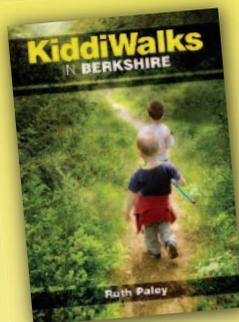


DONNINGTON CASTLE

Treading in the Soldiers' Footsteps

This is a ramble packed with interest. Children will love playing in the ruins of medieval Donnington Castle, where this walk starts and finishes. Its grassy banks are perfect for running up and down and the remaining walls and gatehouse stand as an impressive reminder of the destruction of the English Civil War. From this vantage point, you also get stunning views across the Lambourn Valley. The walk follows the Lambourn Valley Way through Castle Wood to the picturesque village of Bagnor, before heading along a shady tunnel of native woodland to the edge of Snelsmore Common Country Park. The common is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest and is packed with wildlife. The infamous Newbury bypass runs through the southern edge of the common and during the protests in the 1990s, this was the focal area for the protestors' tree camps and tunnels. However, now the woodland trees are home to the great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and tawny owl, while wild ponies graze on the heathland.



gate into a small copse. Turn left and follow the shady path, past oak, beech and holly trees. The tunnel of trees and hedgerows you are walking through gradually turns into Ashpiece Copse, and the edge of Snelsmore Common.

4. Just before a wooden fence, there is a green footpath sign with a kissing gate on your right. Go through the gate and follow the path through the woods, keeping the wire fence on your left. This is a very pretty stretch of the walk as the path winds gradually upwards through the woods to another kissing gate. Go through the gate to leave the woods behind you. Follow the grassy track straight on to a public bridleway.

5. Turn right and continue over open, high ground with fields on the left and the golf course on your right. The bridleway turns into a tarmacked track and you can see the bypass ahead of you. Follow the path as it takes you down to a footpath over the bypass. As you cross, you can see the bridge you crossed earlier in the walk, on your right.

6. Continue straight on, up a short, steep slope. Turn right and pass a very dilapidated barn on your left, with Donnington Castle looming on the horizon directly in front of you. Continue straight on to a farm gate and walk towards the castle. A swing gate on the right leads you into the earthworks surrounding Donnington Castle and when you are ready to leave, a path heads down the steep slope to the car park.

THE WALK

1. With your back to the car park and the castle in front of you, take the public footpath sign to the left of the car park. Follow the path straight on, past blackberry bushes and mixed woodland with views up to Donnington Castle on your right. This path is part of the Lambourn Valley Way and leads you through Castle Wood. At the end of the woodland, take the left footpath, which skirts the edge of the golf course, down to a turning on the right. Cross the bridge over the busy Newbury bypass. Turn left at the end of the bridge and follow a tarmacked path past newly-planted trees. There are plaques on the left naming the local schools that helped to plant them.

2. The path ends at a kissing gate and some houses at the edge of Bagnor village. Turn right and follow the gravel path to the picnic tables for the Blackbird pub. Pass the pub on your right and walk down the main street. Take care as, although it is a quiet road, there are no pavements here. There is a footpath sign just before the bridge. Turn right here and follow the grassy path between two houses. The house on the right has an impressive dovecote fixed to its wall.

3. Go through a kissing gate and continue gently uphill with open fields either side of you. There is a small bench at the top of this path, where you can stop and admire the views back over the Lambourn Valley. Then go through a kissing

3
LENGTH OF WALK (MILES)

2
DURATION (HOURS)

GETTING THERE

Donnington is on the B4494, Oxford Road, 1 mile north of Newbury. From the town, follow the brown tourist signs and turn left into Donnington. Drive through the small village and take the narrow road on the right. This leads up to the car park and castle.

TERRAIN

Easy walking on footpaths and bridleways. Welly boots advisable after wet weather as there may be some muddy patches. A shorter walk to Bagnor then back again to Donnington would be suitable for all-terrain pushchairs and younger families.

START/PARKING

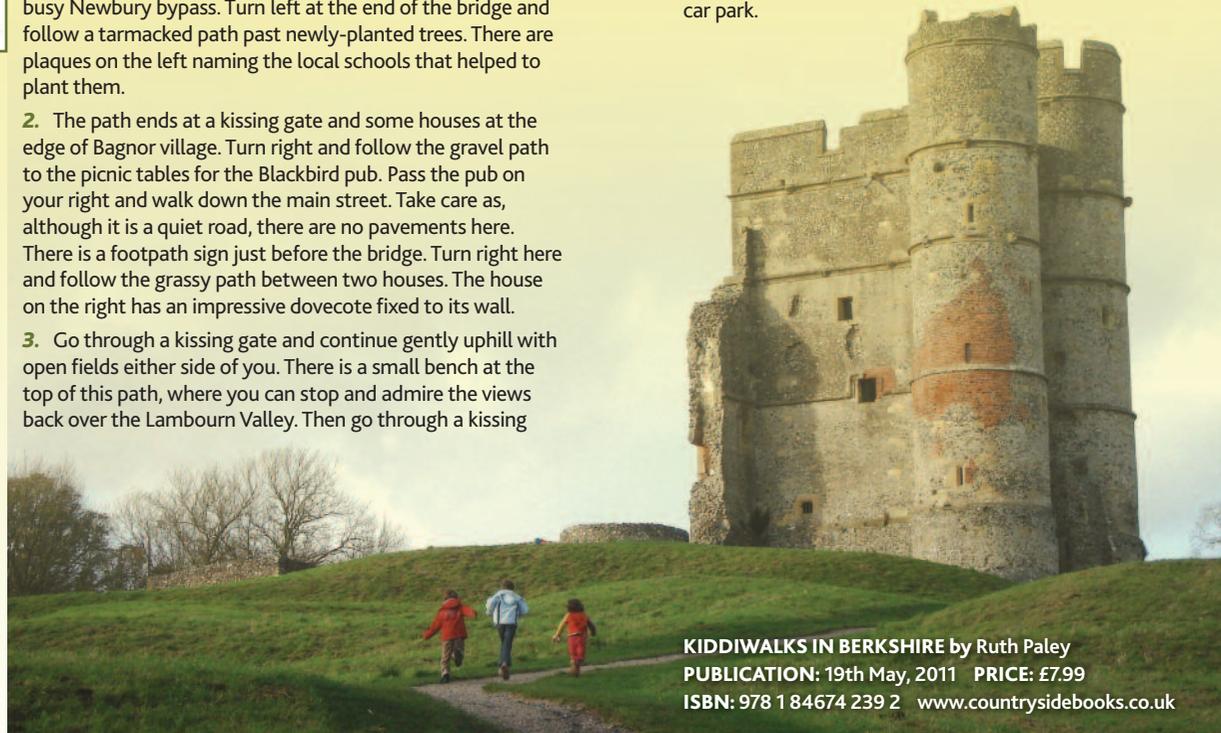
Free parking at Donnington Castle car park (GR: SU 462692).

MAP

OS Explorer 158 Newbury & Hungerford.

REFRESHMENTS

The Blackbird pub at Bagnor has a pretty beer garden with a children's play area and plenty of picnic tables. Donnington Castle is also an ideal spot for a picnic. If you walk further into Snelsmore Country Park, there is a large picnic area by the car park, with permanent barbecues that you can use.



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