



Fetcham Downs and Bocketts Farm

A magical teashop walk

Distance: 3 km=2 miles or 4 km=2½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Bocketts Farm

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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open country trails, green meadows, woodland, secret paths, show farm

In Brief

Bocketts Farm, near Leatherhead, Surrey has a quite delightful tearoom housed in an 18th-century barn, really much more than a tearoom since it serves substantial hot snacks. It is open every day, all year round, from 10am to 5:30pm. An entrance ticket is *not* required for the loos, tearoom and shop. For further information, see www.bockettsfarm.co.uk.



The real magic of this walk is in the secret paths, the wild meadows, the unexpected beech glades and the yew groves of Fetcham Downs. Thanks to the open access provided by the Norbury Park Estate, there seems to be an inexhaustible choice of little-known paths some of which do not feature on the official guides. This guide chooses the best of them.

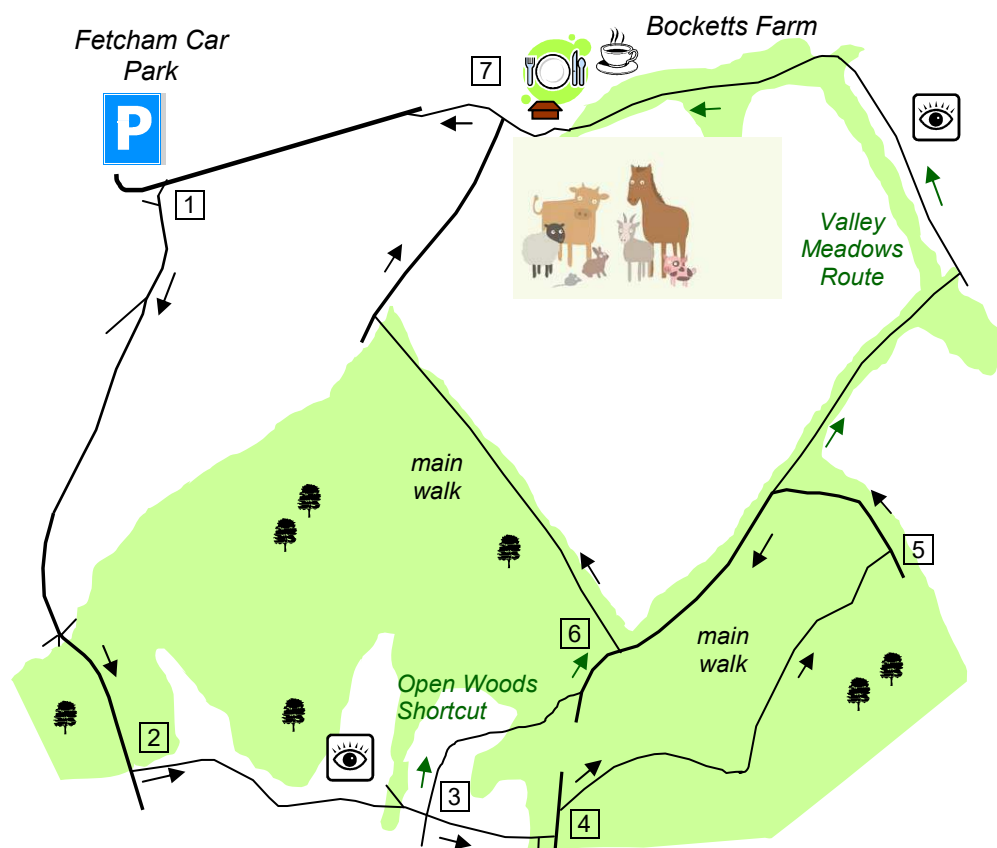
You can choose the **quick circuit** (3 km=2 miles) which cuts out the main loop. The **main walk** includes some quite magical little-known forest where you will probably meet nobody along the way. On your return from the main walk, you have the option to take a walk with views of the Mole Valley, entering the farm from the quiet east side.



There is a short patch of dense bracken and some brambles on the main walk, because of which long trousers are normally recommended. Paths and surfaces are all very good, making sensible shoes or trainers perfectly adequate. Your dog will enjoy this walk and Bocketts Farm will allow him as far as outside the tearoom, if well supervised, where a tub of water is provided. Otherwise simply skip the farm visit.

The walk begins at the small **Norbury Park car park**, close to the **Bockett's Farm** roundabout (*small parking charge*), nearest **postcode KT22 9BW**. There are nearby *free* parking options. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 Exit the car park at the far end and turn **right** on a fine broad track which is surfaced at the start. In about 100m, ignore a wide path that forks right. Soon the trees on the right give way to a small meadow and you have the pleasing sight on your right of *Roaringhouse Farm* (so named because it lies in a windy gap) with its fine old granary. Soon you come to a wide crossing track with a 4-way signpost. Keep straight ahead on the same winding track with woodland on both sides. In 200m, look to your left for a wooden barrier and a very small signpost.

2 Turn **left** through the barrier, up into woods. Your path quickly emerges into an open grassy area and goes straight up, curving **right** to run gradually beside an expanse of woodland on your left. After the corner of the wood, bear **left** with the path and follow it across the centre of a grassy space, with great views of the London skyline to your left. Head for a lonely silver birch with three trunks. (Don't confuse it with another birch tree and a seat further to your left next to the wood.) Continue onwards to the other side of the open space to enter another small wood, veering slightly left, through a narrow gap. Follow a path straight ahead through this narrow strip of woodland and go out the other side into a wild meadow. Follow the path ahead for 30m to reach a crosspaths at another wooden post.



Decision point. If you are in a hurry for drinks and snacks and therefore doing the **quick circuit** (3 km=2 miles), skip to near the end of this text and do the section called **Open Woods Shortcut**.

- 3 Go straight over the crossing path and continue following the left-hand side of the wild meadow as it gradually narrows. In the far corner, go through a wooden barrier, keep straight on for 25m and turn **left** on a wide horse path. In only 30m, fork **right** on a wide path, going through a wooden barrier.
- 4 This path will take you through stunningly beautiful woodland, one of the secret delights of this area. At first, your path goes through a coppice (now cut down). It then curves right through a translucent clearing with tall pines and oaks. Keep following the path, visible beneath your feet, as it exits the clearing through a wide gap, passing a fine tall oak tree in another smaller clearing. Your path wheels left through woodland on a very wide course and then gradually becomes narrower. You now go through a light area of bracken. Don't worry if the bracken is rather dense: just follow the winding path along the right-hand side of the light area, with darker woodland on your right. It leads down finally to a very wide horse path.
- 5 Turn **left** on this wide path, a looping horse ride with views (in winter at least). Your path runs under more beautiful beeches, curves left and bends left again at a junction. On your right are a signposted footpath and a viewpoint with a seat.

Decision point. If you would like to take a simpler route through open pastures to Bocketts Farm by the "back door", skip to near the end of this text and do the section called **Valley Meadows Route**. The distance is about the same as for the main route. You may pass some cute shy heifers along the way.

Continue round **left** on the main path, soon passing an info tablet about Norbury Park Management.

Norbury Park is a working landscape with three tenanted farms and a sawmill. The park lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and covers 520 hectares. Many wood products and the hand-made Norbury Blue Cheese are produced here. Norbury was one of three manors owned by King Edward the Confessor until 1066. Norbury Park and its manor are mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The diarist John Evelyn visited the estate in 1655 and wrote about the great number of walnut trees.

Your path enters woodland again and reaches a 3-way junction with a farm gate and pastures on your right. Veer **right** here on a wide path which runs through woods with the pastures on your right.

- 6 The path descends gently into a yew grove and continues over tree roots, with the pastures still visible on your right. Finally, after ½ km on this woodland path, you come to a T-junction just beneath a sheep meadow. Turn **right** here on a wide track. Follow the track for 200m. (If muddy, there is a drier parallel path on your left.) Go straight past the big car park until you reach the concrete crossing path which is the main entrance to Bocketts Farm. Turn **right** here for loos, tearoom, shop, goose enclosure, herb garden and (for an entrance fee) the Farm Park itself with lots of extras.



WC



As well as being a working farm, Bocketts has developed as a large adventure zone offering a Small Animal Village, fun activities and its famous pig race. The fields to the southwest have been widely excavated by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit after Romano-British, Iron Age and Celtic artefacts were found. The tea room is in a 18th-century barn and offers hot "specials", snacks, drinks (the coffee is decent), dispensed under an enormous chicken, all at quite good value. It is also licensed.

- 7 After your visit, exit by the main entrance, follow signs for the car park and keep straight ahead on the pedestrian walkway. Avoid slipping into the field on your left (an overflow car park) and instead merge with the tarmac drive. In no time, you are back at the Norbury Park car park where the walk began.

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Open Woods Shortcut

Do this section if you are completing the **quick circuit** (3 km=2 miles).

Turn **left** at the crossing path and follow the clear path which traverses the length of the open wild meadow. The path stays close to the shrubs and thin woodland on your right and gradually curves right. After 200m on this path, it enters trees, taking you into a woodland of brambles, yews, ash and birch, passing a memorial plaque. Your path goes up a shallow bank and enters beechwoods. You reach a one-bar barrier bearing the name *Walnut Tree Clump* and quickly arrive at a wide horse path. Turn **left** on this path which immediately curves right towards open pastures and a farm gate. Turn sharp **left** here on a path which runs through woods with the pastures on your right.

Now re-join the main walk at section 6.

Valley Meadows Route

Do this section if you are completing the longer option through the valley instead of along the woodland path.

Turn **right** in the bend, just before the seat, on a narrower path, in the direction of the little fingerpost. Follow the path straight on downhill, getting gradually steeper. Finally, after nearly 400m, your path discharges you through a wooden swing-gate into a large open pasture with great views ahead of the Mole Valley, with sweeping green meadows and Leatherhead church in the distance. Turn **left** along the upper edge of the pasture.

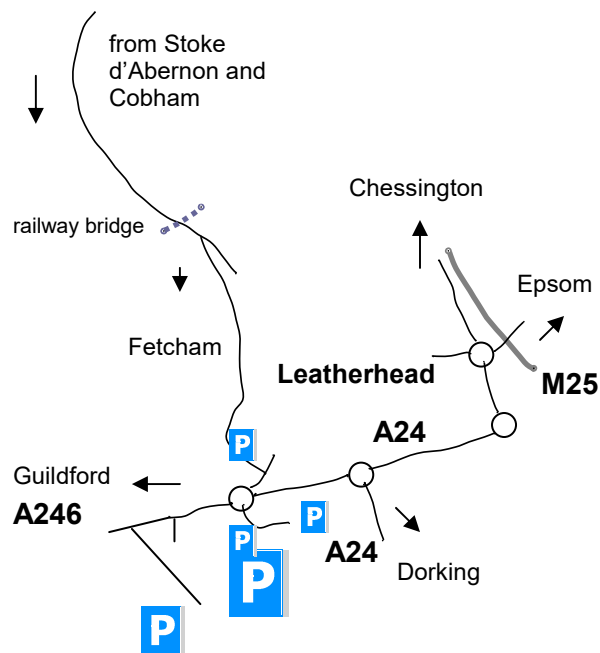
P *Sometimes you pass some very cute shy Guernsey heifers who graze here at certain times. Half way along, a fingerpost points right to a path across the pasture which is not part of this route. It leads down steps and under the railway to the huge Young Street car park and the River Mole Nature Reserve.* Continue to the far top corner and here go **left** and over a stile next to a large wooden gate. Follow the wide path between fences. It leads in 350m straight into Bocketts Farm with loos on your right and the café straight ahead.

After your visit, re-join the main walk at section 7.

Getting there

By car: the walk begins at the **Fetcham car park** by the road leading to Bockett's Farm, just by the roundabout on the A246. To get there from the London area, take the A24 or A243 to Leatherhead. Follow the A24 as it goes around Leatherhead but, where the A24 turns left for Dorking, go straight ahead on the A246, signposted for Guildford. The Fetcham car park is **left** at the next roundabout, signposted with a tourist sign, and immediately on the right.

If coming from Guildford, turn right on the roundabout, a mile or so before Leatherhead. Another route is through Cobham, Stoke d'Abernon and Fetcham (after going under the railway bridge in Fetcham, fork right into The Street).



The small car park is sometimes full because it serves the many local dog walkers as well as ramblers. You can also park **free** at the farm.

Now that this car park is chargeable, many walker park **free** on the road side. The best of these is at the end of **Downs Way** postcode **KT23 4BL** (go ahead on a track and turn **left** in 100m to join the walk just past the the starting point). There is also space on the other side of the main road beside the little green.