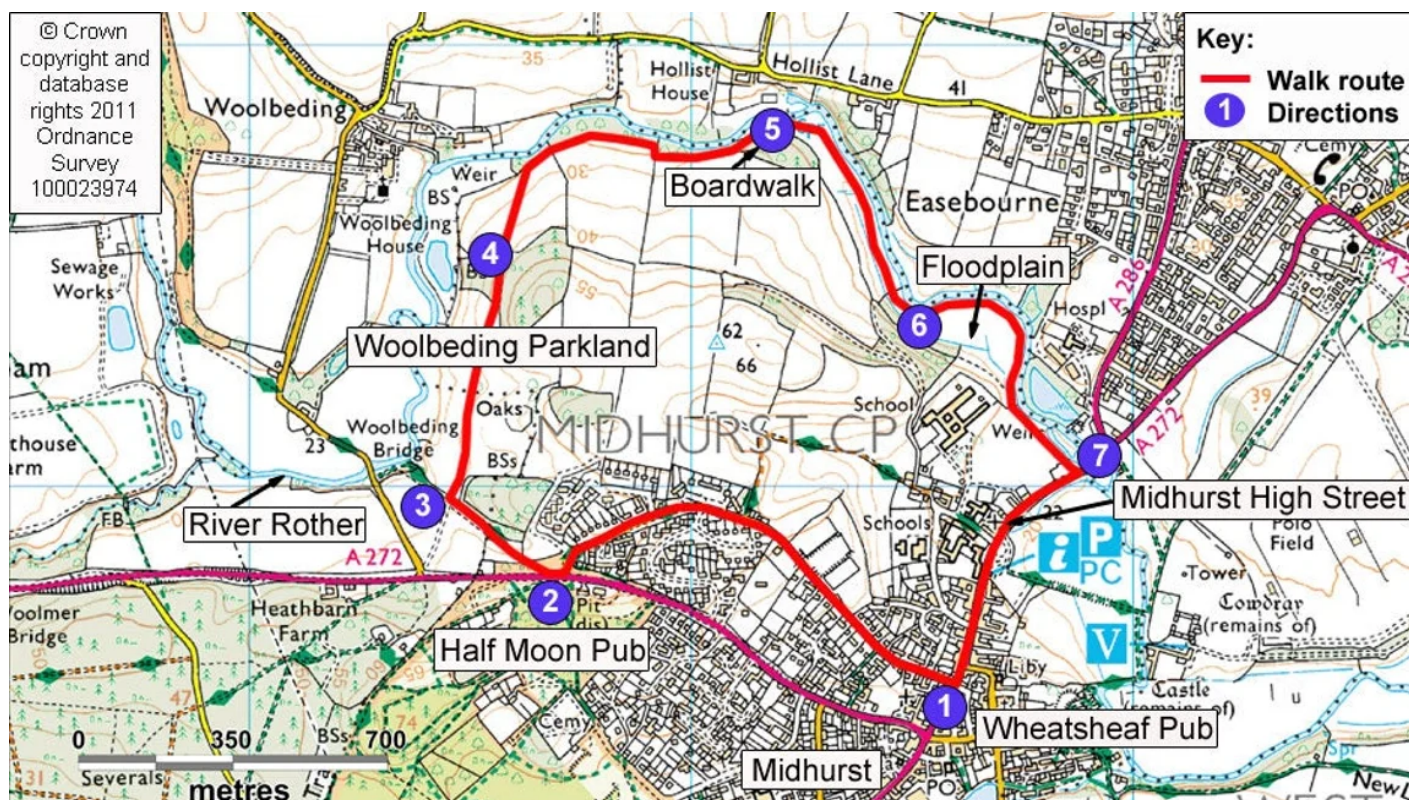


SUSSEX

Woolbeding, River Rother and Midhurst walk

Woolbeding Estate is a hidden countryside gem, situated in the South Downs National Park near historic Midhurst. The walk starts in the heart of Midhurst and takes in the beauty of Woolbeding Parkland. Follow the River Rother, edged with ancient trees. Pass a plantation of whispering poplars and hear the sounds of the weir before returning to Midhurst's main street and your choice of two pubs to finish off the walk.



Information

Address: Woolbeding Estate Office

OS map: OL 33/Explorer 133

Activity: Walking

Easy: A short easy walk. For further details, please see Terrain section.

Dog friendly: Dogs welcome under close control as livestock graze in surrounding fields. No dog bins, so please take dog litter home.

Full trail: Miles: 3 (km: 4.8)

Duration: 1 hour 30 mins

Terrain

No steep gradients, surface is pavement, tarmac lane and sometimes muddy riverside unsurfaced path – in one place raised above boggy ground by a non-slip boardwalk. Buggies will need to be lifted over one stile.

Total steps: 8

Start point: Wheatsheaf inn, Wood Lane, Midhurst GU29 9BX, or Half Moon inn, Petersfield Lane, Midhurst, GU29 9LL

1. From the Wheatsheaf head down Midhurst High Street and take the immediate left turn up June Lane. Follow the lane uphill for about 1 mile, past a bowls club and tennis club, then down past a large black barn to your right, until you reach the main road and the Half Moon inn. Take care as there is no footpath. Unusual for this region is an exposure of rock which you can see on the right-hand side just before the peak of the rise, where tree roots grow over and between the strata.
2. As June Lane reaches the busy A272, you will have the Half Moon inn to your left. Looking west along this side of the A272 you will just see a bus stop, as you follow the waymarker into a narrow footpath through a bracken and bramble thicket, which bears right and leads you to a stile. Cross over the stile and head down the path, keeping the tall trees to your right. At the National Trust access gate you will see a signpost for the Rother walk – turn left here into the parkland.
3. You are now in the heart of Woolbeding Parkland with the meandering Rother down below to your left. These fields are grazed by Sussex cows and Herdwick sheep. Turn right and follow the path into Whiphill Wood. Embrace the finest views of the Rother valley with the picturesque Woolbeding Church, and a lake ringed by rushes, shrubs and reeds. You may see some geese and swans and possibly the quick flash of a kingfisher. The lake is nestled within old pasture punctuated by mighty oaks.
4. Leave Whiphill Wood and the quirky folly in its shadows, and continue diagonally down across the field to its far left corner. Follow the Rother walk signposts. You will have a strip of streamside woodland on your left and interconnected arable fields on your right. About three-quarters of the way along the edge of the second field, turn left at

the waymarker post that leads you into the woods and nearer the river. This opens into a lovely wetland full of reedmace, willow and rushes.

5. Enjoy the elevated views from the boardwalk as it crosses the insect-rich vegetated margin, then continue along the riverside. Watch out for dancing banded demoiselles in summer. These are a type of damselfly that live and breed along flowing water. The males have characteristic dark blue wings.
6. Tall spare poplars, silvery and bare in winter, otherwise alive with crisp, olive and grey leaves, that move and rustle together in the slightest wind. The river is lined with alder trees, which thrive in wet ground. The trembling leaves of poplars whisper to one another with a sound like rain.
7. Leaving the dry sussuration of the poplars and alders, you follow a narrow riverside path, in cool shade and hearing ever more clearly the river. The music of the flow changes as it narrows, bends, and goes over at least one weir; then, as it nears Midhurst High Street, it loops beside gravel banks and discharges into a swirling pool.
8. Turn right at the road. Having trod the riverside way, you can now enjoy the rich experience of Midhurst market town. You will see Cowdray Ruins opposite and the Rother Academy with the plaque commemorating HG Wells. The building with yellow windows shows it belongs to the Cowdray estate. There are plenty of cafés and small shops to savour and enjoy. Public toilets are near the bus stop and car park. Continue along the high street until you return to the Wheatsheaf inn. Turn left at June Lane and continue up the hill if you are finishing at the Half Moon.

End point: Wheatsheaf inn, Wood Lane, Midhurst GU29 9BX, or Half Moon inn, Petersfield Lane, Midhurst, GU29 9LL
