


In the footsteps of a drover... 1 mile Nap Wood, Sussex

Discover a tranquil woodland oasis along an ancient track way of the Weald. Nap Wood is home to a fantastic array of wildlife, from the mature trees that tower above you to the vivid displays of bluebells that decorate the woodland floor in late spring. See what you can spot on this gentle one mile walk.

Start: A267 layby – grid ref: TQ 581329 – OS Explorer 136 or Landranger 188 maps

How to get there & local facilities

Walk: 1 mile from Mark Cross, 2 miles from Frant along a busy road. The Sussex Border Path runs just north of the entrance to Nap Wood,  Wadhurst is 3 miles away along it.

Bus: No.52 bus service, Tunbridge Wells-Eastbourne, passes the walk's start point.

Road: just off the A267 Tunbridge Wells to Eastbourne road.

Roadside parking. WCs, pubs and restaurants in Frant, Mark Cross and Wadhurst. Contact us on 01892 893827 or scotneycastle@nationaltrust.org.uk

Things to look out for...

Ancient track ways

These sunken tracks were created over 100s of years and possibly existed as far back as the first few centuries AD in Romano-British times. The people who used these routes were called drovers. They would take their livestock along them to trade. Local folklore say that they once led to a hunting lodge for King John called Lightlands (still visible on maps of the area), so you could be walking in the footsteps of royalty!

Standing deadwood

In Nap Wood we tend to leave trees and branches to rot rather than remove them after they die. They provide an important habitat for bats, insects and fungi. Keep an eye out for bracket fungi on the side of dead trees. Any holes you spot may be homes to great spotted woodpeckers. In spring, you might hear them drumming on dead tree trunks and branches to proclaim their territory.

Coppice

This is where we cut trees right back to their trunks to encourage them to grow more densely. It is a traditional renewable way to take advantage of wood for products like charcoal. It also helps provides homes for small mammals such as dormice and shrews.



Nap Wood is located in the High Weald, a beautiful rural area between the North and South Downs. It is one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in England. Nap Wood itself is home to hundreds of grand old trees, like beech (pictured here), oak, chestnut and yew.

© NTPL / Mark Bolton



Drovers would let their livestock graze in the High Weald during the summer and autumn in order to fatten the animals up for winter, at which time they would return to the Downs to graze.

© J. Holubecki / High Weald AONB



Nap Wood is famous locally for its dense carpet of bluebells in the spring. At other times of the year the woodland floor is covered with honeysuckle, brambles and moss.

© NTPL / Stephen Robson

"Nap Wood possesses an air of mystery with its fallen trees, big old yews and sunken tracks".

Richard Newman, National Trust Warden at Scotney Castle

Terrain and accessibility

A one mile (3km) circular walk along a well compacted path, with some protruding tree roots. The route is mostly flat, though there are several gentle slopes and a relatively steep one. Take care after wet weather as the path can be muddy, uneven and slippery.

Directions

1. From the layby follow the well trodden track, an ancient drovers' road, into the woods.

Just before you enter the woods, take a look behind you towards Saxonbury Hill Fort (not on accessible land). A Stone Age flint axe head and a Roman coin are just some of the artefacts found here, suggesting evidence of a settlement.

2. Continue along the drovers' road, ignoring a path that crosses your route.

After a short while, you come to a yew tree on the corner to your right. Another old sunken drovers' road leads off from here. Take it for a short detour.

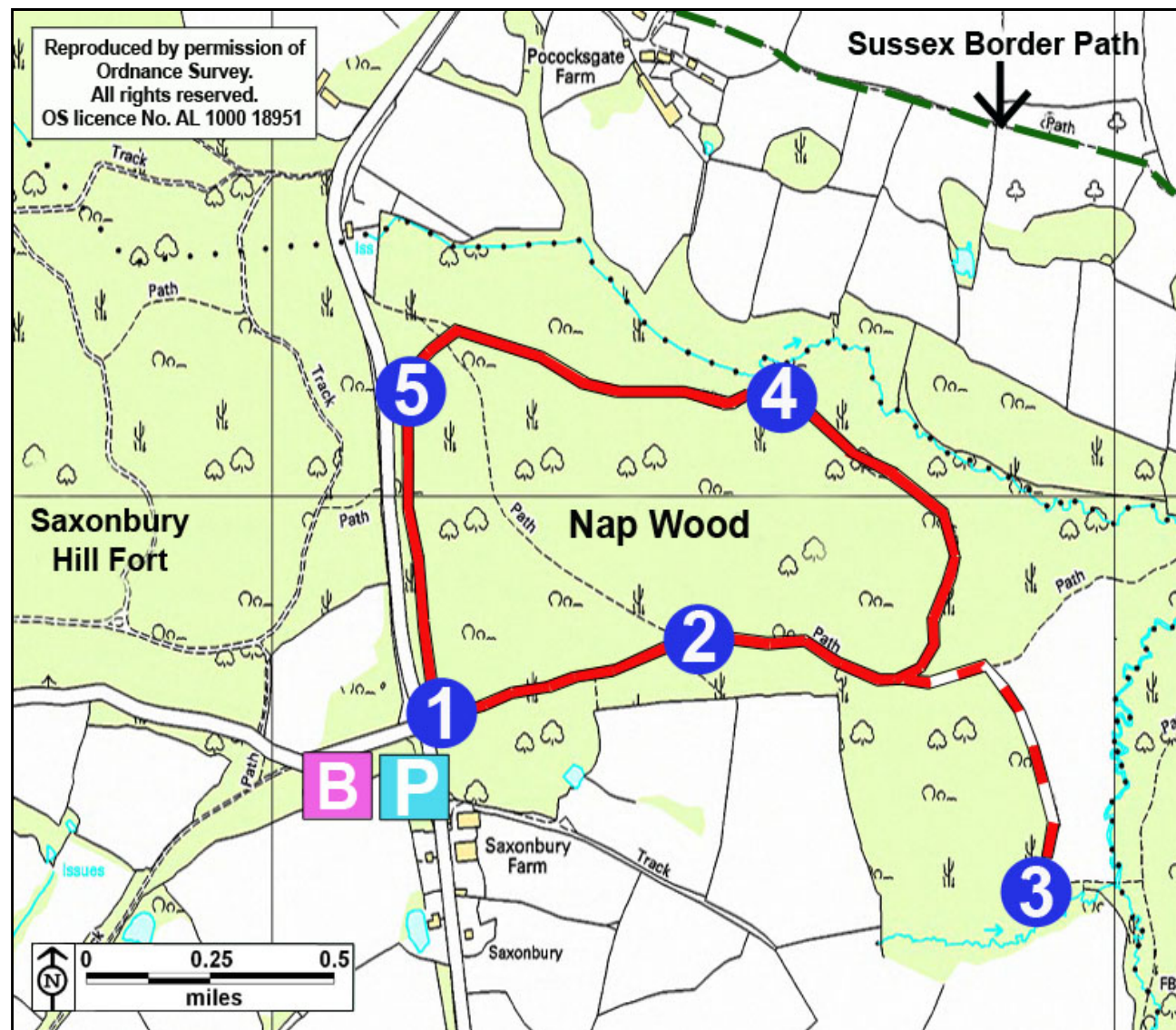
3. This detour leads you to more impressive, old yew trees. After reaching them, turn back and rejoin the main trail.

4. The track goes downhill for a short while before levelling off again.

5. Carry on through the woods listening out for the rustle of dormice, or woodpeckers drumming the dead trees. The track winds its way up a fairly steep hill until you are back at the layby.

National Trust places to visit nearby

Scotney Castle, Sissinghurst, Bateman's, Sheffield Park and Sprivers Wood



As a charity, independent of government, the National Trust relies on the generosity of its supporters to continue caring for our countryside and wildlife, so that everyone can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors for generations to come.

Find out more at www.nationaltrust.org.uk