

Farnham Park and Countryside

A town deer park with ponds and a walk along lovely country lanes and paths

Start at Farnham Park Golf Club entrance GU9 0AU. Leave the car park by the tarmac drive to the café (where there are toilets). Pass the building via the right-hand side and go through the gate into the path by the sports fields. Follow the path past the sports facilities building, passing English and Turkey Oak trees on the left to the path T junction.

Turn left through the traditionally laid hedge and immediately turn off the tarmac onto the soil path to the left. This passes down through a scrub and wild meadow area passing over a sleeper bridge and then rise up the short hill until you reach a large open space. Turn right keeping along the field edge with the rich scrub area on your right, full of birds and butterflies in summer. In the large trees and across the field there will be jackdaws all year. Cross straight over a wide path coming over the field keeping to the right field edge. Soon you come to a small bench and can look down on one of the ponds. This one looks like a muddy watering hole and shows little sign of life. Carry on along the field edge and onto a path between the hedges leading to a tarmac drive.

You can now see another pond, much more life here with reedmace and moorhens as a minimum. Occasionally duck stop here, especially mallard and warblers like blackcap and chiffchaff will be around in summer with our common birds like wrens, dunnocks and blackbirds. There should be some dragonflies too. After enjoying this spot for a few minutes turn right past the pond and leave the tarmac going up the grass slope onto the top of the small hill. From the top you can see a gate and fencing across the field. Go to this and you will see another wildlife pond. Check this out before turning right and crossing onto a tarmac path which you can now follow to your left and downhill.

At the bottom of the hill there are two small streams and bridges. If they are running (can dry up in summer) the chances of seeing grey wagtails down on the stones in the water are good. Next, it's a long climb up a hill so you could maybe steal a sit down on the bench part way up! Continue to the top and just before the path leaves the park turn left onto another tarmac path. This passes into woodland and feels quite unlike a town park. You may see or hear deer in the undergrowth as you walk here. You should encounter birds like nuthatches and treecreepers but the latter are quite a challenge to see and hear. Nuthatches are very noisy from early spring right through summer. Keep on this path without leaving it as paths cross and go into the local housing. Soon the tarmac path heads off right and the continuation is an unmade track. Follow the tarmac towards the housing, turn left and right and up through the back-garden fences to a cul-de-sac called Hampton Road. Turn left.

Follow this road all the way up the hill ignoring all the dead end turns off it. Eventually, a bit breathless you should join Drovers Way and see a (new) roundabout to your left. Cross the road so the roundabout is on your left. The roundabout serves a new housing estate on the other side of the main road but we want to go into Upper Old Park Lane also across the main road.

This is a private road but pedestrians have access to it. Walk all the way along Upper Old Park Lane until you reach a T junction. Turn left onto a track that starts gently downhill past stables on the left and a nice house and barn on the right. This is a lovely track with fields and old trees and hedgerows to enjoy as it drops slowly downhill. At the bottom, there are two Woodside Cottages. Here we join the St Swithun's Way to the right through a narrow gateway. This is another lovely track dropping gently down with woodland to your left and rising again along a tree lined track with adjacent meadows. At the top of the rise the track becomes a lane but it's very quiet serving just a few properties. Here the fields change and some arable farming is evident but the lane has some nice hedgerows to check for flowers and butterflies. After an S bend look right over the gate and you will see the impressive Victorian Ewshot Hall high on the hill in the distance on the other side of the valley.

Continue along this quiet lane soon bending sharply to the left and ignoring the footpath signs. This now slopes downhill in a lovely setting right down to a bridge over what I guess to be a stream at times although I have not seen water in it yet! The lane turns right but we now take a footpath through a kiss gate on the left of the bend in front of us. This nice sheltered path follows the hedgerow until you see a stile in front of you. You can step over this and carry on in the same direction or follow the path to the left, they both end up joining a lane. You pass a nice little bridge on your left, again the stream has always been dry on my visits!

This lane is our route now past some houses and eventually some allotments. It meets a fairly busy road and we need to cross directly opposite up a fairly steep bank and the path turns left then right and through a gate up the hill. These are mainly horse pasture but at the right time of year may be good for birds. Meadow Pipits may be seen or heard, especially in spring and autumn when on passage. In March/April and August/September there is a good chance to see Northern Wheatears perching on the fence posts. Skylarks are also present, given away by their song. At the top of the hill turn left along the track and ahead and slightly to the right in the distance you may see Crooksbury Hill with the communication tower to its right. This becomes a narrower path soon zigzagging through a hedge and gate. It then crosses over a wider track via a gate but carry straight on through interesting scrub with bullfinches often present, into a meadow and across to a concrete bridge over a stream. Then climb up some steps to a lane.

At the lane turn left and now follow this private unmade road through housing crossing made up roads as it slowly but gently slopes downhill and bends left. Following this road you finally reach a T junction at a main road, Crondall Lane, with footpath signs visible opposite. Cross carefully, go up through the gate and turn sharp left. Follow this path now straight uphill through the hedgerows, ignoring all options to turn off, until you reach a footpath T junction. Turn right here and follow the path to the end where it goes left up the edge of a field. At the next junction, which comes quickly, turn right along the open field edge all the way past a tall Cedar tree to Old Park Lane where you turn right.

At the end of Old Park Lane cross the main road with care climbing the few steps onto the tarmac path and turn left. This path now leads you back past Farnham Castle keep to the car park where your car is and you have the opportunity to visit the café and toilets if you wish.