

RANS WOOD EXCURSION

This walk is about an hour. It is rarely frequented by tourists or by visitors to the National Park. It is a secret favourite amongst local dog walkers and cyclists.

The walk is in woods on gravel paths and is suitable for windy, wet days as well as sunshine. Other than immediately after or during torrential rain, there is no need for Wellington boots or walking boots.

Very near to Rans Wood car park, there is an idyllic stream and bridge (pictured below) where young children love to play; and at nearby Hatchet Pond, there is an ice-cream van!



Opposite the entrance to Hatchet Pond (the pond was formed in the eighteenth century to provide water for an iron mill and is the largest body of water in the New Forest), is Furzey Lane.



Carry on down Furzey Lane. It becomes Furzey Lodge when you find houses on both sides of the road and a red letterbox on your right. Most of the houses are owned by practicing commoners, who in turn own the ponies on the forest, and one is occupied by an agister, whom since the Norman Conquest has had overall responsibility for the welfare of the ponies in the forest. At Forest Heath, the last house on your left, turn left down a gravel track. The track is indicated by a green parking sign and cycleway marker post number 43 indicating the cycle route to Brockenhurst. Behind the post is a small fenced pen where the ponies are kept when they are rounded up off the forest during the annual drift. The new foals are then branded and all the ponies have their tails cut according to the mark of their agister. Rans Wood car park takes no more than 3 cars but there is plenty of room to park on the verge.

[If you want to go down to the stream to let the children play, walk back up the car park road and then carry on left down Furzey Lodge. The road very quickly turns into a track and you pass a house, called Odways, on its own in the woods. The picturesque bridge and stream is just beyond the house and is great for “pooh sticks”. If you want to have a picnic, go across the stream and walk slightly beyond it to drier ground. You are in the open forest so you could have animal visitors. **DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS.**]

[If you want to detour to Beaulieu, drive back up Furzey Lane and then go left at the crossroads. Down the hill, the first right takes you to the historic shipbuilding village of Bucklers Hard, the second takes you into Beaulieu (go right again up the high street) and the third is the entrance for the motor museum. To return, retrace your route, just before Hatchet Pond taking the left signposted the B3054 to Lymington.]

To return to the hotel, drive back up Furzey Lane and go straight over the crossroads onto the B3054 to Lymington, which is approximately 5 miles away. You enter Lymington by crossing the river (note the warning sign on the bridge for otters crossing!) and then the railway line, which links up with the ferry to the Isle of Wight. At the mini-roundabout, turn left into Gosport Street and then follow the road up Lymington high street.

[If you want to park, turn right at the top of the hill, before Boots the Chemists, into New Street. You will pass St. Barbe Museum and the Visitor Information Centre before you need to turn left to get to the car park. Use the parking clock in your file, which needs to be displayed in the front window of your car. When you leave, turn right out of the car park and then left. At the T-junction turn left and then left again at the traffic lights. You rejoin the route just after the set of pedestrian lights.]

At the end of the high street, join the A337 to New Milton and 7 miles later, having passed through Pennington and Everton, turn left onto the B3058 to Milford-on-Sea. The village is a mile later and you can easily pull in for a wander. As you come out of Milford, you pass Westover Hall on your left and then you should be able to see the sea. Stop at the second car park if you want to look back and see the Isle of Wight. It is a pay and display car park but charges only apply from 31 March to 31 October. The sea road carries on past Barton Golf Club, and at the mini-roundabout on the outskirts of New Milton, take the first left, the A337 to Christchurch and Bournemouth. 2 miles later turn right at the mini-roundabout and then immediately right into Chewton Farm Road. The hotel entrance is the next right.

RANS WOOD WALK circa 3 miles/ 5 kilometres

Continue on the track from the car park (which is closed off to traffic by a low gate) and you will pass another cycle marker (5.5m to Brockenhurst). You are now in the open forest and could encounter horses, donkeys, cows or even pigs. If the sun is very hot you may even see an adder sunbathing. Go through the gate, at the bottom of the track, which takes you into the inclosure managed by the Forestry Commission. Horses are not meant to be in the inclosures but some do sneak in! As you go through the gate you cross a small stream and pass another cycle route marker. You will see grey squirrels and possibly deer, and in the spring you will hear the visiting cuckoo.

This should be your view looking up the hill (perhaps without the dog)!



At the top of the hill, veer left as per the cycle sign and then carry straight on past another cycle sign, ignoring the track to the left. There is a short downhill, then uphill (again past another cycle sign and ignoring another track to the left) and then downhill.

At the fork, carry straight on up the incline rather than going right on the flat section of track (this route is indicated as left on the cycle route marker post). This should be your view before the fork and you want to take the cyclist's route.



Follow the main track and after a while you will come to a crossroads, ignore the muddy trail off to the left just before the crossroads (there used to be an old sawmill here). At the junction marked by a cycle post, go left (straight on would take you on to Beaulieu Heath which was used as an airfield in World War II but is now used for flying model airplanes).

Stay on the main track, it ultimately veers sharp left and then carries on down a gentle hill to a bridge over a stream. At the T-junction at the top of the hill, turn right and stay on the main track to retrace the earlier part of the walk back to the inclosure gate and then the car park.