



Medstead and Bighton

Distance: 15 km=9½ miles

easy walking

Region: Hampshire

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Refreshments: Medstead

Map: Explorer 132 (Winchester) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Villages, ancient tracks, views, quiet lanes

In Brief

This is a gorgeous walk with magnificent views across the whole of Hampshire, an ancient track, shady lanes and footpaths.

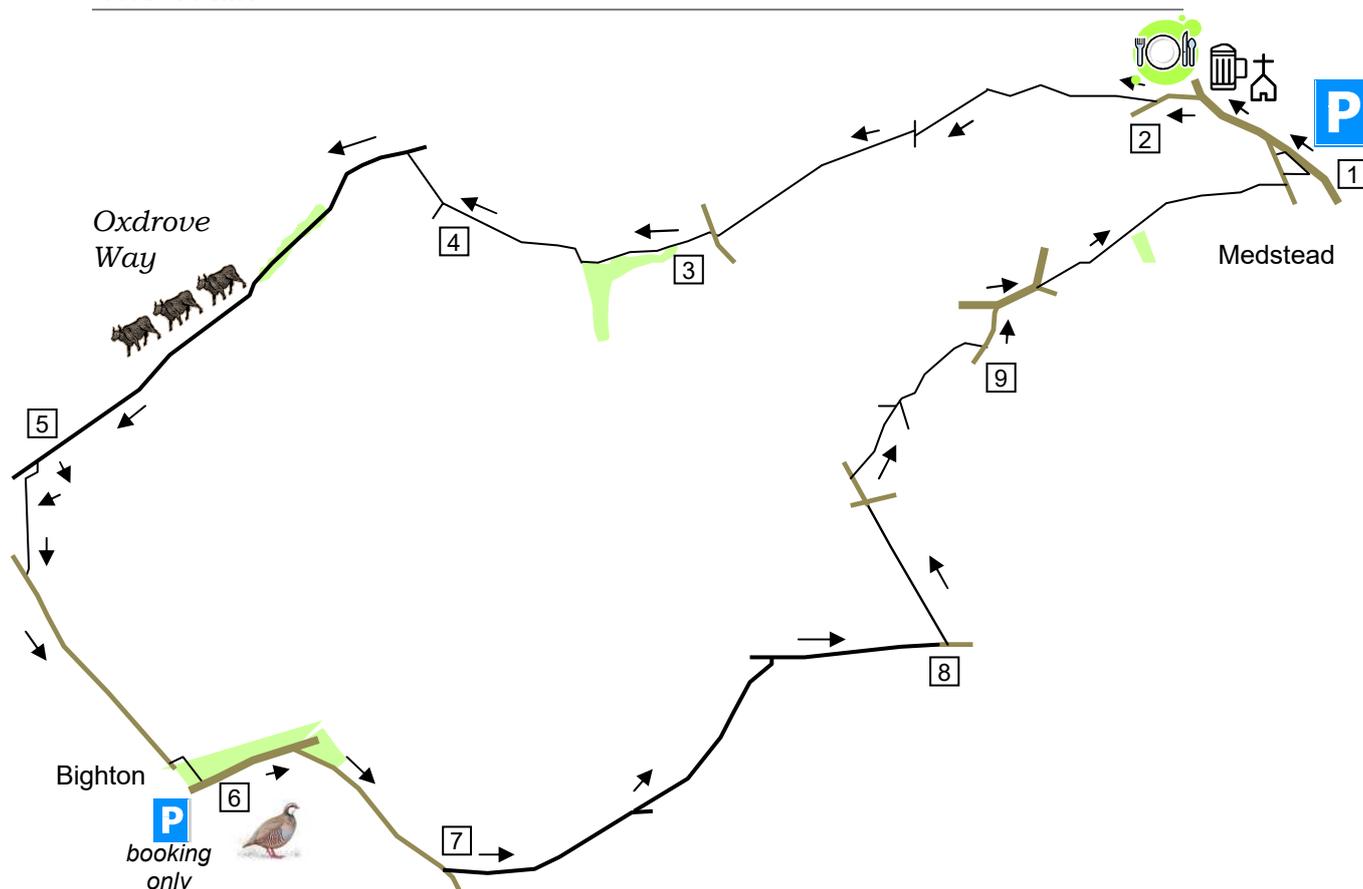
For refreshment, the *Three Horseshoes* in Bighton is now open (Sep 2020) as is the *Castle of Comfort* in Medstead, both having a range of ales and a home-cooked menu. Important: ring 01962-735876 for info at the *Three Horseshoes*; for the *Castle of Comfort*, it's 01420-562112 (or check their websites).



There is some mud on the trackways which you can usually skip round. However, boots are essential in the damper months. Outside the winter months, the walk may be completely dry with only some caked mud. In high summer nettles and brambles tend to proliferate along the narrow paths in the final stages, making it advisable to wear long trousers (and to bring a stick to swish away any stubborn nettles and brambles). Your dog can come too provided he is not too large, in view of one or two stiles in fences.

The walk begins in **Medstead**, Hants, in a layby off Roe Downs Road, nearest postcode **GU34 5LG**, www.w3w.co/sang.migrate.joys, grid ref 657370. An alternative start is in the village of **Bighton**, postcode **SO24 9RE**, for a possible mid-walk break in Medstead; if you would like to use the Village Hall car park, it is essential to reserve it in advance by emailing bookings@bighton.org.uk. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1** Beginning from the layby in Medstead, take a tarmac footpath parallel to the road on your right. Follow the path as it curves left to meet South Town road, turn **right** here and in 50m turn **left** into High Street. After a short distance you pass a handy store and the post office on your left and you come to another crossroads. Keep ahead here passing St Andrew's Church (which is worth a visit when not locked) and Castle Street your right with the *Castle of Comfort* pub.



The Castle of Comfort is worth remembering for start- or end-of-walk refreshments (unless you began in Bighton). Walkers report it as "very friendly and positively economical". The menu is a bit limited (not necessarily a bad sign), but "the ham with the chips and two eggs (at under £10) are very tasty and copious". Note that in the winter this pub may be closed on weekdays.

Pass Castle Street and go straight on until the next crossroads. Fork **left** here alongside a small green and **left** on the road, Common Hill.

- 2** In 20m take a footpath on your **right** crossing over a stile into a small meadow. Follow the path across the field to a metal kissing gate and continue across the grass and through a gap in the hedge into another small patch of grass. Ignore any crossing path and carry on straight ahead. You pass, on your right, a bench made from two tree trunks and then go through a metal gate into a field. Turn **right** and follow the path straight on for some distance ignoring any turn offs, with magnificent views on the left all the way. At the end of the first field, go through a tall metal kissing gate into a vineyard belonging to Hattingley Valley Wines. *This firm makes sparkling English wine on soil similar to that of the Champagne country.* At the other side of the vineyard go through another tall metal kissing gate and

follow the path straight ahead. The houses on your right belong to the small hamlet of Hattingley. *From here on a clear day the whole of Hampshire as far as the sea is spread out before you. At night the light from lighthouse on the Needles can be clearly seen. (It is automated these days.)* At the end of the field you arrive at a tarmac path. Turn **right** on the path and quickly **left** again, before a wooden gate, along the edge of another field beside a hedge on your right. At the other end of this field ignore a left fork and keep **right** on the footpath between a fence and the hedge. Soon you pass another vineyard on your right, and the footpath goes gently downhill towards the road with a wire fence on your right. At the end of the field go through a new metal kissing gate in the corner onto a tarmac lane.

- 3 Cross the lane and go over a stile into a field, and keep along the edge, with a hedge on your left and a newly planted hedge on your right, passing two chicken runs and a clay pigeon shooting area, till you arrive at the other end of the field. Go through a gap in the hedge into the next field and follow the path ahead with a small wood on the left. At the corner of the wood bear **right** to continue along the hedgerow to the corner of the field ahead. At the corner go through a metal kissing-gate next to a new metal farm gate into a field. Keep close to the fence on your left for about 200m. The fence makes three slight turns left. At the third turn leave the fence by veering off to your right at about 45 degrees (that is *half* of a full right turn) on a diagonal path across the open field. **This path is perfectly clear when cereal crops are present; otherwise just note your direction is WNW.** Continue ahead, over the crest. After about 150m you reach a barbed wire fence. Turn **right** and head for some gates visible in the corner of the field.
- 4 When you reach the corner, you meet a complex of two wooden gates and a metal gate. Negotiate the gates any way you can and veer **right** uphill along the left-hand side of a field, ignoring the footpath on your left. At the top you reach a narrow stile, a finger post on the left and a metal gate leading onto a track. Turn **left** on the track, thus joining the ancient Ox Drove Way which was used in olden times to drive cattle to the markets. *The modern Oxdrove Way is a 26 mile=40 km circular trail running through the Candovers, Alresford and the Wilds: ideal for a marathon!*

Oxdrove Way



Continue past Upper Lanham Farm. Where the tarmac turns right to the white farmhouse, keep ahead on a track which soon becomes grassy. The

track widens and becomes overhung with trees. Follow this track passing, after 500m, an open-sided barn on your right and then another barn 400m further on. After this second barn, continue another 750m, passing two more fields on your left where you will find a patch of woodland on your left and, incidentally, a field entrance on your right with a yellow arrow. (As a guide, Nettlebed Lane and Nettlebed Farm are just over 200m ahead. If you overshoot this point, you can simply turn **left** on Nettlebed Lane.)

- 5 **Leave** the Oxdrove Way here by turning **left** on an unmarked track that leads into the woodland. Immediately swing **right** with it to enter a field with a house visible ahead. In 15m go diagonally across the centre of the field to the opposite corner where there is a fingerpost. (If there are wet or dense crops, you can go right-left round two sides.) Enter the trees and exit onto a tarmac lane Nettlebed Lane. Turn **left** on this very quiet lane with great views ahead over Hampshire. In 600m you pass *Bighton Manor* on your right and some playing fields on your left to a 30 mph limit sign and into the village of Bighton. Shortly you see a T-junction ahead. Just before it turn **left** on a narrow tarmac path with a metal rail. Follow the path past some fenced-off new houses till you see a redundant stile ahead and some yellow arrows. Turn **right** here on the wider path to emerge into a large car park behind the Village Hall. Walk down to the road and turn **left**. Soon you reach the centre of the village and the *Three Horseshoes* pub.



This pub was previous known as the “English Partridge” when it had a reassuring sign “boots ok” and was romantically rustic with candles and rare brews. In 2020 it was refurbished and re-opened after three years in the doldrums and has become popular, having well-spaced tables in the garden. The Three Horseshoes is open for lunch during “normal” times, later on Sunday, all day Saturday.

- 6 Continue on past some cottages on the left and some lovely old houses then a charming thatched cottage till you reach a road junction. Turn right here following the sign for *Ropley*. Carry on down this pretty little road for nearly 1 km until you arrive at another road junction. Turn **left** here by a low sign post in the direction of *North Street*. Follow this road for about ½ km. Just after the road passes two pedestrian signs and before it bends sharp right, leave it by going straight ahead past a red brick house, *Takoma*.
- 7 The track may soon becomes quite muddy in the wetter seasons. Soon you pass an opening into a field on your right: carry on straight ahead on a small footpath ahead. After about 200m another track joins you from the right. Your track soon becomes wider and, in winter, quite a bit drier. Always carry straight on avoiding any turn offs. Finally your path bends left to a T-junction. Turn **right** here on a horse track known as Stancomb Broad Lane. The track becomes stony and after 600m or is joined from the right by a tarmac drive.
- 8 In 40m turn **left** on another path marked with an orange, possibly hidden, byway arrow. **If this path is very muddy it is possible to avoid the mud by going into the fields alongside, first on the left and then across the path to a field on the right.** In 650m the path comes out to a road junction. Cross straight over the junction and proceed along West End Lane. In 150m, go **right** by a fingerpost through a gap in the hedgerow. Follow a diagonal path to the left across the field, go up steps in the hedge and bear diagonally across the next field. After a stile, go diagonally left across the next meadow, over another stile and across a very small meadow to a 3-way

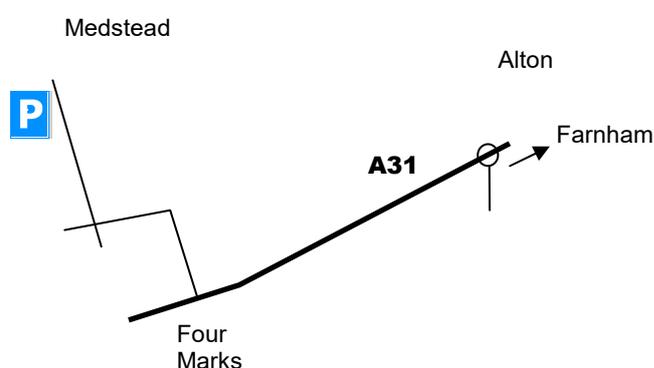
fingerpost at a junction of tracks. Go over a stile here and bear **right** on a wide track, avoiding a track sharp right. The track passes some houses and shortly brings you to a T-junction with a road by a wooden post in the centre of a small triangle of grass.



- 9 Turn **left** on the road and follow it to a T-junction. Turn **right** here following the signs for *Medstead, Bentworth*. On the right is the beautiful thatched *Three Ways Cottage*. In about a 100m the road bends left at a junction. Turn **right** here into Homestead Lane but immediately, just under a sign saying *Bridleway no Unauthorised Access for Motor Vehicles*, turn **left** onto a small path. Follow this path past houses and through several small fields and a small patch of glorious bluebell woods, always keeping straight ahead. There are several stiles, some redundant or avoidable. Your path runs between a hedge and a fence, going past two crossing paths with stiles and horse pastures. Finally you pass through a metal kissing-gate and, 5m later, a metal kissing-gate on your right which leads into a cemetery. Here you can either continue on the path to the road or walk through the very pleasant cemetery and exit onto the road through a pair of metal gates. Turn **left** on the road, using the footway opposite. After 40m there is access to a playing field on your right. You can cross this or if necessary go round the edge to arrive at the layby where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: If coming from the London area, take the A3 to Guildford, then the A31 over the Hog's Back, through Farnham and follow it towards Winchester. The dual carriageway ends at the village of Four Marks. Continue for about half a mile and just past a new housing estate is a sign on the right for *Medstead 1½*. Turn **right** here and follow the road until you come to a cross roads with a sign for Medstead on the right. Turn **right** here into Roe Downs Road and continue for 0.8 mile=1.3 km till you pass a school and reach some playing fields on either side of the road. Here on the left is a large layby where you can park the car, your only competition being the school run.



By bus/train: bus 28 runs from Alton station to Medstead, not Sundays. Check the timetables.

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