

Walk 1 (about 1.6 miles)



Going west out of Streatley on the B4009, a steep hill leads to a car park on the right. Enter this and, on the left, take the footpath to the Golf Course (beware of golf balls). From the top of the hill enjoy the views of the Golf Course and surrounding area, with The Ridgeway Path at the bottom of the valley. The wide grassy areas of the Golf Course contrast with the woods and areas of thicket. Listen to the birds in the woods. On this walk look for pyramid orchids, and other wild flowers in the season. A grassy path leads downhill and then passes through some trees. Emerging from the wooded area, see where the path has been hollowed out by myriads of feet over the centuries.

A little further on is an old bonfire site. Growing here may be seen Verbascum plants. Carry on and climb over the stile at the bottom. Continue on to the road. This is The Ridgeway Path. Turn right, and after a few minutes a track on your right leads to a gate. Go through this, and climb over a low bar on to Lough Down, an open grassy area with wild flowers. Walk up a steep hill, an effort perhaps, but one that is well worthwhile to see the view from the top. On the Down may be seen, at the right time of year, many chalk grassland flowers: pyramid orchids, wild mignonette, milkwort, dropwort, horseshoe vetch, kidney vetch, to mention but a few. Red kites, graceful, with forked tails and red in the sunshine are a sight worth seeing, but other birds too, for example, green woodpeckers and skylarks, may also be there. There used to be nightingales, but alas no more. The chalk grassland flowers encourage the indigenous butterflies.

Look out, therefore, for the Adonis Blue and the Chalkhill Blue, who both need the horseshoe vetch on which to lay their eggs. The Chalkhill Blue and Adonis Blue males are blue, the Adonis being the darker of the two. The females are brown. When you reach the top of the hill turn round and admire the view. From here can be seen the Chiltern Hills and Wittenham Clumps, with its two distinctive clumps of trees. Didcot Power Station is in the distance on your left.

At the right hand corner of the fence, at the top of the hill, is a gate, which leads to Lardon Chase. Go through it. Here, spread out before you are the villages of Goring and Streatley, with the Thames winding its way to Reading. Walk to the right along the top of the hill. As you go, look to your left when, on a fine day in the distance can be seen the Tilehurst Water Tower, and to the left of it the wind turbine on the M4 in Reading. Continue to the car park.

Walk 2 (about 3 miles)



Cross the road from the car park and take the path by the National Trust sign. This is a well-made path, initially through woods where there are bluebells in the spring. A path from The Coombe joins on the left. Go straight on here through a gate. Presently, the woods, on the right thin to reveal wide views. Continue straight on (passing the path from the Youth Hostel on the left), through two more gates, and you will reach the top of The Holies. Before you are woods, and a wide area of chalk grassland where different types of orchid may be seen in the season. Take the obvious paved path down a steep hill. After passing through a gate there is a steep uphill path which, if followed, could be the place to look for orchids. Otherwise, as you approach the bottom of the hill, leave the main path and follow the curve of the hill around to the left. Here, stop and admire the cowslips in the season. On the right, in the far corner of the wood, there is a gate. Go through it to a path running parallel with the Reading Road. Continue on until the path runs into the Reading Road. Cross over the road and continue walking in the same direction to a footpath on the right, which leads to the High Street. Turn left into the High Street. During April to June the meadow on the right, as you walk up the High Street, has a magnificent show of yellow bulbous buttercups. Continue up the High Street, through the lights and straight on. Just past the Old School House and before you reach a left turn to the Coombe, there is, on the right, a gravelled track leading to a gate at the bottom of Lardon Chase. Go through the gate and walk up a very steep hill. When you reach the fence at the top, turn left along Lardon Chase to the car park. An alternative would be to keep on the Reading Road, and just before the Youth Hostel, take a left turn up a steep track to your original path and then turn right to the car park.

