, and continue **left** soon ignoring a footpath left. Eventually the Forest Way meets the main road. Cross over using the pedestrian crossing and continue on the other side on a wide pathway through woodland. After 700m, the path comes to an old level crossing through a wooden gate. Turn **left** here on the lane.
- 2 Follow the lane as it bends right and comes to a remarkable ruin. *Brambletye Castle or Brambletye House was built in about 1631 by Sir Henry Compton but became a ruin in the same century. Its history has been confabulated by a fictional novel by Horace Smith called 'Brambletye House'.* Just after the ruin, keep ahead, ignoring a bridleway left. The track zig-zags round several properties and passes a fruit farm on the right. Just after the end of the fence on the left, where the path enters woodland, turn sharp **left** on a woodland path. Don't miss this turning! The path crosses the Medway by a bridge. Turn **right** along the edge of a large meadow and at the end comes to a junction of paths.

[The short cut joins the main route here.](#)

- 3 Turn **right** and cross the Medway by a bridge. The path goes over a rather marshy area (which you can avoid by keeping to the grassy tufts) and goes along the left-hand side of a meadow and under grid wires. It then goes on an enclosed path. (At the time of writing, the stiles are in disrepair but easy to use.) Veer **left** in a sheep pasture. *The great church of St Swithun in East Grinstead is visible up on the right.* Ignore a right turn at a fingerpost. *You now have a clear view of the lake and if you want to see the dam you can go through a gate on the left, although you can't walk along the top.* Through the next gate, you are on a fine pleasant level path through the woods. From here the route is obvious all the way to the Admiral's Bridge Lane. There is a picnic site on the left and some more fine woodland, where the path bends left, and three fine wooden gates. *Note that you have joined the Sussex Border Path. This is the North-South section that goes down to the sea, separating the two Sussexes.* There is an unneeded stile into more woodland and, from this point, several junctions with paths on the right which of course you avoid, staying by the lake. Soon there are paths up to Standen Rocks, one of many rock outcrops in this area of the High Weald. At the end, you meet a lane at a T-junction with a fenced-off canoeing centre on the left.
- 4 Turn **right** on the lane and follow it all the way to West Hoathly Road. Turn **left** on the road. *(By turning right you would soon arrive at Standen, a late Victorian house belonging to the National Trust, designed by Phillip Webb,*

and overflowing with Arts and Crafts furniture and coverings, with a fine garden.) The road eventually runs over the shallows of the west arm of the lake, re-entering East Sussex in the process. At the next road junction, turn **left** on Legsheath Lane. In 500m you reach the Weir Wood Nature Reserve and its car park (an alternative start), an excellent vantage point for bird-watching.

- 5 Continue along the road. (If you are starting at this car park, then turn **left** on the road.) In 550m, ignore a lane left marked *no through road*. and follow the road, slightly uphill. In another 500m, the road passes the entrance to *Charlwood*, curves right and steepens a little. In another 150m, where the road bends right, turn **left** just after a house over two stiles into a meadow. Go straight down the long meadow aiming for a large wooden gate in the bottom right-hand corner. Go through the gate. (At the time of writing it is padlocked and you need to climb over, but you should not worry that there is anything wrong with that.) Go through a metal kissing gate and follow a wide path through woodland. Soon the path runs beside a pond on the right.
- 6 120m after the pond, turn **sharp right** through a metal gate into another large meadow, initially on the left-hand edge and soon keeping ahead across the centre. Go through a wide gap in the trees and into another meadow. On the other side, go through a metal gate and a wooden gate and keep in the same direction along the left-hand edge of the pasture and, where the edge curves left, leave it to keep ahead and go over two stiles. [July 2011: a walker advises special care in locating these stiles. There are other stiles over to the right which will take you on the wrong path.] Stay on the level over a hillock with an oak tree and descend towards the attractive *Mudbrooks*. Here, go over a stile and turn **left** on the drive.
- 7 Follow the concrete drive past various farm buildings. The drive forks its way around South Park Farm Cottages and passes the historic buildings of South Park Farm. 100m later, where the track curves right, turn **left** on a narrow path indicated by a post with yellow arrows. The path goes through woodland and round a fence to a lane.

At this point you have a choice if you started the walk other than in Forest Row and would like to shorten it. It means you will miss an attractive town and refreshments.

Shortcut. Turn **left** on the lane. Soon you reach the gates of the Weir Wood enclosure which includes a sailing club and other facilities. Take a narrow footpath here to the right of the gates. Keep to the path as it bends right and left and passes by some houses over on the left. Continue along the left-hand side of a meadow until the path is joined at a junction by a path coming from the right, with a wooden bridge head.

Jump now to section [3](#) and continue from there.

- 8 Cross the lane, go through a split-gate opposite, along the left-hand side of a meadow, over a concrete bridge and through a gate. Ignore a path branching left here and continue ahead through a plantation of trees. At a crossing bridleway, keep ahead over two stiles, through more plantation, over another stile, along the centre of a meadow, through a metal gate by a stile and up past a house. The path goes **left** in front of a barn, over a stile, **right** and over two more stiles, then along the centre of a meadow, over a

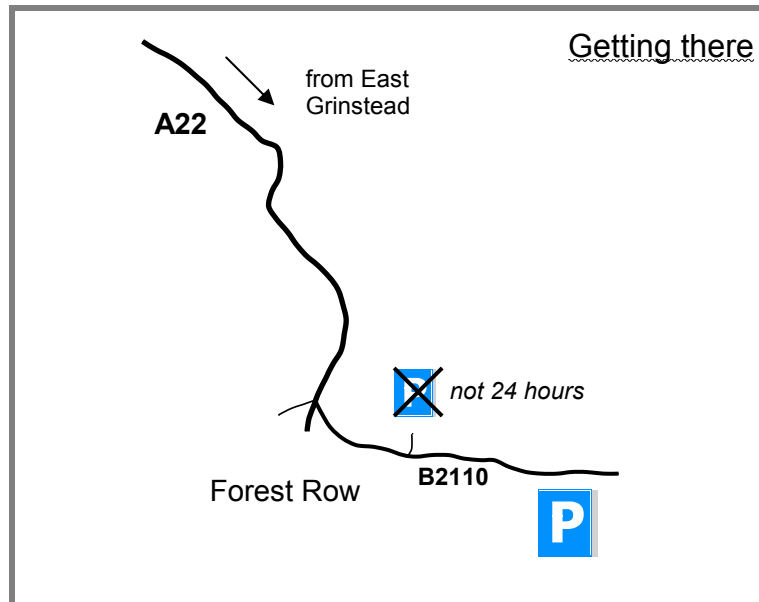


stile and through undergrowth. It now joins an elegant pebbly path adjoining a stylish modern group of houses. At the end of the path, keep ahead up some steps and through the passage in the middle of a building, which leads past a small patio and shops, out to the main (A22) road in Forest Row. *On the other side are the 'Chequers Inn' and a pizzeria.* Turn **right** towards *The Swan* and cross the road to take the **left** fork down the main Hartfield Road. *There are several eateries, including a Cantonese, Portuguese and Indian.* Finally, on the left, you come to the *Forester's Arms* where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Forest Row is on the A22, 3 miles (5km) south of East Grinstead. The car park just after the *Forester's Arms* on the left is not 24 hours: you need to park in the next one, on the right, a little further down. Alternatively, park in a side street. A good alternative start is the car park by the Nature Reserve (see map).

By bus/train: Metrobus 291 from Crawley, East Grinstead or Tunbridge Wells.



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