



Walks from the Watercress Way No 7/8 Shady glades and dreamy droves

A circular walk from Micheldever Woods: 9km/ 6.5 miles

This shorter circular walk follows part of the northern part of the WW. It can be shortened /lengthened & is suitable for children, and dogs under control. It is on grassy and gravel tracks and some roads without pavements. Some tracks can become overgrown. Wear appropriate clothing.

The Watercress Way (WW) is a waymarked 27-mile circular trail, near Winchester, Hampshire. It follows parts of two disused Victorian railway lines, linked by historic rights of way including livestock droves.

Approximately 1.6 miles/2.5 kms of the WW is followed through rolling chalk downland on the River Itchen's southern facing valley, just outside the South Downs National Park. You pass through beautiful mixed ancient woodland famed for spring bluebells and Muntjac deer. Many archaeological features from prehistoric and medieval times remain, including Iron Age banjo settlements, several tumuli (Bronze Age burial barrows) and ancient tracks(holloways). Wide open fields and vistas await.

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Please consider a donation to use this route map.

www.thewatercressway.org.uk

Charity No 1167675



The Watercress Way

ACCESS

Start from Carpark: Micheldever Woods FC Car Park (free, no facilities), Main Rd to Northington from the A33

OS Map SU530362

Post code SO21 1PP

What3words: punctual. rent. pity

Buses No 95 Winchester to East Stratton. Use Lunways bus stop, and walk along Northington Lane east to Micheldever Woods (no pavements)

	Directions	Watchpoints
The Watercress Way	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> From Micheldever Woods car park turn left along Northington Lane, NO PAVEMENTS TAKE CARE As the woodland ends, look for the bridleway signed on the right of the road heading SE to Alresford. (Can shorten route by following section 7 onwards) Stay on this gently undulating main track, called The Oxdrove Way, for 2 km, heading SE. (Can extend the walk here by carrying on to Three Castles Path and keep turning right to return to point 4) Leave WW at the 3rd bridleway to the right, just after ivy encrusted Itchen Down windpump, heading downhill, south, to Northington Rd (if you miss the turning carry on to the first height restriction barrier then right along minor road called Northington Rd) CAN LENGTHEN ROUTE HERE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is part of the Oxdrove (on OS maps labelled Alresford Drove) a West-East track traceable west from here to South Wonston & Stockbridge and east to Totford, the Woolpack Inn & further east. It is either still a gravel track or has been metalled into a road, made for the herding of oxen (often shod for long journeys)& turkeys, geese & sheep from Wales & the West Country to markets in Alresford, Petersfield, Guildford and London. The railway era led to an end to the era of drovers & droves. Just as you enter Itchen Woods, just to the right of the bridleway, there is a holloway (ancient track) & one of 4 banjos in the area (obscured under vegetation, approx. 0.2 ha.) an Iron Age settlement enclosure listed by English Heritage as a listed monument. Banjos are found across Wessex and the Upper Thames but are rare elsewhere. On the OS map you will see double dykes marked by the BS (Boundary Stone) with short, coppiced trees on it. Building the M3 led to many discoveries here including ancient tracks, called holloways. Woods over 100 yrs. old often have an earthwork as a boundary At Itchen Down look out for a trig point 130m above sea level on the left and a windpump for Itchen Down farm obscured by tall conifers and vines. The Watercress Way continues another 4 km along droves into Alresford.
Greenpath	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue on Northington Rd (no pavements) until first bridleway to the right, just before Spreadoak Cottages and opposite Rectory Lane. Turn right (North) Follow the Greenlane up and down hill, with its dogleg turns, until reach the bridleway bisecting it. This is the WW again, (you walked this short section of the WW in step 2) Turn left for a few 100m until bridleway to the left west into Itchen Wood, exit the WW here. TO SHORTEN ROUTE CARRY STRAIGHT ON BACK TO CARPARK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As you climb back up the Itchen valley slopes, look back at the fabulous view's SW across to St Catherine's Hill and Cheesfoot Head (scene of Eisenhower's briefing to US troops pre D Day in this natural chalk amphitheatre and Boomtown Festival) Dog leg turns are characteristic of drove tracks, shielding livestock from poor weather. This is a feeder drove (from pastures on floodplain) to Hampshire's main W-E tracks Spot the majestic specimen solitary oaks in the field to the left (west) It is estimated 2,300 species depend on one oak tree (birds, mammals, fungi, not including bacteria or microorganisms) Long linear belts of trees form shelter belts, created of conifers.
Itchen Wood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the bridleway with fields either side and enter Itchen Wood. Keep bearing left up hill, a deeply worn track with woodland either side. Ignore small tracks to right and left. At the top of the hill follow the bridleway, which gradually arcs right (west). At a gate with side access, ignore right and left tracks and carry straight on till you reach the end of Itchen Wood at Chillandham Lane. Take the gravel track to the right (north), paralleling the M3 and Service Station. Follow this downhill until you reach Northington Rd North again, with the M3 underpass just to the left. Turn right, back on the WW for a few 100 metres to the car park and to access the Archaeological Trail. NO PAVEMENTS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Itchen Woods (bridleway access only) and Micheldever Woods (open access) are working forests with a mix of conifers and deciduous trees and bluebell carpets run by The Forestry Commission. They are classed as ancient woodlands because after Roman times the woodland grew back from the patchwork of settlements and became part of a mixed coppiced pasture common, with open areas providing rights of way to Itchen Abbas and Chilland to the south. It was enclosed in 1814 by Baroness Bolton and then Lord Ashburton (1928-2020, merchant banker, the Baring family) Bluebells thrive where there is heavier shade from trees stopping undergrowth. They survive because do most of their growing before the beech trees come into leaf. Muntjacs are small, non- native deer from China. Escaped from Woburn Park 1838. The slippery nature of tracks here, especially after rain, is from the layer of clay and flints overlying the chalk rock. Northington Lane from the A33 to Northington bisects Micheldever/Itchen woods. It follows an old dry valley, carved out during the Ice Age during permafrost times when the ground was frozen and allowed surface drainage