

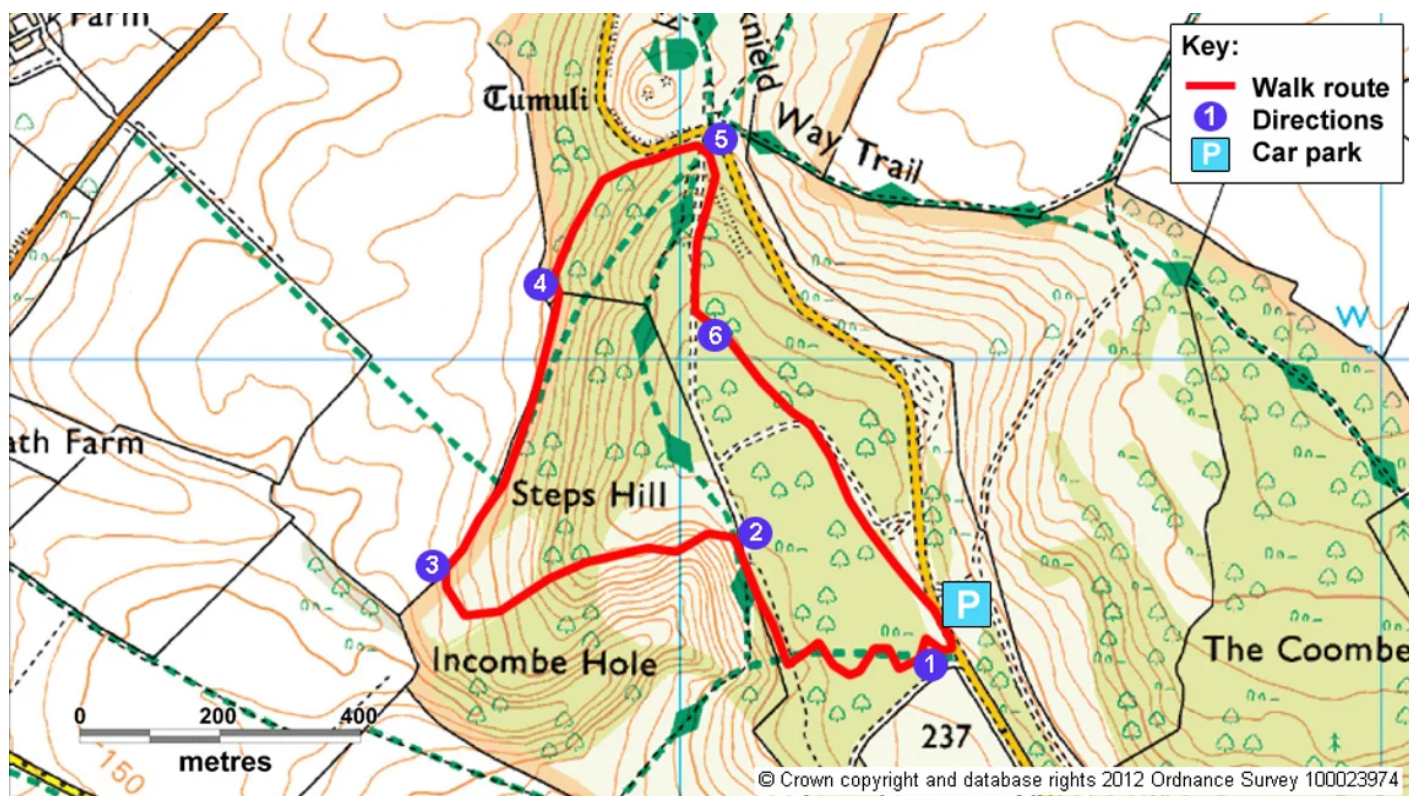
ESSEX, BEDFORDSHIRE & HERTFORDSHIRE

Ivinghoe Hills butterfly walk

Follow this easy circular walk where you can spot the various species of butterflies found on the Ivinghoe Hills. Species to see include the rare Duke of Burgundy and other species that thrive on rough chalk downland, such as chalkhill blue, dark-green fritillary and marbled white butterflies.

Discover a variety of butterflies

The lower slopes of Ivinghoe Hills have one of the strongest colonies of Duke of Burgundy butterflies left in England. Also look out for dingy and grizzled skippers, brown argus and green hairstreaks.



Information

Address: National Trust Steps Hill lower car park on west side of C road (Beacon Road), grid ref: SP96415

OS map: Explorer 181; Landranger 165

Activity: Walking

Easy: Circular route down, along and back up the Chilterns escarpment. Some muddy paths. For further details, please see Terrain section.

Dog friendly: Dogs are welcome, but should be kept under close control at all times to avoid worrying wildlife

Full trail: Miles: 2 (km: 3.2)

Access: Easy

Duration: 3 hours

Terrain

Circular route down, along and back up the Chilterns escarpment, using the more gentle inclines. Some muddy paths, brambles and prickles.

Total steps: 6

Start point: National Trust Steps Hill lower car park on west side of C road (Beacon Road), grid ref: SP96415

1. From the south-west corner of the grassy Steps Hill car park on the west side of the road, take the public footpath by the large brown sign marking the old military training area. Follow this widened path through glades in scrubby woodland, turning right onto the bridleway before the crest of the escarpment. Follow the bridleway through scrub and young oak woodland, passing the first gate out on to the downs on your left.
2. Take the second gate on your left, by another large brown sign, onto the downs above Incombe Hole. You don't need to go down the steep track into the Hole. Instead, follow vague sheep tracks that run above the right-hand crest of Incombe Hole, past isolated scrub bushes. Head for the ancient earthwork (embankment and ditch system) that runs down the spur on the right side of the Combe. Follow this ditch almost to the bottom of the scarp slope, but bearing right to cut across to the vehicle track that runs along the foot of the escarpment, joining the track to the right of a cattle trough.
3. By the fence, bear right on a chalky track that runs along the foot of the downland slope. Carry on along this track until you reach a rickety gate.
4. After a stile by the rickety gate, turn right up a sunken track sheltered by tall bushes. Here you have an option to make a detour before turning right: carry on along this bottom of the slope path, through a shady section, with a badger's sett, into a large paddock of rough grassland and bushes. This is a good area for dark-green fritillary and

chalkhill blues on the shorter turf upslope. Retrace your steps and turn left up the sunken track.

5. Just before the road bends, bear right to pick up the vehicle track that leads up the scarp slope crest southwards. You can do another detour here: cross the road carefully, follow the broad chalky path for 110yd (100m), then veer off left to explore short turf banks and gulleys, before recrossing the road and rejoining the route. On the vehicle track, ignore the footpath leading off to the right and carry on up the steep slope through open grassland.
6. Just before the track disappears into the scrub, fork left down a bumpy track that takes you through patches of hawthorn scrub. Then turn left to join a rutted track, which leads back to the car park where you began.

End point: National Trust Steps Hill lower car park on west side of C road (Beacon Road), grid ref: SP96415
