



Woldingham and the North Downs

Distance: 15 km=9½ miles or various options down to 4 km=2½ miles
moderate walking with long easy sections

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: *Knights* in Woldingham, picnic, Oxted after the walk

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

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Views, woodland, Victorian village, nature reserves

In Brief

The woods just south of this village provide stimulating walks, all very well marked and maintained, with great views over the North Downs and across the series of valleys in which the village nestles. This Guide offers several options, enabling you to choose the ideal length.



The paths are clear of undergrowth in winter but in high summer there are nettles along some sections, making long trousers necessary, especially along the narrow path in Chestnut Wood. There is at least one (optional) section (Stubbs Copse) which is very muddy in winter. Otherwise, the surface is generally firm or even tarmacked. So boots are probably necessary in winter, but otherwise, sensible walking shoes or trainers are adequate. Your dog will be welcome on this walk.

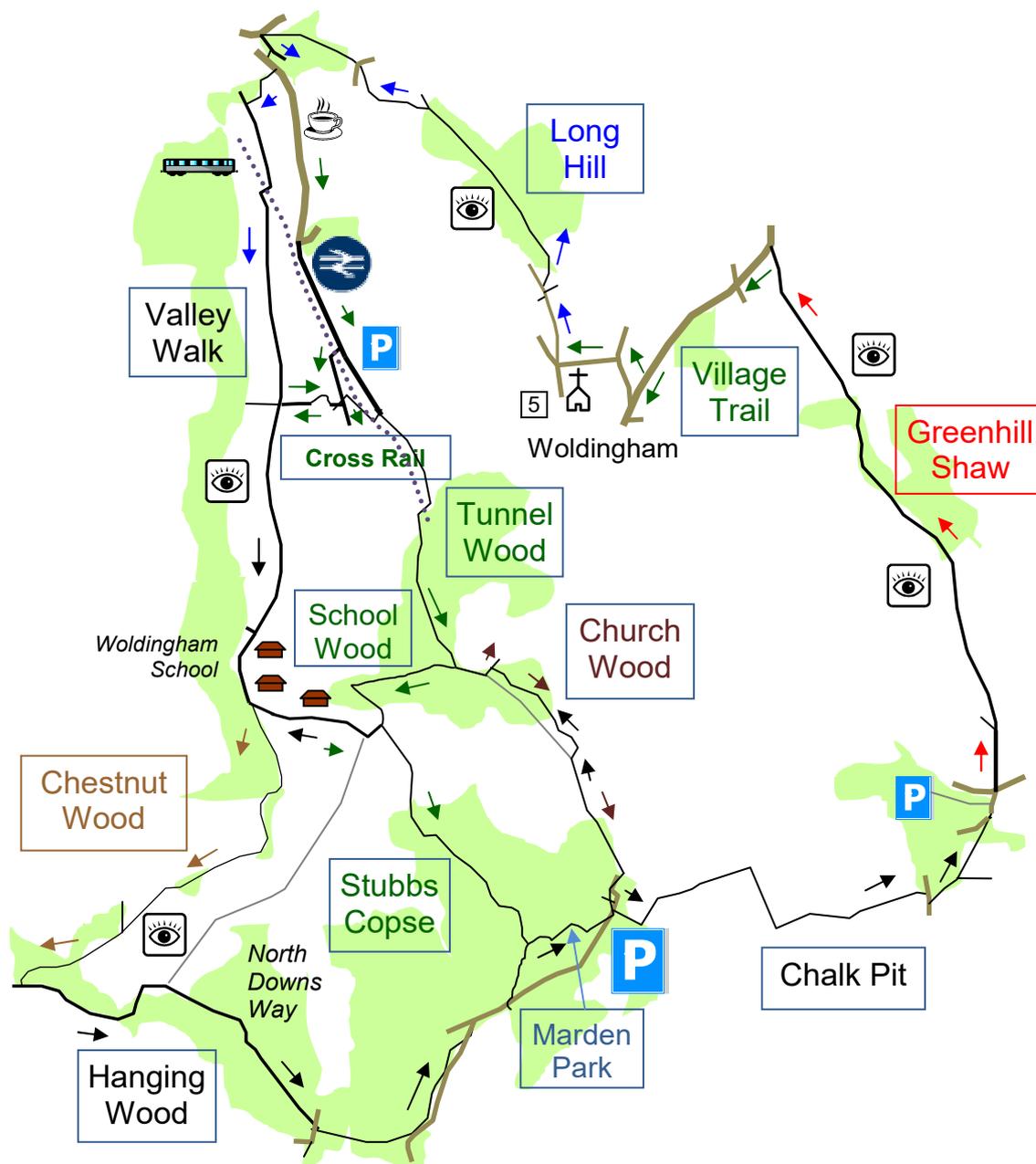


There are several options in this walk, giving you a choice of distances. The **Full Walk** goes through woodland, along valleys and through the village, with a shorter return option. The shorter walks avoid the interesting village and stay mainly in the woods. If you follow the text below *in sequence*, you will be doing the Full Walk. For the shorter options, you need to skip to additional sections near the end. All the sections have names (some official, some invented for this Guide), to help you locate them. The map on the next page shows all the sections. You may need the map because the signage is lacking in some places. Alternatives to the Full Walk are: Church Wood (in two directions), School Wood and Stubbs Copse (the shortest at 4 km=2½ miles) and Church Wood, School Wood, Chestnut Wood, Hanging Wood and Marden Park (7½ km=4½ miles).



The walk begins at the Woodland Trust's **Marden Park** car park, nearest **postcode CR3 7AD**, www.w3w.co/woods.reveal.shrimp, or at **Woldingham railway station, postcode CR3 7LT**, where you can also park. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



This Guide begins at the **Marden Park** car park. If you are starting the walk at Woldingham Station, skip forward and do the section called **Station Start**.

Decision Point. You immediately have a choice between the **Full Walk** (marked on the map as **Chalk Pit**) and some much shorter walks. If you do *not* want to do the Full Walk, skip to near the end of this text and begin with the section called **Church Wood North**.

Start of Full Walk

Chalk Pit 2¼ km=1½ miles

Starting at the Marden Park car park, go out to the road, turn **right** and immediately **left** down steps. At the bottom keep left on the path, now identified by the sign and the white acorn symbol as the North Downs Way (NDW). It goes down steps, then more steeply down a long flight. It turns left and runs level with great wide views to your right across the Surrey-Sussex Weald. At the far end, go **right** through a modern kissing-gate, down the left edge of the hillside and through a wooden swing-gate. Your path continues down the left-hand side of a field and turns left at the corner. This diversion, taking you uncomfortably close to the M25 motorway, is to avoid the disused Chalkpit Quarry, a site earmarked for development. Just before the next corner of the field, the path takes you through a kissing-gate and up through bushes to a road, Chalkpit Lane.

Turn **right** on the road for 30m and go **left** at a fingerpost up steps, still on the NDW. Shortly, a kissing-gate leads to a NT sign for *Oxted Downs*. Keep **left** up the side of the hill to reach a fingerpost and a lovely bench with a butterfly motif. After admiring the view, **leave** the NDW by keeping **left** on a narrow path uphill. Your path, streakily visible ahead, winds up the steepest part of the hill heading for the top right corner. *Note that you are on part of the Vanguard Way, a 100 km=66 mile national trail running from Croydon to Newhaven.* Gaining the top, with some relief, go through a kissing-gate, turning **right** and keeping **left** uphill to meet a road, Chalkpit Lane again. Turn **right** on the road to come to a crossroads at another road The Ridge.



Greenhill Shaw 2¼ km=1½ miles

Cross straight over the road on a tarmac drive directly opposite, running beside the wall of *The Flint House*. Where the wall ends, avoid a private left fork and continue ahead slightly uphill. *Soon you have great views left down to Whistlers Wood Farm in the valley.* The drive becomes a wide gravel track with views right across another valley. After you pass a farm gate on your left, the path becomes narrow and somewhat stony. Exiting the trees of Greenhill Shaw, you suddenly have views ahead across the open valley down to Woldingham. The way is now down a wide grassy strip. *On your right, Warren Barn Farm hosts the Warlingham Mock Hunt as well as a hang gliding centre.* You pass on your left a pasture for a fine herd of longhorns which are the pride of this area. A short muddy section finally takes you out to Slines Oak Road.

Village Trail 1½ km=1 mile

Turn sharp **left** uphill. You pass road junctions and some attractive properties (as well as some more lowly ones). Near the top, turn very sharp **right** on Lunghurst Road. Where the road curves right, turn **left** into Croft Road. You pass a sports ground on your left, shortly followed by Woldingham church.

This is the "new" Woldingham. The old Woldingham is the small village on the Downs. The new village was built in late Victorian times on what was once bare heathland, given by William Gilford under a covenant which strictly preserves the spacious rural nature of the village. No commercial properties

are allowed and this means **no pub**, much to the disadvantage of thirsty walkers.

There are two churches in Woldingham. The old church is St Agatha's, one of the smallest in the land, in the old village. This "new" church of St Paul was designed by the architect Sir Herbert Baker and finished in 1933, complete with massive stones and flint walls, making it look centuries older. (One gentleman of the congregation is older than the church.) Because of its treasures, the church is usually closed. But, if you call in at around 11 am just after the Sunday service, you can view the stunning interior and share a cuppa. The massive wooden beams also have a medieval look whilst the all-round stained glass windows fill the church with radiant light. The church was gifted to the village by local resident Viscount Craigmyle, chairman of P&O. In tribute to that famous shipping company, he commissioned windows in the chancel representing four "nautical" saints.

Long Hill 3½ km=2 miles

After the church, take the **first** turning on the right, the quiet Long Hill. Follow this lane downhill. In 300m, you pass footpaths left and right. Immediately after them, fork **right** on a narrow path between wire fences. (There is no signpost for this path – just a stone marker.) After a short rather muddy section, the path descends through a yew grove. When the path breaks out of the woods, you have fine views left across the chalk grasslands to the valley beyond. The nice level path finally re-enters trees and you reach wooden posts with steps just ahead. Turn **left** here, thus avoiding the steps, and then immediately **right** onto a track signposted as a bridleway.

Your path runs beside a chalet-style house, an orchard and a little thatched garden house on your right, running between fences and emerging on a tarmac lane at a curve. Go straight over on a bridleway opposite. This path soon becomes a tarmac drive and comes down fairly steeply to the Halliloo Valley road with open views. Don't cross or join the road. Instead, turn **very sharp left**, almost doubling back, on a tarmac lane, Park Ley Road. In 30m fork **right** on a concrete drive. The drive leads down to the main Woldingham Road.



As a short diversion for tea or coffee, the Knights Garden Centre is just over 100m **left** along the road on the left. Its Dene Restaurant & Pantry Coffee Shop offer snacks and more, in charming surroundings.



If you are ending the walk at Woldingham Station, keep **left** on the road, using the footway, reaching the station in 700m.

Turn **left** on the road and, in 20m, turn **right** onto a dirt track marked as a bridleway. The path zigzags and reaches a tarmac lane after 200m. Turn **left** on the lane. In 300m it bends right and left through an arch under the railway. You pass a sign for Woldingham School and a white cottage and, ½ km further, you reach a footpath right and a track on your left.

Decision point. You have the choice now of taking a direct route south to Marden Park. If you prefer that, skip forward and do the **Cross Rail East** and the **Tunnel Wood** sections. Otherwise ...

Keep straight on along the drive.

Valley Walk 1¼ km=¾ mile

You now have an easy walk along the valley for nearly 1 km between sloping meadows. Finally you reach a large sign board for Woldingham School. Ignore a track on your right and keep straight ahead through the school buildings. The driveway curves left and you pass a chapel and a tile-hung building on your left. Here your route will fork right off the main drive. But first, on your left, you can glimpse the principal school building through the yews.

Surely the best site imaginable for a girls' school! Woldingham is a Roman catholic private school, originally established in S.W. London as the Convent of the Sacred Heart and moved to this site in 1946. The magnificent redbrick house is the Main House. The original Marden Park was built by Sir Robert Clayton in the 1670s but burned down in 1879. Previous pupils of Woldingham include Carey Mulligan (actress), Louise Mensch (MP, novelist and cyberbully) and Lady Isabella Hervey (socialite).

Decision point. If you are doing the Full Walk, continue below. Otherwise, take the Stubbs Copse route as follows (note that this route is *very muddy* in winter): continue on the driveway passing more school buildings; in 350m, opposite a bungalow and before some steel gates*, turn **left**; in 50m go **right** over stile; now skip to the section below called **Stubbs Copse**. (* It is also possible to continue on the drive through those steel gates all the way to the NDW but that route is much duller than the woodland walks given here.)

On your right you will see a fingerpost indicating a footpath. Fork **right** here or just after, up the grassy slope, passing a marker post [Jul 2017: resting against a tree] leading to another marker post.

Chestnut Wood 1¾ km=1 mile



Your path follows a wire fence on your left. It takes you through woods, steeply up a slope and through more bluebell woods to a post with yellow arrows. Turn **right** as indicated, continue along the path for another 50m and turn **left** over a stile (avoidable if you are thin). The path runs along the right-hand edge of woodland, re-enters woods and goes uphill between meadows, with great views left to the North Downs and Hanging Wood where you will soon be walking. Continue through some thick undergrowth with overhanging branches, fortunately getting easier soon. [Jul 2017: some people "escaped" along the edge of the crop field.] The path follows a line of large chestnuts and winds its way to the edge of a large open field where it follows the right-hand edge. As the edge curves away right, keep straight ahead across the field. (Depending on the season, there should be a faint but distinct path made by many other feet through the barley.) [Jun 2017: some walkers still had to go round the edge of the field.] On the other side, your path enters a small wood where you meet a marker post on your right indicating a junction.



Ignore the path that branches right here and keep straight on, near the left-hand side of the wood. In 50m your official footpath exits **left** from the wood and cuts across the field to the next corner (just as before, on a faint path cutting through the crops). [2017: walkers found the field ploughed up and had to go round it. The path into woods referred to below is 100m after the edge of the field bends left.] On the other side, take a path into woods, quickly taking you over a stile, now on a much clearer path through the woods. Your path goes down steps, gradually more steeply. Eventually you come down to a

wide track by a 4-way fingerpost, opposite a storage space for cars and vans. This is the NDW, a bridle path. Turn **left** on this semi-concrete track.

Hanging Wood 2½ km=1½ miles

You pass houses and go past a metal barrier into woods. Follow this nice level path with vines on your right and a view of the M25 rumbling in the distance. You reach a gabled lodge where, on your left is the south entrance drive to Woldingham School (and the point where you re-join the walk if you took that much-less-interesting option). Veer **right** and, almost immediately, fork **left** between wooden posts by a yellow arrow indicating the NDW. You pass an information tablet for *Marden Park and Great Church Woods*. Your path now goes steeply up and you reach a seat with terrific views across the Weald and as far as the South Downs. [This space also has a wonderful display of orchids in June.](#) The route is still uphill through trees and past a marker post where it thankfully levels out. A 2-way fingerpost [[jun 2018: the back-pointing finger missing](#)] under a large beech points you to the **right** at a fork. Finally you come out through wooden posts and down steps to a lane next to Hanging Wood Forest Farm.



Cross straight over the lane, ignoring another path far to your right, still on the NDW. This path, a little muddy in parts, runs downhill between wire fences. Just as you approach a tarmac lane, your path goes through a modern kissing gate and runs parallel to the lane. It quickly zigzags up some steps onto a higher path. The next uphill stretch can be quite strenuous if you are nearing the end of the walk. For the last 30m, your path joins the lane and reaches a T-junction with another tarmac lane.

Marden Park 1 km=½ mile

Turn sharp **left** at the junction on the tarmac lane and immediately go **right** by a metal barrier on a wide level permissive horse path with a sign “*Marden Park Woodland Trust Welcome*”. There is also an information tablet for “*Marden Park and Great Church Wood*”. In 250m, you reach a junction with a large fingerpost. Turn sharp **right**, as for “*Car Park*”. Follow this very bendy path, avoiding all turnings off and following white arrows or posts with a red band. After 600m, passing a large hollow on your right, you reach a T-junction with another large fingerpost. Turn **right** to the car park where the walk began.



*For final refreshments, there are **three** good pubs in Old Oxted, just across the valley.*

End of Full Walk

Station Start 350m=400 yds

Take this route at the start of the walk if you are beginning it at **Woldingham Station**.

Turn **right** out of the station building on a tarmac lane, used on one side as a car park. In 350m, on your right is a bridge over the railway.

Decision point. If you are doing the Full Walk, continue below with **Cross Rail West**. Otherwise, do the section called **Tunnel Wood**.

Cross Rail West ½ km=0.3 miles

Turn **right** over the bridge across the railway. The track bends left and reaches some buildings of Marden Park Farm. After a long building you reach a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a tiled bridleway between buildings. Before the cottages, take a narrow path which bends right and left and comes out onto a driveway. Keep straight ahead on the driveway and, when you reach a major tarmac drive after 150m, turn **left** on it. Now join the main walk at **Valley Walk**.

Cross Rail East ½ km=⅓ mile

Turn **left** on the track. At the end, as you pass a private parking area on your right, keep ahead on a narrow path which bends right towards some cottages and then left again. Continue on tiled drive between buildings. At the end, you come to a T-junction with a wide track and a 3-way fingerpost. Cross straight over the track, a fraction left, through a gap in the fence and keep to the right-hand side of a small meadow. At the corner, turn **right** on a path beside the railway. In 150m, your path turns left over a bridge across the railway. At a T-junction with a wide dusty lane, turn **right**. Now resume the walk with the section below, **Tunnel Wood**.

Tunnel Wood 1¼ km=¾ mile

Continue along this unmade country lane with the railway on your right. Where the pasture on your left ends and the lane enters trees, turn **right** at a fingerpost with a sign for "*Woldingham Countryside Walk*", go down three steps and over a stile. Your path turns left and right over the railway at a point where it enters a tunnel. It turns left again and leads up through woodland with a great deal of mossy debris of living and dead trees either side of the path. The North Downs chalk becomes more evident as the path gets steeper and meets a T-junction.

Decision point. The usual continuation now is **Church Wood South**, below. But you also have the option of going west on a longer woodland course with great views by turning **right** at the T-junction and skipping to the section called **School Wood**.

Church Wood

Church Wood South and **Church Wood North** below cover exactly the *same* route but in opposite directions, depending on which "loop" you choose to walk.

Church Wood South 1¼ km=¾ mile



Turn **left** at the T-junction. In 100m you come to a junction with a large fingerpost by a farm shed. The “normal” route is straight on along the wide track; however, there is a lesser-known path in the high woods which is delightful, especially in springtime when the bluebells are on show; and this is the route taken in this Guide. Turn **left** at the junction as for “Great Church Wood” but, in 20m, at a post with a red band, turn **right** into the wood. In late spring this is a perfect place for bluebells. This is a very twisty path and you need to keep alert so as not to stray. Another path joins you from the left. Soon you can see the main track far down on your right in the valley. After nearly ½ km in the wood, you pass a bench and reach a junction. Avoid an uphill path left and veer **right** down steps. *You may need to be careful in slippery conditions.* At the bottom, turn **left**, resuming your route on the original track.

This easy wide track takes you along the valley between woods and a meadow with great views, enters woods and, after nearly ½ km, reaches a large fingerpost and a large wooden gate. Keep straight on into the Marden Park car park. *If you began the walk here, it ends here; otherwise, re-join the main walk at the start of this text.*

Church Wood North 1¼ km=¾ mile



From the Marden Park car park, go straight ahead past a large wooden gate, ignoring a left turn at the large fingerpost. You are on a lovely easy wide level path through trees and then with fine views on your left across the meadow. As the meadow ends, you will notice on your right a fingerpost and a flight of steps. *You can now continue on the main track and keep ahead at the next fingerpost; but this woodland route is more interesting and beautiful, especially in late spring.* Turn **right** up the steps, past a post with a red band, and go steeply up until you reach the top. Turn **left**, passing a bench and follow this very twisty path through the wood, avoiding side paths. After passing two more posts with red bands, in around 350m, you arrive at a T-junction at another marker post. Turn **left** here. In only 50m you reach a junction with the original path, at a large fingerpost with a farm shed on your right. Turn **right**, resuming your original course. In 100m, you come to a 3-way junction. *(Turning right downhill here would lead eventually to an unmade lane leading to the station.)* Continue straight on at the junction. *Now resume the walk with the section below, School Wood.*

School Wood 1 km=⅔ mile

Your path goes gradually downhill through the woods. After 400m, you reach a wide track opposite some storage tanks. Turn **left** on the track downhill, taking you to a junction by Woldingham School. Keep straight on, with a cemetery on your left, for 50m, to reach a junction of drives with a modern kissing-gate straight ahead.

Decision point. *For the shortest return to the Marden Park car park, go straight over through the kissing-gate and do the section **Stubbs Copse** below. (You can also take the much-less-interesting main driveway to the right of the kissing-gate.)*

Turn **right** on the drive and **right** again in front of a house, *Wilson Flat*, going past the school buildings. *For some information on this school, see the **Valley Walk** section in the Main Walk above.* The main redbrick school

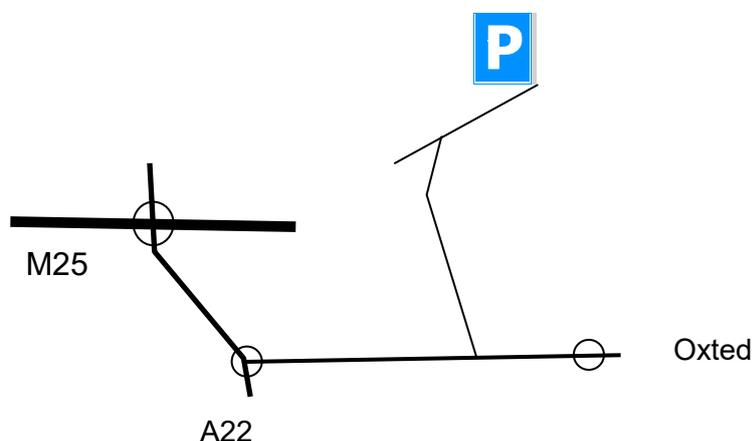
building is on your right. In 350m, just after a blue sign and two flag poles, as you enter conifers, sidle **left** onto the grass verge. Soon, opposite a stone statue of Jesus, turn very sharp **left** up a grassy slope. You pass a post with a yellow arrow [Aug 2023: resting against a tree]. Continue ahead until you reach another marker post with a yellow arrow. **Now revert to the Full Walk beginning with the section Chestnut Wood.**

Stubbs Copse 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ km=1 mile

Your path goes up the grassy slope, curving upwards beside a wood on your left. At the top corner, your path enters the woods of Stubbs Copse. Avoid a minor right fork and go through a wooden swing-gate. Keep straight ahead on the main path through the wood, eventually passing a bench. **This section can be very muddy in winter.** In 400m, at a wide crossing track, keep straight ahead up a slope, passing two marker posts with red bands. In another 150m you reach a large fork. Take the **left** fork downhill, passing several marker posts with red bands, until, after around 600m and a flight of steps, you arrive at a T-junction with a fingerpost. Turn **right** here, to arrive in 500m back at the Marden Park car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: If coming from the M25, the best route to Marden Park is via the A22 (Godstone) exit. Turn **south** as for Oxted and turn **left** at the next roundabout as for Oxted. In $\frac{2}{3}$ mile, turn **left** on a narrow unsignposted road, Tandridge Hill Lane. This lane is very narrow and you need to keep an eye open for passing places. The road goes over the M25 motorway and in another $\frac{1}{2}$ mile reaches a junction with another lane. Turn **right** on it. The car park is another 0.4 miles on your left. It is very clearly marked with the Woodland Trust logo.



If Tandridge Hill Lane is too narrow or is blocked, you can turn left at the next small roundabout, keeping left under the railway and over the M25, turning left at the top of bendy Chalkpit Lane onto The Ridge.

Woldingham can be reached from Croydon and the Purley Way. Follow signs for the Station. There is normally plenty of parking on the lane that runs past the station.

By train: There are frequent trains to Woldingham station from **East Croydon**, London Bridge, Victoria and East Grinstead.

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