

Wyke circuit via Gants Mill and Ridge Hill

9 km (5½ miles), 200 m (650 ft) ascent. About 120 to 150 minutes. Easy apart from two very short sections.



A glorious walk through a range of different landscapes with excellent views. Mostly on easy footpaths/bridleways or very quiet country lanes, with two very short moderate sections near Gants Mill. One short section of the return route is hazardous in wet weather: two alternative routes are offered.

For the best views walk the route as numbered rather than clockwise.

Start at Station Road Car Park

From the car park turn right along the road with St. Mary's Church on your left. On reaching Church Bridge cross the river and the road to reach a town map on the left, which will guide you along the Riverside Walk. Don't miss a left turn off Lower Backway opposite Sexeys Hospital (before a house called Heybrook on the left). Turn right at the end of the Riverside Walk, cross the zebra crossing and take the lane on the left which runs uphill past the filling station to Mill on the Brue Outdoor Activity Centre.

2

Continue through the car park and up the drive. Just before the house turn left over a stile and continue to the right along a clear path below the garden. The path leads under the zip wire then through the obstacle course to a gate. Go through the wood, with a mill stream below you to the left, to reach another gate and the delightful setting of Gants Mill.

Follow the path leading up to the right above the former Mill works and through a gate. The path becomes narrow and climbs steeply for a short stretch. Take care. [The walk returns this way. If the path is wet and muddy, decide now whether to come back this way. If not take one of the alternative routes]. It then levels out and runs high above the river, before reaching another gate.

Go straight through the scrubby woodland, then slightly up the bank between some small trees and out into the field above the scrub. Continue slightly downhill, just above the scrub. After zigzagging through Cole Gribb (an often-muddy gully) go slightly right and uphill to the gate at the far corner of the field.

3

Go through the gate and turn right along Wyke Lane. The landscape changes completely as the lane meanders gently down through open countryside, with views opening up in all directions.

Arriving at the T junction in Lower Wyke turn left down Wyke Road (more of a lane than a road). This very quiet road drops gradually downhill to cross the River Brue and then the Great Western Railway.

Once over the railway the road climbs quite steeply up the side of Ridge Hill. Through gaps in the hedge on the right Glastonbury Tor can be seen to the north-west, and the Mendip ridge to the north-east.

Shortly after a sharp left turn the top of the hill is reached. After about 150 m gently downhill the road swings right. Take the steps up the bank (signed Cole 1½ miles) on the left.

4

Go over the stile, along the short right-hand field-edge and through a gate. Turn left. From here the path meanders across the side of the hill just below the fence. This section of the walk is one of the finest in the area. The hamlet of Hadspen is visible below, and once a corner is rounded there is a glorious rural view up the valley to the east, with St Marys Church in Bruton visible in the distance and the Stourhead ridge beyond. In the last week of April and first week of May the Hadspen orchards below are a sea of pale pink apple blossom.

The path gradually gets less distinct, but the route is obvious, with the fence close by to the left. It drops gently downwards to a gate through into the orchards.

5

Once through the gate follow the rough track that runs next to the hedge down the left-hand side of the orchard. Near the bottom watch for a not very obvious sign to the left of the track, indicating where the path turns right downhill off the track, between two rows of apple trees.

Go down through the orchard and across the brook. Turn left, go through a gate hidden in the bottom corner of the orchard and then diagonally across the field to the opposite corner, where a gate leads on to the road. Turn left and follow the road past houses and a farm, over the River Pitt and into Cole.

6

[If you have decided to take one of the alternative routes continue at either A or B below].

At the junction turn left between two houses (Wyke Lane again) then immediately right into the private lane leading to Colestile (also known as Cole Style). The lane crosses the Brue by a narrow bridge.

In the winter of 2020, the landowners established a permissive path through the field in front of Colestile which is more direct, easier to follow and altogether better than the 'official' route. Follow it if open, by turning right through the gate immediately after the bridge. Continue through the field with the River Brue to your right. Otherwise walk up the drive to the house and take the stile into the field on your right. The field narrows as the river and railway line gradually converge. Go under the railway.

7

Go through the gate and straight on up the hill ahead past a fine oak tree. The path becomes indistinct. Scramble straight ahead up the muddy bank to re-join the outgoing route at point 4. Return to Bruton using the outgoing route, taking great care on the steep drop down to Gants Mill.

A

This alternative route is easy but rather boring and takes the same time as the main route. Instead of turning left into Wyke Lane at point 6, continue for 200m or so and take the first road turning left. Follow the road (which adjoins the railway for most of its 1km length) to reach the A359 Cole Road. Turn left. The main road leads back into town, under the railway to the zebra crossing and the outgoing route.

B

This route is more interesting, with a climb and also some mud in wet weather. It adds about ten minutes.

Turn left between the two houses and up Wyke Lane at point 6, ignore a lane forking off to the right, cross the River Brue and continue uphill under the West Coast Main Line to cross the outgoing route at point 3 above. Go straight ahead here, taking the crude steps away from the road up a steep bank to a stile, across a track, and a further stile.

Continue uphill slightly to the right towards and past prominent trees. Usually well-trodden, this is a permissive path, not the right of way shown on the OS map. As the path climbs excellent views open up to the left towards Glastonbury Tor and the Somerset Levels. Continuing more gently uphill, gradually approach the hedge on the right, to what from a distance looks to be the top right-hand corner of the field but is actually a turn in the hedge. Turn right, follow the hedge for a few metres, cross the stile and continue in the same direction with the hedge now on the left.

The lane becomes hedged on both sides. Go through a gate into woods, eventually going steeply downhill onto a metaled drive and then back into Bruton. Turn right for the zebra crossing and the outgoing route.