

6. The Leckhampton Loop

This walk guides you around one of the most beautiful and varied stretches of the Cotswold Way. From rich grassland to peaceful woodlands, from Iron Age remains to Victorian quarries, this route offers up a taste of the entire Cotswold landscape in 4½ sheltered and windswept miles.

Distance:

4½ miles or 7.2km

Duration:

2½ - 3 hrs

Difficulty:

Moderate to easy, no stiles, some steep sections.

Public transport:

No. 51 bus (Cheltenham - Cirencester - Swindon). Ask for Seven Springs stop. (Visit www.travelinesw.com).

Start/Finish:

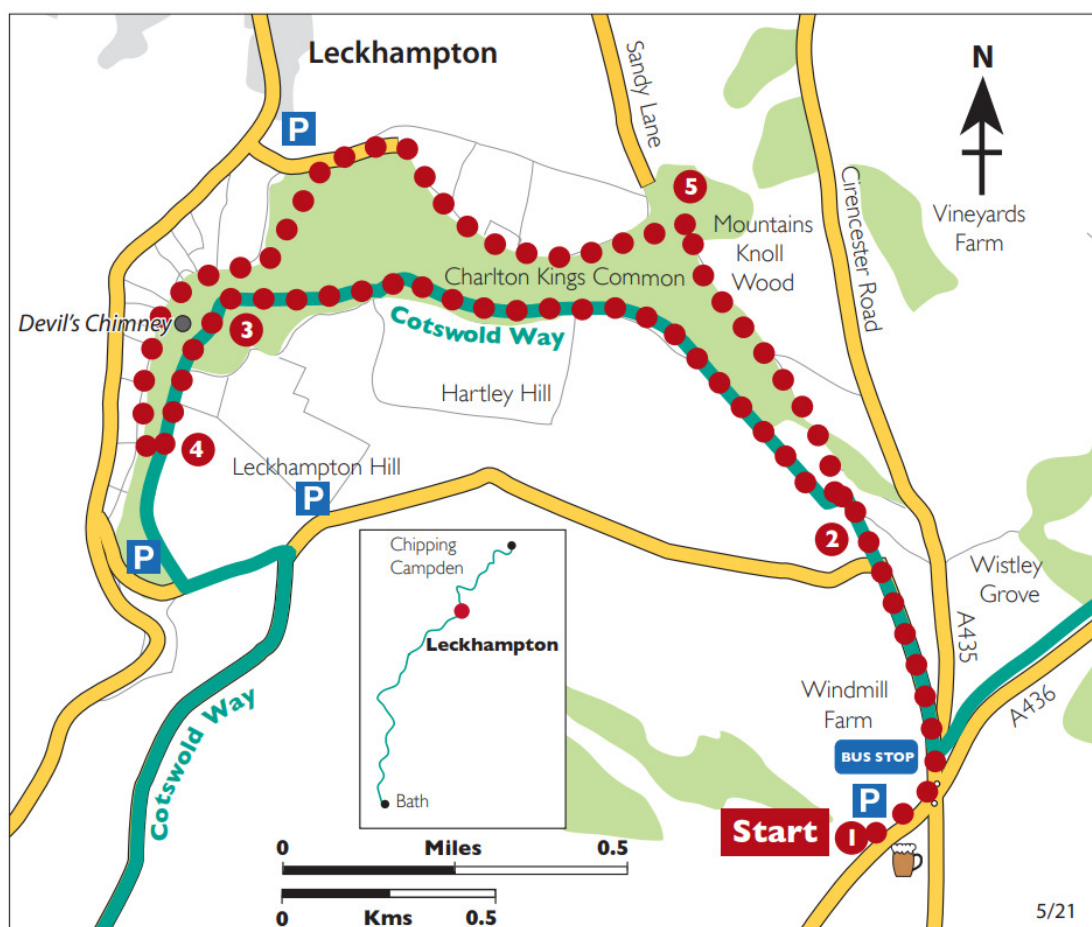
Grid reference SO 967/170
(OS Explorer sheet 179)
Postcode GL53 9NG

Refreshments:

Pub at Seven Springs. Check opening hours.

Parking

Lay-by opposite Seven springs pub. Alternative start points are from car parks indicated on the map.



1 Start at the lay-by opposite the pub, and take the footpath up towards the busy roundabouts and follow the Cotswold Way as it leads down the narrow road off to the left. At the junction, follow the track straight on.

2 Continue to follow the Cotswold Way up to the left, through a wooden gate along the edge of the meadow and through the trees until you emerge onto grassland at the top of the slope. This precious nature reserve is expertly managed in partnership with volunteers from the Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (FOLK). Keep on the Cotswold Way as it follows

the edge of the scarp for just over a mile (1.6km), eventually passing through ramparts just beyond some pine trees. Enter into this Iron Age hillfort, built between 500 and 100BC, and continue on towards the viewpoint.

3 Take a few minutes to breathe in the magnificent views, and then follow the path down to your left, through a gap. There is an information panel here. For a short detour to an iconic Cotswolds landmark, the Devil's Chimney, follow the path down to the right.

After puzzling over this intriguing monument to the hill's quarrying past, retrace your steps to the gap in the bushes and then continue to follow the Cotswold Way along the top of the hill. After about 400 metres look for a waymarker post down to your right, approximately 15 metres from the path. There is a bench just across the path from the waymarker post.

At this point leave the Cotswold Way, head for the marker post and follow the steepish path leading diagonally down across the slope into a wooded area.

4 At the bottom of the slope continue along the peacefully enchanting woodland path, keeping the tumbledown wall on your left. After approximately a quarter of a mile (0.4km) you will pass a number of houses on the left hand side; at this point the Devils Chimney can be clearly seen, up towards the top of the slope on the right.

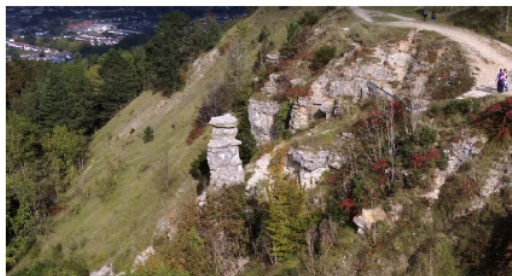
Continue along the path until you reach the old quarry buildings at the junction of seven paths. Take the wide path leading straight down the hill, an old quarry tramway, as indicated by the arrow on the stone marker at ground level 'Public footpath/Leckhampton Hill Walk [no.] 8'. Continue straight downhill to the fence and gates at the bottom. Turn right and continue

to follow the road after it becomes an unmade track for half a mile (0.8 km) along the bottom of the escarpment, eventually forking right to take the narrow footpath.

5 At the end of the path, follow the waymarkers left, then right, then continue on the wider track all the way along the bottom of the hill until you rejoin the Cotswold Way at point 2.

From here, retrace your steps back to the start. This spectacular and diverse walk is now at an end, but the rest of the Cotswold Way is waiting to welcome you back for another splendid stroll.

Points of Interest

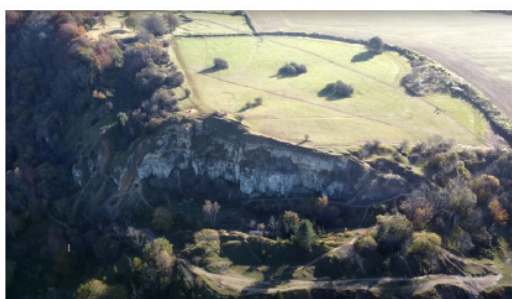


Devil's Chimney

is a limestone rock formation that stands above a disused quarry.

Legend holds that the Devil's Chimney is the chimney of the Devil's dwelling deep beneath the ground. Supposedly the Devil, provoked by the many Christian churches of the area, would sit atop Leckhampton Hill and hurl stones at Sunday churchgoers. However the stones were turned back on him, driving him beneath the ground and trapping him there so he could not further harass the villagers. Now he uses the mass of stones as his chimney to let free the smokes of hell...

It is though more likely that the quarrying was carried out from before 1617 through to 1926 resulted in the creation of the famous Devil's Chimney.



Leckhampton Hillfort

is one of a number of forts constructed along the Cotswold Escarpment between 500-100BC. Excavations in the 1920s and 1969/1970 revealed that the enclosure bank was originally 2-3m high with a ditch 4m wide and 1.5m deep, strengthened by a wooden palisade and stone wall with a large impressive gatehouse.

In 2008 a further survey by Gloucestershire County Council Arceological Services with voluntary support from Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (FOLK) and general members of the public confirmed there was an Iron Age settlement within the fort, with evidence of hut circles, internal enclosures and ditches. The survey also showed medieval cultivation had taken place within the hillfort, and confirmed the location of a second world war installation.

For more information visit: www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk (opens in new window)

The Cotswold Way National Trail is managed and maintained by Cotswolds National Landscape and the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens
www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk



Photo credits: Aerial photos of the Devils Chimney and Leckhampton Hillfort (c) Mike Ramsey 2022