



Petworth in the town and around

Distance: 5 km=3 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: Petworth

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Historic country town, views, horse pastures, streams, bridges

In Brief

Petworth is among the oldest and most opulent little towns in Sussex, famous for its elegant stone buildings and antique dealers. Most visitors come to visit Petworth House and Park, a splendid treasure in the bejewelled collection of National Trust properties. You can combine this visit with the town and the scenic walk described here by obtaining a pass-out at the town entrance.



There are no nettles on this walk so any kind of sensible attire is fine.



Because the first half of the walk is across horse pastures, there is a fair amount of sticky ground in the damper seasons, when boots are recommended.



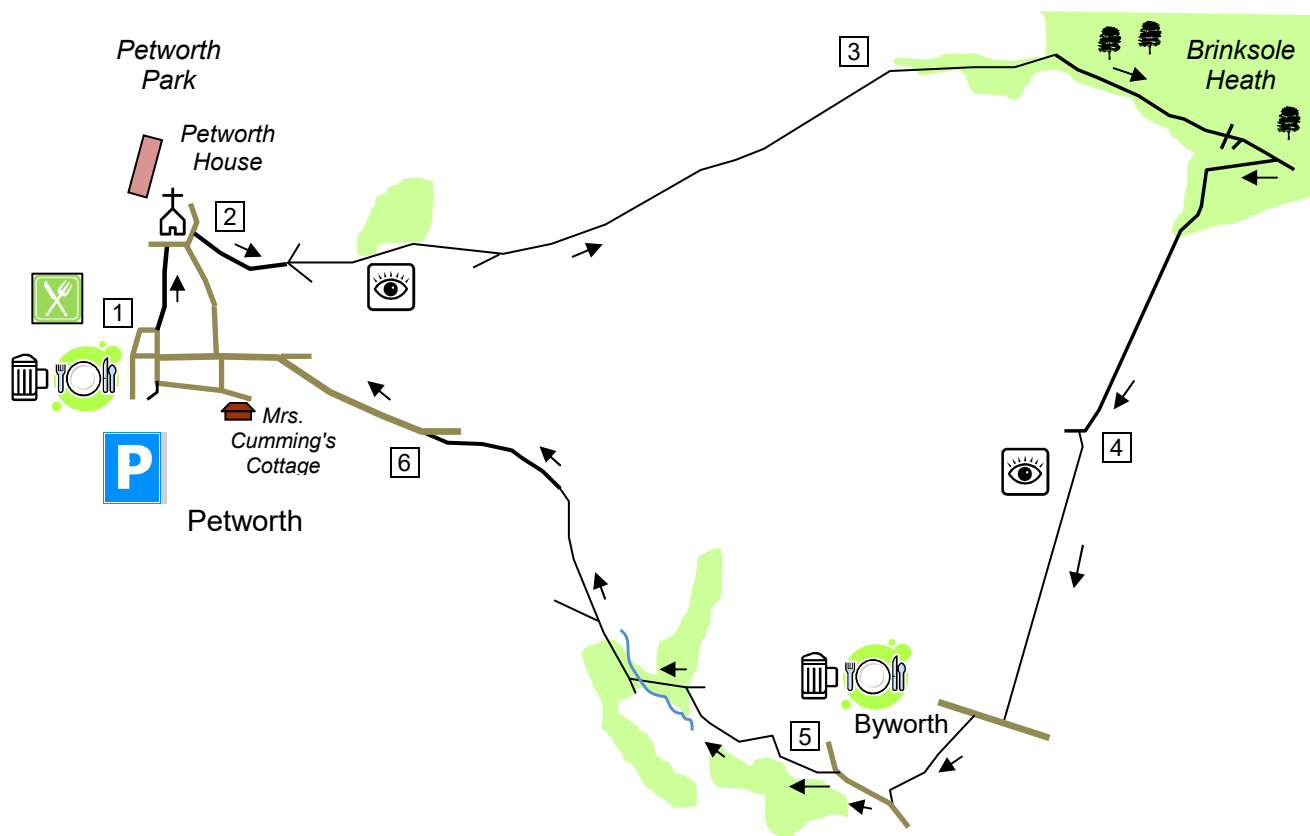
There are some high stiles on this walk, requiring some steady agility. Your dog will enjoy this walk but a short leash will be needed in the town because of the traffic.

The walk begins at the Market Square in **Petworth**, West Sussex, postcode **GU28 0AP**. There is a large car park just south of the Market Square, allowing up to 7 hours for a very reasonable charge. You can reach the Market Square by walking through the Old Bakery Arcade. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Petworth is of great antiquity and is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was acquired in the 1100s by the Percy family who built a fortified manor house, complete with six (real) tennis courts. The house was completely rebuilt in 1688 by Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset as the palatial Petworth House you see today. (But the original 13th-century chapel and undercroft survive.) The 700-acre deer park was landscaped by Capability Brown in the mid-1700s in the typical English "natural" style. It inspired painters such as Turner and Constable. Petworth House contains an impressive collection of paintings and is still home to the Egremont family. House and garden are run by the National Trust.

*The modern town is famous for its bijou shops and antiques. If you come in late June or start-July, you may be aware of Petworth's own fringe festival, **Petfringe**; it is said to rival Brighton and Edinburgh: see their website. Petworth's Market Square has been there **at least** since 1541. But if you arrive on 20 November (St. Edmund's day) you will find the Market Square closed off to traffic for a village funfair. This tradition goes back **at least** to 1273 and was only broken once in 1666 because of the Plague. For a scholarly account of the town's history, you need the book "Petworth from the Beginnings to 1660" by Peter Jerrome.*



- 1 As you stand in the Market Square in Petworth, the central grey stone building, with the bust of William of Orange, is the *Leconfield Hall* which acts as town hall and general meeting place. Facing it on the north side is the rather tall and grand three-story *Old Bank Building*. The walk starts to its right, just by *Augustus Brandt Antiques*. From here, take narrow cobbled Lombard Street, the most picturesque street in the town, with little shops

and old houses. It leads out to the road opposite the church. Your route is **right** to the junction, but first a visit to the church (cross carefully!) is a high point of the tour.

Petworth Church of St Mary the Virgin dates from the 1200s and 1300s. The tower, from 1827, designed by Charles Barry, was built on top of the original lower half. There was originally a wooden crooked spire which gave rise to the rhyme "Proud Petworth, Poor People // High Church, Crooked Steeple". Inside, the restored panelled ceiling bears the monogram "IHS", standing for "Iesu Hominis Salvator". The most celebrated part of the church is the north east chapel, dedicated to Thomas à Becket. The rough stone font goes back to Anglosaxon times, pre-dating the church by several centuries. Memorials abound and it is worth picking up the "walk round guide".

- 2 Having turned **right**, to the three-way junction with its decorative lamp stand, cross over (very carefully – traffic in Petworth is a one-way *menace*) and turn **right** on Barton Lane, marked as a cul-de-sac. Keep left to avoid private entrances to continue on a narrower tarmac path, coming through a wooden swing-gate and a small metal gate into the open pastures.



Suddenly you have a terrific view of the countryside and the walk ahead. Go straight down the steepest part, heading for a brick bridge at the bottom. After the bridge, keep to the left-hand side of the horse pasture. After a wide gap by a line of trees, continue similarly in the next pasture, all the time going gently uphill. *If you came in damp conditions, you will be skipping round a fair amount of mud here. However, the latter stages of this walk will be much drier.* You pass a fingerpost where a path joins from the right. At the top, go through a wooden swing-gate. *Note that you are on part of the Serpent Trail, a snaking long distance path, often encountered on these walks.* Ignore the spreading meadow on your left and keep dead straight on, with a small bushy enclosure on your right and a round clump of conifers further away on your left. Keep an electricity pole just to your right to come through a wooden swing-gate. *(Have you considered how thin the people of Petworth must be?)*

- 3 Your sunken path leads uphill. Soon you come through a lighter patch and under wires. *On your left now is Brinksole Heath, an extensive area of common land maintained by WSCC and you are welcome to make a diversion to explore this woodland, especially during bluebell time.* Your route, however, is straight ahead along the right-hand edge. Eventually, you pass the Lodge on your right, now splendidly redeveloped. Continue straight over a crossing track and another shortly after. Go another 100m to a 3-way fingerpost and turn very sharp **right** on a track, signposted *Sussex Diamond Way (a long-distance path from Midhurst to Heathfield in E.Sussex).* *(This route is keeping strictly to the rights-of-way.)* Pass to the side of double padlocked wooden gates and, just before the tall stone gate pillars of the Lodge, turn **left**, as waymarked. Follow the farm track, passing a small covered reservoir on your left, and pass to the side of a metal gate. Soon after, you will be able to enjoy a great view of the South Downs ahead.



- 4 After 400m or so, where the track suddenly bends right, **leave** it by continuing straight ahead, as directed by a waymarker arrow, through a metal kissing-gate onto a narrow fenced path across the field. At the end, go through another metal kissing-gate to a road. Turn **right** for only 40m and, at a Public Footpath sign, turn **left** over a (high and slightly awkward) stile into a horse pasture. Go down across the field as directed by the sign,



towards a large white house and, in the corner, go over a stile and down through a large metal gate to a tarmac lane in the hamlet of Byworth. Turn **right** on the lane, passing a cottage which, judging from the familiar big sign, might once have been a grocer. Here, where the village street elbows right, keep **left** on a tarmac drive, past stone cottages on your right. However, by staying on the lane you reach in only 30m the "Black Horse Inn", a wonderful historic building inside and out, which serves good food.

- 5 Go through a small wooden gate, along a pleasant grass path, over a stream and beside a line of trees by a duck pond. A [2019-2021: partly broken, high and a little awkward] stile takes you into a pasture. Turn **left** here alongside the fence and follow the grass path with a string of ponds on your left. At the end, go over a stile [Dec 2021: also needing care] and turn **left**, going steeply downhill by the meandering stream. After a concrete bridge, your path goes up a bank to a T-junction with a marker post. Turn **right** here. Your path takes you through the remains of a swing-gate into a rough meadow. Keep straight ahead, ignoring a path uphill on your left. Your path rises to a high point next to some houses. Keep straight on with garden fences on your left and continue ahead, past a redundant stile, on a wide stony path. Finally you come out beside a road leading into Petworth.
- 6 Keep straight on, using the footway, going past the catholic church and the *Angel Inn* on your right. *The Angel Inn is noted for its gourmet sandwiches.* On your left is the *E. Street Bar and Grill*.

*If you turn **left** just before this establishment and **left** again at the end, you reach "Mrs. Cumming's Cottage", the Petworth Cottage Museum, a time capsule of life in the village, with everything retained as it was one hundred years ago.*

Cross over New Street heading for the *Star Inn* where you are back in the Market Square where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: To get to Petworth from the north (Surrey or London) side, take the **A283** from **Milford**, through Chiddingfold and Northchapel. There is a generous car park on the South side of the town (look for **P** symbol).

By bus/train: Stagecoach Worthing–Midhurst (passing Pulborough station) or Compass Horsham–Petworth (passing Horsham station).

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