



White Hill, Headley

Distance: 9½ km=5¾ miles or 4¼ km=2¾ miles

moderate walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Headley

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

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

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High hills, woodland, village, views

In Brief

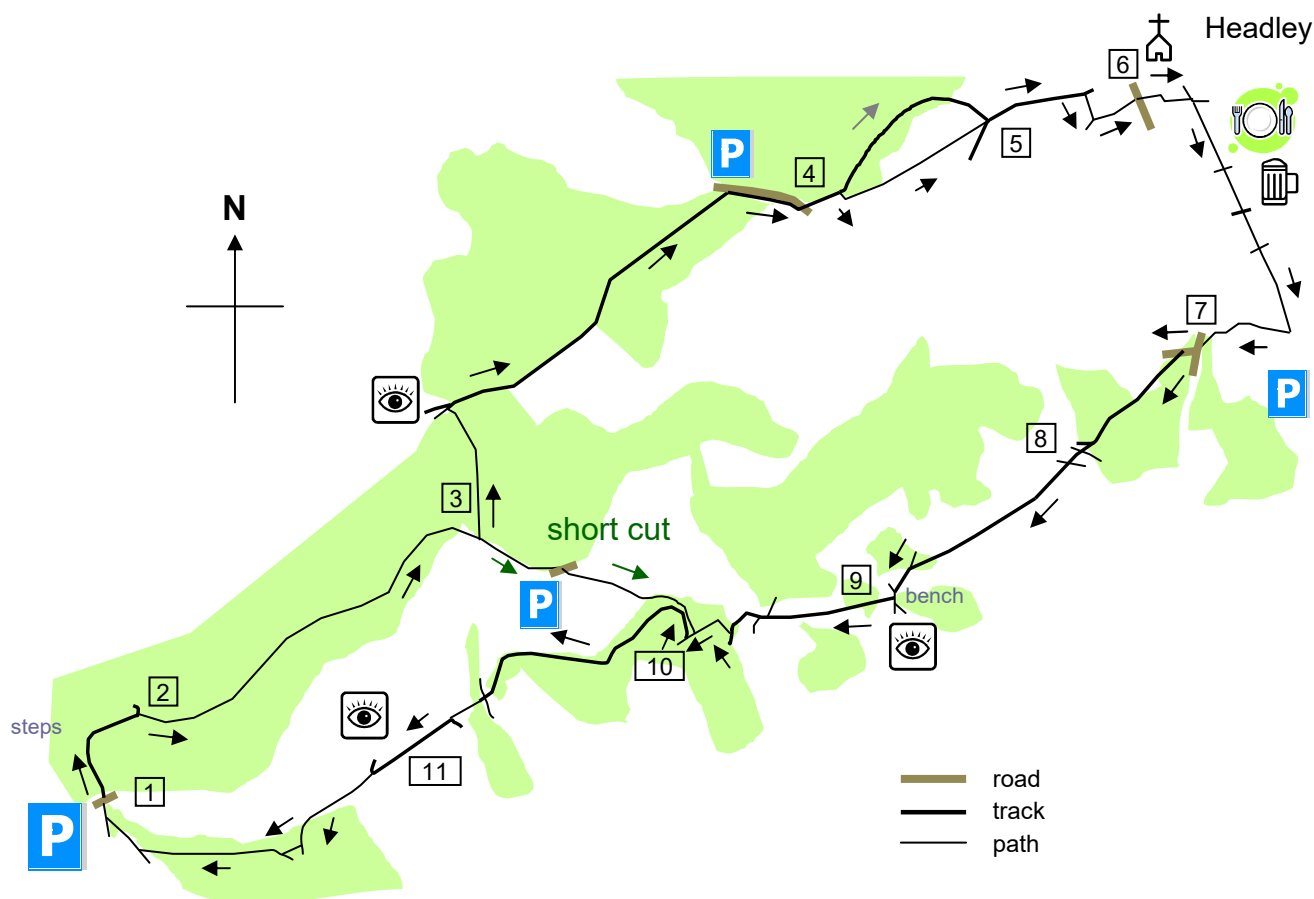
This is an invigorating walk taking you up the steepest part of Whitehill and onwards by a little-known path, to Headley for refreshments and a tour of the village. It then takes you back across Headley Heath with some more steep sections. One path especially runs beside a steep drop and the walk should not be attempted in slippery or icy conditions. A shorter (half length) option omits the village and restricts itself to the paths around the valley.



There are no nettles or brambles on this walk and conditions are generally fairly dry, so any strong footwear and sensible clothing should be fine. Your dog can come on this walk too since the only unavoidable stile has a good dog gate.

The walk begins at the **Whitehill NT car park**, near Mickleham, Surrey, **postcode RH5 6DF**, grid ref TQ 180 525. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1** This walk is not an easy stroll-in-the-park and some of the sections are steep. So we get the worst part over first, knowing that nothing will be as strenuous again for the rest of the walk. Go out of the car park and cross the road to a footpath on the other side, marked by a fingerpost and a sign for the *Box Hill Hike*. Now begins your long ascent of White Hill. There are 182 steps at the last count, but at least they are well-made. At the top, the path curves right and runs along the contour, soon with great views to the right into the valley below. The path leads to a bend with a seat and another marker post for the *Box Hill Hike*.
- 2** **Leave** the main path at the bend and take a very narrow path straight on, to the **right** of the marker post. (NB: this path is narrow and easily missed.) This slender but clear path runs level through yews and mixed woodland. In 150m you enter a lighter area with some tall beeches. Keep straight ahead, with a fallen beech on your left, curving slightly left-right to maintain your direction, once again on a clear level path. Soon your path is running beside a fairly steep escarpment on your right with good views across the valley, if seasonal foliage permits. *Special care is needed, especially if conditions are wet or icy.* The farm below is Warren Farm. After more thick yews and box trees, the path curves right and goes downhill. You reach the head of the valley and a junction of paths: one leading ahead and one narrower path coming down steeply from the left.

Decision point. If you are doing the shorter option, missing Headley Village and Heath, skip forward to the end of this text and do the **Cockshot Traverse**.

3 Turn **left** uphill on the steep narrow path. At first, your route is unclear in the leaf-fall at the bottom of the short steep valley under beeches. At the top, the path becomes clear and snakes its way uphill through beech saplings. Finally you emerge at the top of Mickleham Downs, a long grassy slope with great views. (See another walk in this series *Headley Heath, Mickleham, Box Hill.*) Turn sharp **right** past another marker post and veer **right** on a wide path through woods. Shortly, at a fingerpost, avoid a bridleway on the right and keep straight on along a very wide path between a nature reserve on your right and Cherkley Wood on your left. After 800m or so, the path comes out to the B2033 road by a small car park opposite Nower Wood. Turn immediately **right** at a fingerpost along a bridleway running parallel to the road.

4 At the end of the path, cross the road carefully and take a bridleway opposite. In 80m, you reach a fingerpost. *If you are walking the dog or you don't love stiles, you can stay on the bridleway as far as the junction of lanes. The following path prevents the walk being too easy, but it offers some excellent open views and a rural experience.* Turn **right** here over a squeeze-pastable stile and follow the path down the field and **left** over a stile. Proceed along the left-hand side of a meadow, over a stile (or through the large metal gate) into the next meadow and over another stile into a long meadow with houses and the church at Headley beckoning ahead. At the other side, go over a stile or through a large metal gate and through another large metal gate to a 3-way junction of tarmac lanes.

5 Go **right** and immediately **left** to maintain the same general direction on Slough Lane, towards the village, passing a big redbrick house on your right, *Tumber House*. At the end of the high wooden fence of *Tumber Lodge*, turn **right** at a signpost onto a narrow footpath. At a 3-way signpost, go **left** up to an old kissing gate and continue on a path heading straight for the church. You reach Church Lane with St Mary's Church opposite. *The "Cock Inn Pub and Dining" on your right (previously the "Headley Hills") is a rather upmarket new bar-restaurant, not popular with the locals, which presumably still does afternoon teas. It has a large bar area and a separate restaurant which serves good food. The terrace is a pleasant place to chill out. For more details of the church and the village of Headley, see the walk "Walton-on-the-Hill and Headley" in this series.*



6 Cross the road between the inn and the church and continue into the churchyard. Zigzag right-left onto a path between clipped yews. *Note the rare wooden structures in place of gravestones.* Leave the churchyard through an old swing-gate, giving views of London, including Wembley arch. Turn immediately **right** at a fingerpost on a wide path and proceed through a wooden swing-gate, straight across a horse pasture. Your route now is via a swing-gate over a farm track and straight over on a narrow path. Next is a brand-new swing-gate taking you straight across a meadow, through another new swing-gate and across a tarmac drive by the *Old Rectory*. *This is distinctly horse country.* After another swing-gate, go straight ahead and through another. *(These gates are a joy: you won't want to see another stile – ever!)* After a rough meadow, you meet a stile in the corner but the sequence is not broken because your route is *not* over the stile! Turn sharp **right** in the meadow and follow the path down past a metal gate with a garden fence on your left. Go past an unneeded stile and turn **right** on the house's driveway. *Note the unusual letterbox.* The drive curves left and right to meet the main road.

- 7 Cross the road carefully to go down Nut Ash Lane opposite, going past a NT sign for *Headley Heath*. In 40m, fork **left** on a rough track, quickly leading to another road crossing. Take a bridleway opposite, another rough track, marked as a private road. Follow the track past *White Heath Lodge* with a flint wall on your right and a pond on your left. At a 3-way fingerpost, ignore a footpath on the right and stay on the bridleway. At the next junction and fingerpost, ignore a bridleway curving away to the right and keep straight ahead, up to a large wooden gate. Go through a small wooden gate beside it onto the open heath with a choice of paths ahead.
- 8 Immediately cross a sandy track and take a very sandy horse track straight ahead. This level path quickly crosses another path diagonally and assumes a course close to woodland on your left. You will be following this official bridleway for some distance across the beautiful Headley Heath. Keep to the path as it dips and rises, avoiding all side paths, however tempting. The path veers left under oak trees as it joins a path coming from the right. You reach a junction of many wide paths looking over a valley ahead, with a long bench, perfect for a breather.
- 9 Take the first major path to the **right** of the seat. This is a wide stony path going downhill past a blue-topped post with a blue arrow, clearly labelled as a *public bridleway*. It descends quite steeply, eventually reaching a junction with a long flight of steps coming down on the right, shortly passing another flight of steps on the left. Your main path curves its way beside a small meadow on your right and reaches a blue arrow pointing to the right. Turn sharp **right** here, at the corner of a wire fence, by a marker post. *Don't miss this vital turning!* Your path goes very steeply up towards a house of High Ashurst and through a small wooden gate at the top. You reach a marker post with blue arrows pointing right and straight on. Keep straight ahead ignoring the right turn.

The **Cockshot Traverse** short cut re-joins the main walk [here](#).

- 10 Continue ahead to meet a tarmac drive coming from the Centre. Now turn very sharp **right** through the entrance of High Ashurst, as though doubling back, and follow the tarmac drive high above the valley on your right. *High Ashurst is now an outdoor education centre but during World War II it was a billet for Canadian Troops.* After about ½ km, this easy route curves left and right to meet a drive coming from Bellasis House. *Bellasis House was used in WW2 for Special Operations where Czech agents trained.* Go straight ahead at a fingerpost on a path steeply uphill. Keep ahead on a new tarmac drive coming from the left, with great views ahead and a sheep pasture on your left.
- 11 Where the path bends sharp right, keep straight ahead by a disused stile, through a (usually open) metal gate. Keep right on a grassy slope straight ahead, with a wire fence on your right. The path runs beside woodland on your left and later enters the wood. Just 80m after entering the wood, fork **right** on a level path, avoiding a path leading uphill. (You should always keep sight of the grassy meadow on your right.) Soon you pass a marker post with a yellow arrow to confirm you are on the footpath. Immediately turn **right** at a T-junction. Your path takes you over a sturdy stile (with a dog gate) and along a long straight path between birches, with a wire fence on your right. You emerge onto the open grassy slopes of Juniper Top. Turn **right** downhill to a large wooden gate. Go through a small wooden gate beside it and veer **right** on a track to the Whitehill car park where the walk began.

The Cockshot Traverse

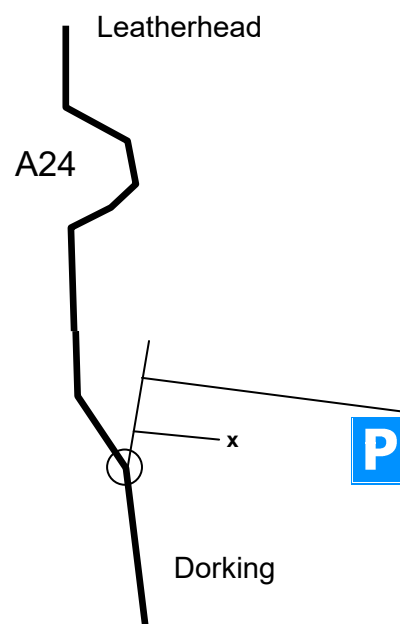
Take this short cut if you want to reduce the walk to half the distance, but missing Headley and a refreshment break.

Bear **right** on the straight path running along the head of the valley, lined with maples, with a green meadow on your right. The path comes down to a small car park off Headley Lane (alternate start). Keep **left** beside the car park to cross the road by a fingerpost opposite, beside a flinty cottage. This wide path winds its way uphill beside a sheep pasture on your right and, after that, through trees, passing a field on your right which is used for archery. The path runs beneath the high walls of High Ashurst on your right and meets a bridleway at a signposted T-junction. Turn **right** here, in the direction of the *Box Hill Hike* sign.

Now resume the main walk from section [10](#).

Getting there

By car: to reach the Whitehill Car Park, take the A24 between Leatherhead and Dorking, turn off at the Burford Bridge roundabout, signposted *Mickleham Box Hill*, go past the hotel on the Old London Road and take the **second** road on the right. This is *not* the Zig Zag Road but the road after it, Headley Road, opposite a bus stop. The car park is 600m on the right.



By bus/train: bus 516 goes from Leatherhead station to Headley, including Sundays. Bus 465 has a request stop at the junction of Old London Road and Headley Road. Check the timetables.

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