Walk Guide

East Harptree Woods & Combe

Mendip Hills National Landscape



Difficulty & Trail Type
Moderate | **Walking**

Distance
6 km (3.75 miles)

OS Map
Explorer: 141
Landranger: 182

How to get there

- **By Bike:** The start point is 2 miles from Sustrans National Cycle Route 3- **www.sustrans.org.uk**
- **By Bus:** Service 672 Bristol to Chew Valley (bus stop near point 10 on the walk route).
- **By Car:** East Harptree Woods are 1 mile south of East Harptree Village.

Facilities

- Parking and picnic area in East Harptree Woods.
- Pub and village shop in East Harptree.

Respect, Protect Enjoy

Sections of this circular walk travel through wildlife friendly areas. Please be aware of this and know your Countryside Code:

- Leave gates and property as you find them and keep to paths
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control
- Be considerate of locals and others enjoying the outdoors
- Follow advice and local signs

Information & Walk Highlights

Most coniferous woodlands in Britain have been planted for forestry purposes. As conifers can grow up to six times faster than broadleaved trees, plantations produce much higher yields of timber than slower-growing broadleaf woodlands. Conifer plantations typically tend to be planted at high density which reduces the amount of light reaching the floor. Broadleaf woods usually allow far more light through leading to a greater diversity of ground flora. Most conifers are evergreen so they do not shed their needles in winter. East Harptree Woods has been designed and managed with wildlife in mind with a wide ride (open, tree-free space) to link areas of natural vegetation.

The area was once important for lead and zinc mining, and the undulating terrain, known as ‘gruffy ground’, indicates old pits and spoil heaps. Much of the ore was processed and smelted at this site and you can see the restored Smitham Chimney (see above).

Connected to the north- eastern end of the woods is a narrow gorge with a small stream running down Harptree Combe a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In contrast to the conifers, this area contains deciduous oak and ash woodland, with old hazel coppice and rough, marshy grassland. This is an opportunity to enjoy two contrasting but equally interesting wildlife habitats: young coniferous plantation and old ash, oak and hazel woodlands

Special qualities to look out for

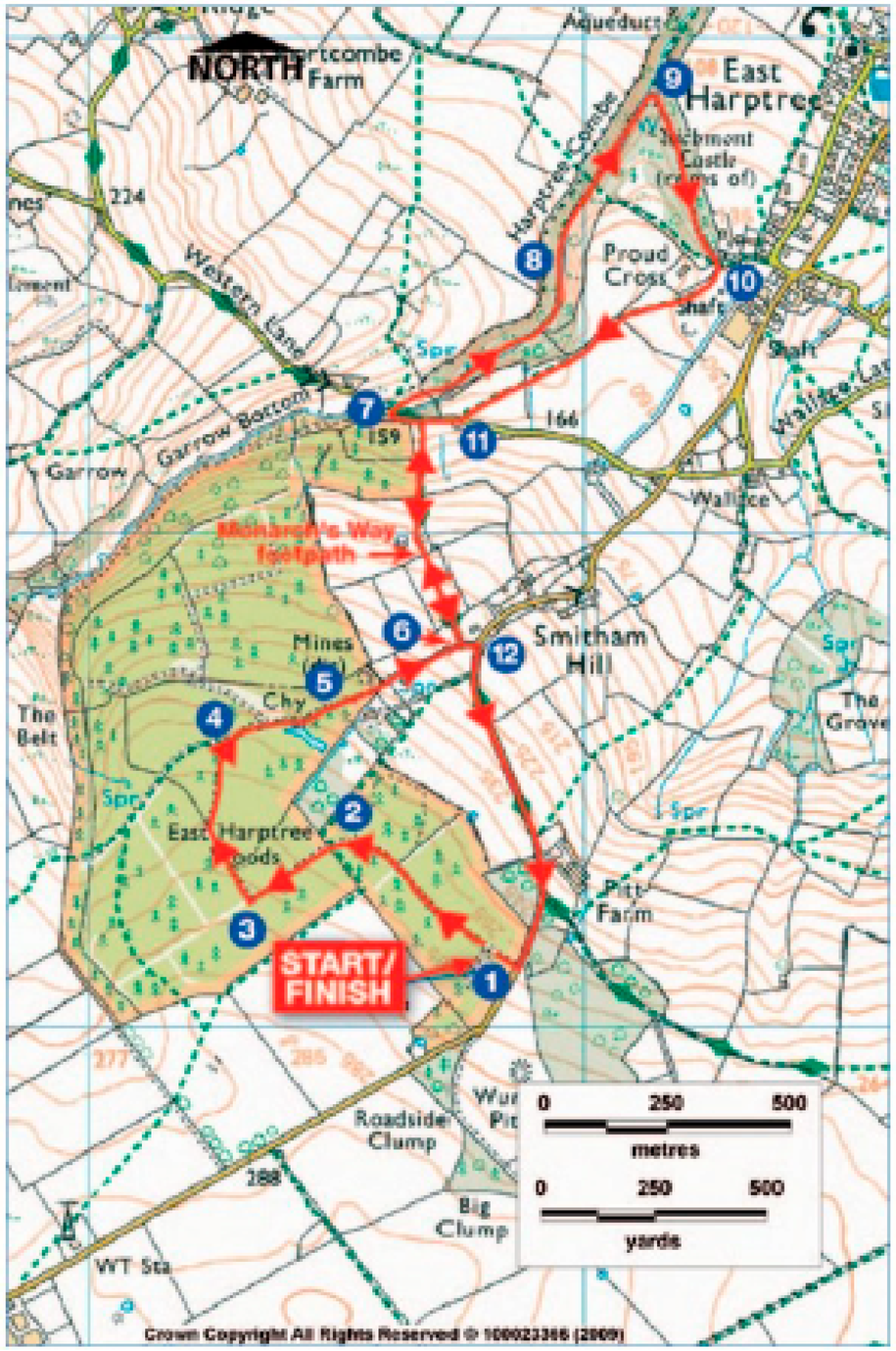
- Prehistoric ochre mine
- Smitham lead mine chimney
- Views of the Chew Valley
- Ruins of Richmont Castle

Contact Details
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Directions & Information

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Look for the waymarkers wherever there are stiles, gates or changes of direction.

From car park **(1)**, follow the forestry track north-westerly though woods.

Bear left **(2)**, then right **(3)**, then join a path **(4)** from the left. Continue to the open area near the chimney and pond **(5)**.

Walk out of the woods, cross the field and turn left before the lane onto the Monarch's Way footpath **(6)**.

Continue northwards to the lane, and walk left for a few metres. Take the path on the right **(7)** to Harptree Combe (**8)**.

Cross the first path that bisects it and take the second path that joins from the right **(9)**. Follow this uphill towards East Harptree.

Where a footpath crosses near the houses **(10)**, carry straight on through the fields (beware of grazing animals) until you rejoin the lane **(11)**.

Turn right and left back on to the Monarch's Way footpath until point **(6)** is reached.

Turn left and right on to the lane **(12)** and return to the car park.