



Godalming: A Walk to the Squirrel (pub walk)

Distance: 7 km=4½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Hurtmore, Godalming

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

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Country town, river, woodland, pubs

In Brief



Unlike the circular walks that dominate this site, here is a *linear there-and-back* pub walk through the amazingly wild wooded valley that forms the banks of the River Wey. It is easily accessible *by train*. It starts in that wonderful country town of Godalming with its narrow streets, pubs and shops and, after a riverside stroll, visits a popular pub/restaurant the *Squirrel Inn*. (For enquiries, ring 01483-860223.) You can alternatively start in **Hurtmore**, either in the village on the road side, or in the overflow car park of the *Squirrel Inn*, and use one of the excellent locations in town for your mid-walk break. Because the River Wey tends to flood after heavy rain, this walk is best treated as a spring-summer-autumn walk, for when the weather is fine and dry. After rain, there are some muddy sections on the valley path and a nordic pole may be useful as a probe. In the woodland, there is a carpet of oak leaves which make the going pleasanter.



? In high summer, the paths get rather overgrown and there is one section with high nettles, so you may be glad of long trousers. Apart from this, the only trip hazard may be the occasional town beau and his sweetheart concealed in the tall grass. Any sensible shoes are fine and your dog will love the walk.

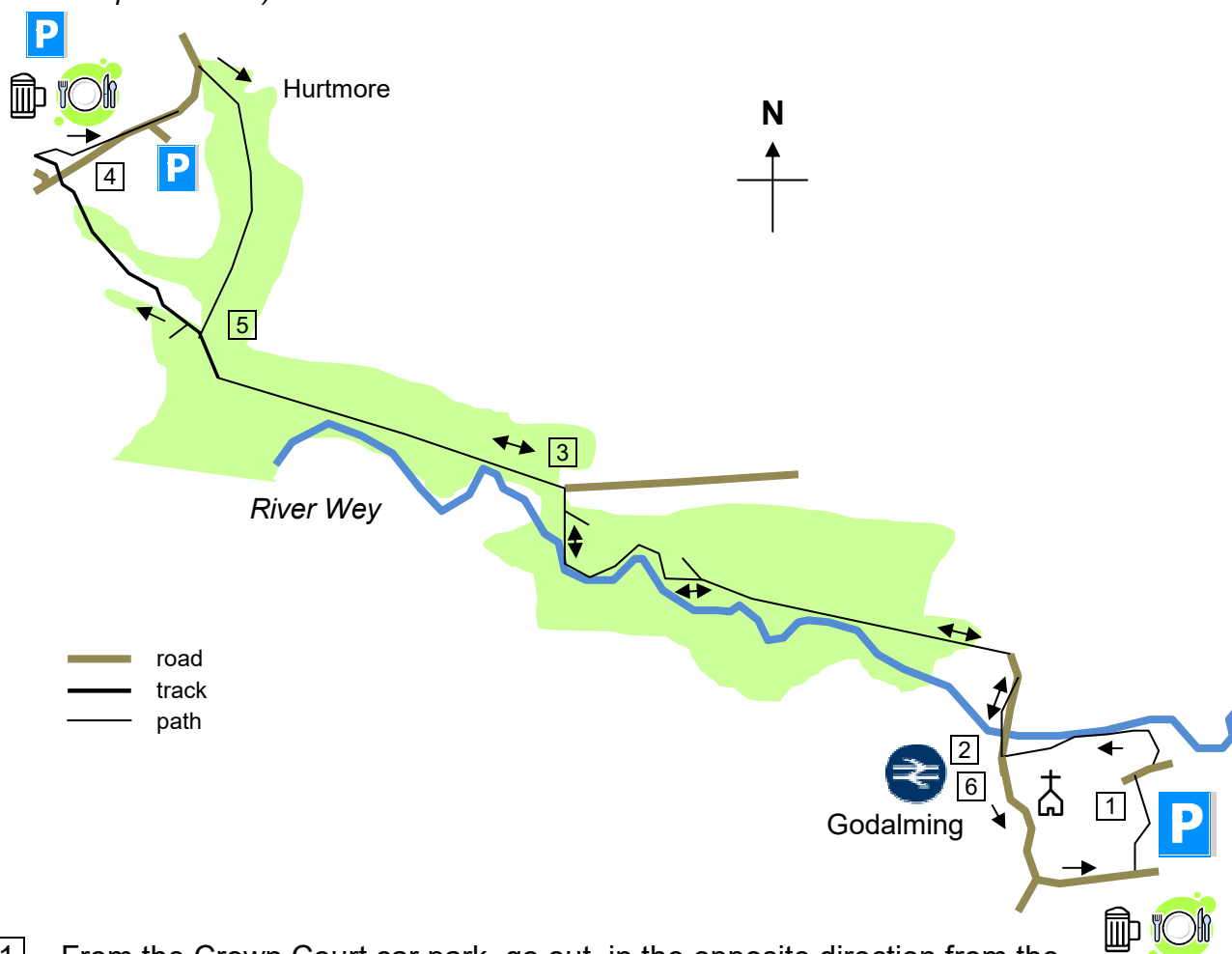


The walk begins either at **Godalming station** or at the **Crown Court** public car park in the centre of **Godalming, Surrey, postcode GU7 1DY**. It is free on Sunday (as 2014: please check). There are many other places to park, most (or all?) of which are free on Sundays. On Saturdays there is normally a charge of £3.50 for the day. On weekdays, (not in the council offices) the charge is normally £2.40 for 4 hours + £1 per hour. However, at weekends it is better to do the walk in reverse (see above). For details of how to get there, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

If you are arriving by train, do as follows. Turn **left** out of the station and walk through the car park until, on your **right**, you see a narrow passage, Vicarage Walk. Turn **right** here, going over a footbridge and between stone walls until you emerge on the main road. Turn **left** on the road and join the walk at section **2**.

The name "Godalming" means "Godhelm's people" and the town with this Saxon name was indeed recorded in the will of Alfred the Great (849-899). The town became rich through its woollen cloth and leather tanning and was at one time even bigger than its neighbour Guildford. Advanced in river navigation (the Wey), advanced in its railway (in 1849), it kept up this forward-thinking spirit by installing the world's first public electricity supply (in 1881). Godalming (or, strictly speaking, the borough of Waverley which it administers) was voted no. 4 in the list of best places to live in the UK (after Edinburgh, Winchester and Epsom-Ewell).



- 1** From the Crown Court car park, go out, in the opposite direction from the town, over a driveway, to the river and turn **left** along the riverside path. You can dawdle here awhile before setting out, sharing the delights of the river with other trippers, maybe grabbing an ice-cream, crossing the boardwalk and admiring the flower beds. The riverside path goes past a bowling green and forks. Take the **left** fork away from the river to a small square walled garden. This is the Phillips Memorial Cloister, dedicated to Jack Phillips the radio operator of the Titanic who stayed at his post in 1912 sending out SOS signals till the ship sank. Over on your left is the church of St Peter and St Paul with its distinctive tall spire, dating back to the year 1100 (and further back in some details), an architectural gem. Opposite the left-hand side of the Cloister, cross the road and turn **right**.

- 2 Immediately fork **left** on a signed footpath parallel to the road. This path crosses the River Wey by a long footbridge [2017: temporarily? closed as “unsafe”: you have to keep to the road], giving you a closer view of the old waterside buildings. Keep right past more buildings and re-join the road, going under a railway bridge. Immediately turn **left** onto a signed tarmac footpath running beside an arm of the river. The path crosses a drive leading to Westbrook Mills, with a metal barrier on each side. On your left is a gurgling stream until you meet the Wey itself on your left, going over an arm of the river. The path becomes sandy, then firm again. Immediately take the **left** fork, a narrow path, staying by the river side. [Jun 2018: care! fallen tree, you may have to crawl under.] After 300m or so on this narrow path, going twice under power lines, you come to a clear fork. Take the **right** fork, leaving the riverside (avoiding a loop in the river) and going under power lines again. Avoid another left fork and keep ahead, passing a stone pillbox hidden by creepers, over a flat concrete bridge and steeply up towards some houses. You come out at the end of Peperharow Road.
- 3 Turn **left** on a track under yews, through a metal barrier, a woodland path. Soon the path goes down some wooden steps. (These have been repaired (2014), with a new handrail, but there are still some quite steep drops; so watch your step and *take your time!*) The path is now mainly level giving you the chance to enjoy this surprisingly wild green river valley. You tread some wooden boards, go through a metal barrier and find on your left the garden fence of *Milton Wood*. Note the name on the garage as you pass: “*the Little Garage in the Lane*”. After the house, go through a small wooden gate. You shortly meet a fingerpost: keep straight ahead, ignoring the right turn and, immediately after, avoiding a bridleway on your left. You pass the modestly named *Hartsmore Cottage* and the track becomes a tarmac lane. The lane passes under the Hurtmore Road and quickly brings you to the *Squirrel Inn*.



The Squirrel Inn is a nicely converted country inn beside a cluster of farm cottages now used for accommodation. In fine weather most visitors eat al fresco (the nearby A3 road does not seem to be a worry). The restaurant gets its supplies from Secretts Farm in Milford and, as is so often the case, the starters on menu are more interesting than the rather predictable (or comforting, depending on your point-of-view) main courses. Ales include the local TEA, a Ringwood, a Marston and a guest. There's a children's playground and the open space just above the inn is used for balloon flights.

- 4 After a refreshment break, you can return the same way, skipping the rest of this section, or take a small loop as follows. Cross a drive beside the pub with a timbered cottage (the one with the big lettering) on your left and go up a narrow tarmac path with a metal rail, passing gardens on your left, to join the Hurtmore Road. Keep ahead passing Quarry Road and a beauty salon. Just after a left bend go sharp **right** at a fingerpost on a footpath. The path winds down into deep woods. At a marker post, ignore a bridleway sharp left and immediately ignore a path that forks left uphill. Continue straight on till you pass another hidden pillbox and the old garden wall of *Hartsmore Cottage* and reach a fingerpost, familiar from your outward journey (if you started in Godalming). Turn **left** on the wide path.
- 5 Your return journey is by the same route, through a small wooden gate, passing the house *Milton Wood*, walking the woodland path (careful at the broken steps!) as far as the first house in Peperharow Road. Turn **right** before the house going over a flat bridge. Ignore the footpath on your left

and take a more interesting route close to the river, bearing **left** along the bank. Keep ahead where you re-join the sandy footpath coming from your left. Stay on the path as it leaves the River Wey, passes two metal barriers either side of a driveway and meets a road. Turn **right** under the bridge and, as an attractive option, fork **right** on a track going to the left of some buildings and over a footbridge across the River Wey, re-joining the road.

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A final option, if you explored the river side on the way out, is to pass to the right of the church and follow picturesque narrow Church Street, *by far* the most interesting street in the town. *The “Star” on your right is one of the great historic town pubs of Surrey, full of character (and characters), serving a great range of beers and top-notch food, and hosting a beer festival.* At the *Pepper Pot* (the little old town hall) turn **left** on the High Street. After passing more shops (a rather predictable collection unfortunately) you will find on your left the Crown Court car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Godalming can be reached from Guildford on the A3100. However, the easiest way is via the A3 trunk road. Leave the A3 at a sign for *Milford & Godalming* just outside Guildford. Follow the signs for *Milford* and turn **left** at the traffic lights. Go ahead at the small roundabout. Go under a railway bridge to reach a larger roundabout and keep left on the A3100 Ockford Road. Ignore the left-hand turning for the station and continue following Parking signs until you pass *Waitrose* on your left. Turn **left** at the next roundabout following a Parking sign for Crown Court and follow the road round to the right and beside the river where you have the Council Offices car park first on your left (available weekends) followed by the larger Crown Court car park.

By train: frequent service daily by rail to Godalming station, from London Waterloo, Guildford, Petersfield, Portsmouth, etc.

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