

8. Commons and Canals - The Selsey Circuit

This extremely popular walk is one of the easiest to follow, winding its way along the National Trail for nearly all of its length. From sheltered beech woodlands and over rich open grassland, it guides you around remnants of an industrial past that shaped the landscape we love today. Wander between the grandeur of Victorian mills alongside the sleepy beauty of the waterway, and discover a timeless journey between past and present that reveals yet another face of the glorious Cotswolds.

Distance:

5 miles or 8 kms

Duration:

3 - 4 hrs

Difficulty:

Moderate - Some stiles and steep sections.

Public transport:

No. 66S bus between Stroud and Gloucester or train to Stonehouse. (Visit www.travelinesw.com).

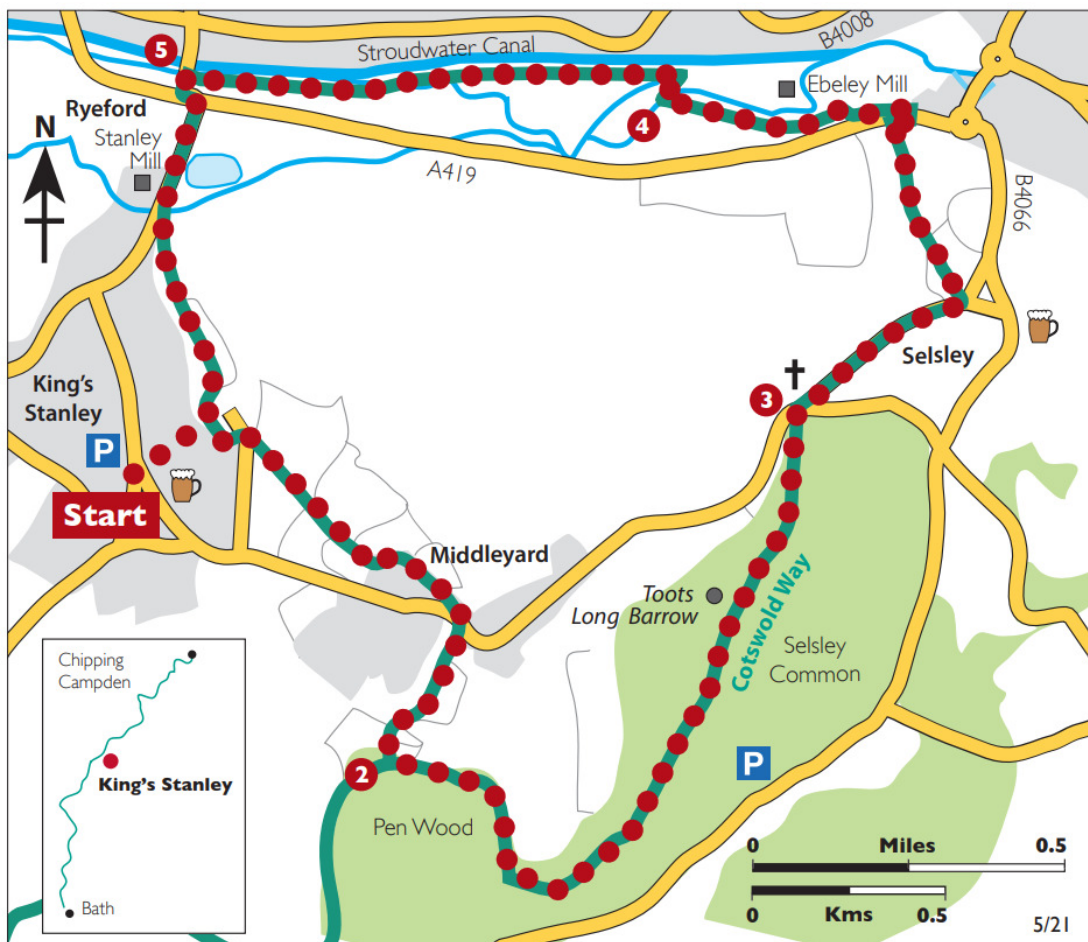
Start/Finish:

Grid reference SO 812/035
(OS Explorer sheet 168)
Postcode GL10 3JD

Refreshments:

Pubs in Kings Stanley and Selsey.
Check opening hours.

1 Start the walk at the Kings Head pub, with the free car park behind you and the playing fields ahead. Pass around the left of the fields, turning right after the ball-sports court, making for the waymarker post between the floodlights. Turn left to head down the steps and over the little footbridge. Continue straight on to join the Cotswold Way, ignoring the gate to the left, and head right to follow the signs over the fields. Continue around the edge of the fields, until you emerge out at MIDDLEYARD Baptist Chapel. Turn left and in 50 metres turn right across the road to head up Coombe Lane. Carry on following the Cotswold Way as it forks right up a track,



over a stile and across a meadow. After the second stile, follow the bridleway signs up the steep, stony gully.

2 At the top, turn left at the fingerpost and follow the path down through the woods. Carry on around the edge of the woods, crossing over a small road, and after half a mile keep your eyes peeled for a marker post pointing up a steep track to the right. At the top of this track, pass through a kissing gate to exchange the shelter of the woods for the wide open space of Selsley Common. Head straight onto the common, taking the path up towards the large tree. As the incredible views open up to your left, ignore the path around the bottom of the hill and look for the posts with green discs to guide you towards the Toots. After a moment to catch your breath and cast your eyes across the Severn Estuary into Wales, continue straight uphill towards the Toots, an Iron Age

burial mound. Pass over the crest of the hill between the long barrow and the topograph, and follow the path straight downhill towards the church below.

3 At the bottom of the path, pass through the gate, cross the road and follow the signs along to the right past the lychgate. If you are in need of peace and cool serenity, there is no finer place on this walk than Selsley Church with its beautiful 19th Century stained glass windows designed by leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement such as William Morris and Ford Maddox-Brown. Continue on past the Scout Hut, crossing a stile on the left to follow the Cotswold Way. Heading down across the fields towards the fence at the bottom, beautiful views spread out beneath you of a valley rich in industrial heritage and with Ebeley Mill its centrepiece. Pass through the kissing gate and take the pedestrian crossing over the road, continuing left along the cycle

track, formerly a railway track.

4 After just under half a mile, pass through the kissing gate on your right and follow an old railway line towards the river. Pass over a small bridge and go up some steps through an area of housing, turning left when you meet the canal. Continue alongside the picturesque Stroudwater Navigation, opened in 1779 and currently restored beyond your next bridge at Ryeford.

5 Leaving the canal behind, take the path up to the left and head down towards the busy road. Cross at the lights and follow the signs towards Stanley Mill. Keeping a good ear and eye out for traffic, cross the road just after the bridge to follow the high path across the top of the fields. Follow the Cotswold Way ignoring two footbridges. At the second kissing gate turn right, cross a stream and climb steps to bring you within sight of the 'Kings Head', just across the playing field.

Optional route

Follow the Circular Walk from King's Stanley across Selsley Common and then downhill to the pedestrian controlled crossing over the A419. This was formerly a railway line known for the "Dudbridge Donkey". Then turn westwards along the tarmac cycle track through the community orchard towards Ryeford.

After 0.3 miles along this cycle track there is now a choice. Continue along the tarmac route to Ryeford or look for a metal kissing gate on the right to take you across a water meadow to the canal towpath. The towpath is reached by following the green waymarking discs through some new houses to a waymark post on the towpath.

If you wish, it is interesting to turn right to walk to Ebley Mill. However, if short of time, turn left and follow the canal westward, passing the double locks, and re-joining the original Cotswold Way on the bridge at Ryeford Road. Here, a signpost directs walkers south to King's Stanley or north to Painswick.

Points of Interest



Selsley Common

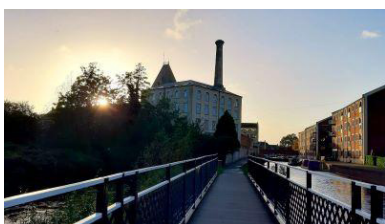
Is a sizeable area of limestone grassland, on a flat-topped spur along the edge of the Cotswold escarpment; to the west the land drops steeply by over 300 feet, and most has far-reaching westwards views, across the Severn Valley towards the Black Mountains in Wales. The common is still used by local residents for livestock grazing, in accordance with ancient rights.

Besides the views, the other main attraction is the variety of the calcareous grassland wildflowers, and in recognition of this, together with some interesting geology, as evidenced by several rock faces from ancient limestone quarries, the common is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). At least eight orchids are found here; bee, common spotted, common twayblade, early purple, fly, fragrant, green-winged and pyramidal, together with many other species.



All Saints Church

the only church in Britain to have all its windows designed by William Morris and his colleagues.



Ebley Mill

Once the largest cloth mill in Stroud valley, and for many years owned by the Marling family, Ebley Mill won design awards when it was converted into offices by Stroud District Council in 1989.



Stroud Water Canal

This was the first canal built and joined Stroud to the River Severn just beyond Saul Junction. It was opened in 1779. Called the Stroudwater Navigation it enabled Trows to carry goods from Stroud to ports on the River Severn. With the later building of the Gloucester Sharpness canal the two were joined together at Saul Junction. The waterway climbed up from the Severn Plain into Stroud. The Stroudwater was initially commercially successful but profits were badly hit by competition from the railways, and was eventually abandoned in 1954. Much of the line of the canal is intact and many distinctive features and buildings remain.

For more information visit: stroudwaterhistory.org.uk (opens in a 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: Selsley Common view to Selsley Church & Ebley Mill (c) Philip Dark, 2021; Selsley Church (c) Jo Siobhan Bromley 2021;
Stroud Water Canal (c) Jane Hodgson, 2022