



Friday Street, Coldharbour, Leith Hill

Distance 10½km=6½ miles, easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey

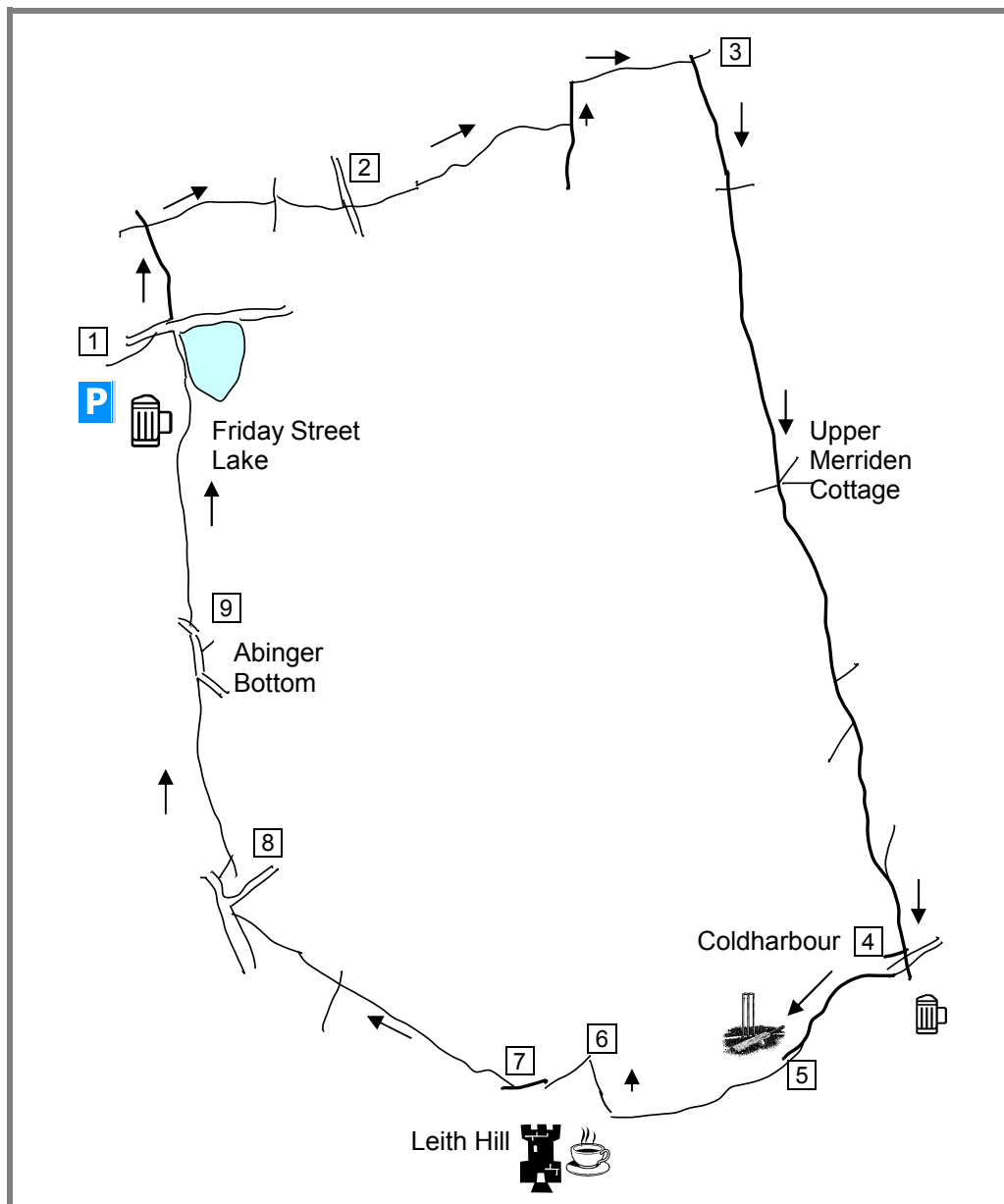
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Refreshments: Coldharbour, Leith Hill (weekends), Friday Street

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking)

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Woodland, water meadows, high hills



In Brief



This is an unforgettable walk from a tranquil lake to the highest of the Surrey hills, taking in water meadows, magical forest and an ancient track.



There are no nettles and good sensible shoes should be fine. There is one short but steep descent that can be tricky in wet conditions. This walk is ideal for your dog too.



The walk starts at the Friday Street car park: see map and guide at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

- 1 From the car park, facing the road where you came in, go **right** and proceed along the narrow path that runs above the road by some railings and joins it after about 50m, reaching the lake shortly after. Leave the road here by turning **left** just before the lake down a tarmac track. This leads past a cottage that usually has jam and relishes for sale, over a ford with a little bridge and past picturesque Yew Tree Cottage with its scarecrow, eventually reaching a crossing path before a gate. To the left is a beautiful old weir bridge with the Tillingbourne and water meadows on each side, but you turn **right** through a smart new kissing gate, up a steep path. Keep to the main path and, after some distance where it twists left, avoid all turnings off and "Private" signs. Where the wire fence on the left bends left, at the corner of a mature wood with a large meadow on your right, keep straight on between the wood and the meadow, ignoring the main path that curves to the left. This path takes you through a wooden gate to a narrow lane. Cross straight over the lane through another wooden gate opposite and continue straight ahead on a grassy path that soon begins to descend.
- 2 Where the wire fence on the right ends, keep straight ahead on a narrower winding path. The descent now becomes very steep and you need to take very great care in wet conditions. Follow the path over a stile, along the left-hand side of water meadows, across another stream and eventually up two steps to another stile onto a T-junction. Turn **left** on a wide path. *This is part of the Greensand Way that runs from Haslemere to East Kent.* In about 100m turn **right** over a stile at a 3-way fingerpost on a fenced path that runs up the right-hand side of a meadow. This leads up, over a stile, onto a very broad sandy trackway at the top of a ridge. Turn **right** on the trackway which known as Wolvens Lane. (You can stay on the narrow winding path above the sunken track because it eventually merges with the track itself.)
- 3 You will be following this ancient trackway for about 2km all the way to the village of Coldharbour. There are many turnings off which you ignore. After about 15 minutes' walk, you pass double signposts. Just after, there is another signpost. If you are tired of the sand, you can take the right-hand, lesser path here: it rejoins the main path later. Just after half way there is a house *Upper Merriden Cottage* (possibly renamed) on your left. At **Coldharbour** you are greeted by a red phonebox and a pub and probably a bunch of cyclists. *This village was long regarded with fear and superstition by the inhabitants of Dorking as a dark and dangerous habitat of smugglers. The Plough Inn has a big garden in the back, offers accommodation and runs a good kitchen. (But at weekends Leith Hill tower, half an hour away, is better for just light snacks.) It has a good*

selection of real ales, including those from its own Leith Hill Brewery (currently named Tickety-Boo, Crooked Furrow and Tallywhacker).

- 4 Turn immediately **right** uphill along an unmade road past some cottages on your left. Fork **right** after about 50m to avoid going into a private entrance. The road becomes a track and leads upwards towards Leith Hill. You reach a clearing with a cricket pitch (the highest in Surrey) visible on the right. *There are views left here on a clear day to Gatwick Airport.*
- 5 Just *before* the cricket pitch, take a **left** fork along a lesser path. Follow this path into the woods where you go through a barrier. There is a green-topped post here indicating that you are on the Coldharbour Walk. You follow these green-topped posts through woods for nearly 1km. Basically, they lead you straight on parallel to the edge of the hill, with good views to your left where the trees permit. There are one or two unexpected turns, so watch out for those posts – or you can simply keep to the edge of the hill. Eventually you see a sign for the Tower carved on the back of a sign for the car park. The walk now curves **right**, joining a much wider track, descends deep into the woods, and later reaches a deep hollow on your left.
- 6 Here you *leave* the green-topped posts and instead follow the sign for the Tower, going **left** steeply uphill on a broad path frequented by daredevil cyclists. (You can avoid the steep ascent by forking right on a bridleway after 40m. You will soon see the tower on your left and can take any path in that direction.) In 100m or so you reach [Leith Hill Tower](#). *At weekends* there are refreshments and nice homemade cakes. (*This extends to Fridays from April to October.) You can ascend the tower where there is a view all round with miles of seeming wilderness. The tower was built to raise the height of Leith Hill to the symbolic 1000 feet.* Continue in the same direction down a very broad path past an information board. In 80m you pass an orange-topped post. In another 80m, opposite the second picnic table and some sculpture on your left, and next to a fallen tree trunk, take a **quarter-right** turn on a very obvious broad path into the woods.
- 7 In about 60m, ignore a right fork leading to more pines and some sandhills and stay on the main path as it veers slightly left, alongside an area on your right that has a maze of paths much used by mountain bikers. In about another 60m, **leave** the main path that goes a quarter left into a forest of tall conifers and, keeping the same general direction, zigzag **right** and **left** onto a broad sandy path running between bracken and with that conifer forest close by on your left. Follow this path a considerable distance as it becomes stony and sandy again. Eventually you meet a signpost at a crossing path where you continue straight on. You later come out to a road at a junction.
- 8 Ignore the minor road sharp right and turn **right** on the major road, signposted *Abinger Common, Wotton*. Continue along the road for 70m where you take a signposted, slightly hidden, footpath a quarter **right**. This path crosses a drive and takes you down through beautiful woodland. Follow it straight on until eventually you reach a broken gate and the hamlet of Abinger Bottom.
- 9 The path is reinforced by a tarmac road coming from the right which you follow through the hamlet. Ignore footpaths on your left and right and shortly after, just past the last house, take a broad path a quarter **right**. The path follows a magical route through more forest with several wooden stepped bridges on your right. (You can take a higher path on the bank to

the right for most of the way, also giving you a sight of the gurgling stream.) After about 1km you reach houses and a pub (the Stefan Langton). This pub is open all day Sunday and offers an impressive menu plus several real ales. *Stephen Langton* (c. 1150 – July 9, 1228) was Archbishop of Canterbury between 1207 and his death in 1228 and was a central figure in the dispute between King John of England and Pope Innocent III, which ultimately led to the issuing of Magna Carta in 1215. Keep straight on to reach the lake on your right and the road, familiar from the outward journey. Turn **left**, looking out for steps on your left that take you back to the car park there the walk began.

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Getting there

To get there by car: go to Dorking, take the main Guildford road and after 3 miles (5 km) take a left turn marked "Abinger Common, Friday Street, Leith Hill". After passing houses on the right, going through a rather dramatic cutting, passing a road junction on the right, a footpath on the left and reaching a large house on the right, take an extremely sharp left turn signposted **Friday Street**. The signpost is somewhat hidden in the trees and this turn is very easy to miss. After about 400m, look out for the car park on the right, before the lake.

