

Bruce Trail Friendship Trail – Beacons, Commons and Woods

This spectacular walk leads you along peaceful woodland tracks and out onto windswept hillsides with breath-taking views. A true jewel in the Cotswolds crown.

Distance:

6 miles

Duration:

2½ - 3½ hours

Difficulty:

Moderate – some stiles and moderate slopes

Public transport:

No 63 Stroud to Gloucester bus stops at Bird in Hand (2 on map). See 'Explore the Cotswolds' public transport guide or visit www.traveline.org.uk

Start/Finish:

National Trust Cripplegate car park (no charge). Grid reference SO 832084 (OS Explorer 179), nearest postcode GL6 6PP.

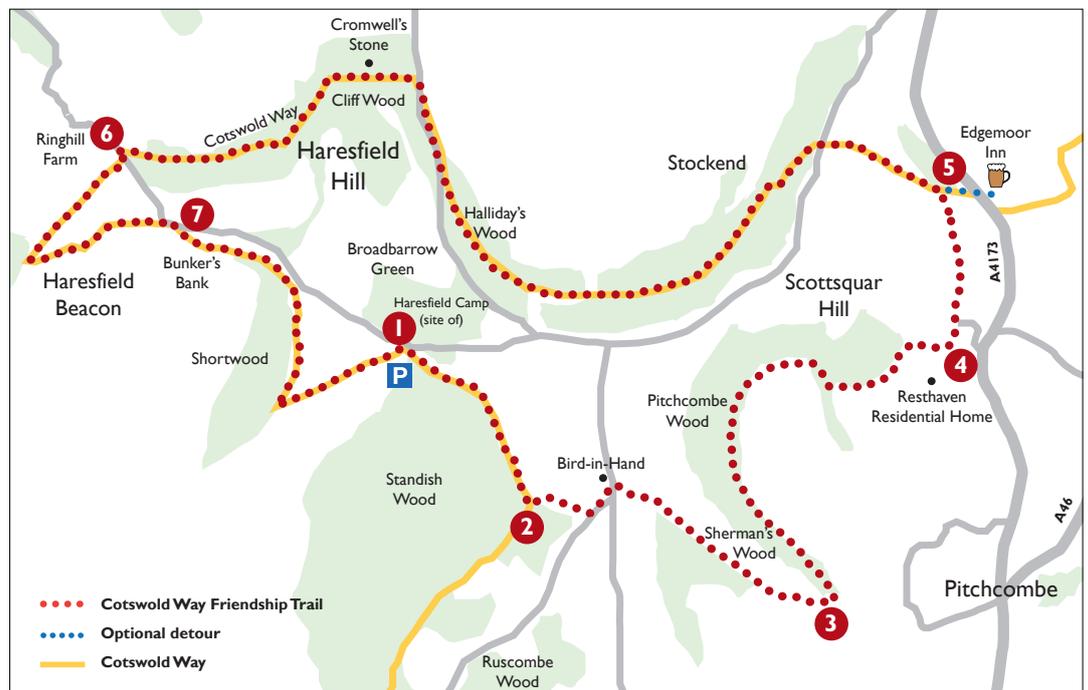
Refreshments:

Edgemoor Inn (short detour across busy road).

This part of the Cotswold Way is twinned with a section of the Bruce Trail, located in Ontario, Canada, as a mark of friendship and international cooperation between our two trails.

The 890 km long Bruce Trail is Canada's oldest and longest marked footpath and is maintained by volunteers. The trail spans beautiful and varied landscapes as it passes through Canada's most densely populated region, and is the only continuous public access to the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. For further information on this wonderful trail, visit: www.bruce-trail.org

The route description below is regularly checked and updated, but to make it even easier to follow, the friendship trail has been signed at key points with a special marker disc (pictured right).



1 Leave the car park through the wall near the main entrance and follow the Cotswold Way along a broad path into Standish Wood. Turn left at the fingerpost indicating Bird-in-Hand to leave the Cotswold Way and join a path along the edge of a field heading right. Cross over the stile at the end of this path onto the road and turn left.

2 Where a second road joins from the right, cross over and enter a narrow lane to the right of a letter box. At the end of this lane, cross a stile into a large field. Keeping to the right hand boundary, head downhill ignoring two paths on the right. Pass through the gate at the bottom of the field.

3 Almost immediately turn left and cross a stile to join a broad track through Pitchcombe Wood. All along this path there are fine views down to the right of Pitchcombe village with its small church and across the Painswick Valley. At the end of the track, enter a field and cross diagonally behind Resthaven residential home to reach a stile in the corner. Cross this stile and follow the hedge to your left descending to a tarmac road.

4 Turn left, and where the road bears right, keep straight on passing several houses. Cross the stile at the end onto Edge Common. This area of unimproved limestone grassland is grazed by cattle to preserve the habitat for several varieties of orchid and the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly. To the right beautiful views open up of Painswick and the spire of St Mary's Church. Continue straight ahead until you reach a Cotswold Way sign post.

5 At this point turn right to reach the Edgemoor Inn for refreshments, or turn left to follow the Cotswold Way all the way back to the start. Proceed uphill crossing a broad track and following a series of waymark posts to the top of the common. When you reach an old quarry, head down the stone steps towards the road. Cross over into the woods and follow the path downhill to a rough track. From here there are clear views to the Malvern Hills and on a clear day, beyond to the Brecon Beacons. Carry on until you reach another road, and turn right downhill. Turn left at the old well and horse trough to climb steadily. At the top of the rise, there are three slabs of stone, the upright one is known as Cromwell's Stone and features eroded lettering and the

date 1643 which corresponds to the Siege of Gloucester. Continue on through the woods towards Ringhill Farm.

6 At the road, turn left uphill and almost immediately right. Climbing steadily, take in the wonderful views across the Severn vale to the Forest of Dean and May Hill until you reach the trig point at the tip of Haresfield Beacon. Bear left and follow the ridge of the escarpment to a flight of steps which descends to a lower track leading into Shortwood

7 Head left uphill through the wood to emerge onto open grassland. Bear right and continue to the end of the promontory where a topograph sets out the surrounding countryside in relief. To your left, the escarpment runs south towards Uley Bury and the Tyndale Monument, and further right is the Severn Estuary and on a clear day, the twin bridges. Finally to the west lies the Forest of Dean with the Welsh hills in the distance. Once you have drunk your fill of one of the Cotswolds' finest views, put your back to the topograph and follow the trodden path back to where you began.