



## Circular walking guide from Dorking

In summer, take the train to Dorking for a stroll with spectacular panoramas, gourmet food and fine English wines

With superb views over the Surrey countryside from the summit of Box Hill, the setting for the picnic scene in Jane Austen's *Emma*, this circular walk from Dorking station meanders through England's largest vineyard. After the steep ascent of Box Hill, the route descends to follow the North Downs Way and cross the River Mole, then returns to Denbies Wine Estate, where a gourmet lunch with fine wines awaits. Follow the Mole Gap Trail back to Dorking.

Exit Dorking station, taking the subway under the A24, and turn right along a footpath to Chichester Road, where you turn left, and left again at the junction. After passing Foxwarren House as the road curves to the left, look diagonally across for a partially obscured sign and track marked "Westhumble 1.5m". Follow the track to a junction and turn right towards Denbies Wine Estate along the Mole Gap Trail. Keep straight on by the vines and through the gate, following the signs to Westhumble.

A few hundred yards after crossing a tarmac lane, exit on to a single-track road. Go right, pass Pilgrims Way House and continue along the footpath until you reach the archway to Leladene on your left and a blue plaque commemorating the 18th-century novelist Fanny Burney. Next door is the timberframed Westhumble Chapel, which is not always open. The ruins of a much older chapel are further uphill on Chapel Lane.

Go downhill on the single-track road passing Boxhill & Westhumble station to reach the Stepping Stones pub. Cross the A24 under the subway. Follow the blue sign left to Box Hill, ignoring the turn off to a field track on the right. Cross the River Mole and pass the Burford Bridge Hotel on your right, where John Keats finished *Endymion*.

After 100 yards, go right and up the steps to Box Hill. Cresting the hill, follow the track right and then straight on to reach the gravestone of Major Peter Labellière, who was buried here, upside down, in 1800. Considering the world to be "topsy-turvy", he thought that he would eventually end up the right way up.

After about 70 yards, turn left at a fork and pass Swiss Cottage on your right. This was the home of John Logie Baird, the Scottish inventor of the television, between 1929 and 1932. Straight ahead is a car park with the National Trust information centre, café and gift shop. To your right is the path to the summit viewpoint and the memorial to Leopold Salomons (who purchased the Box Hill estate for the nation) with lovely views across to Leith Hill, Hindhead, Dorking and Ranmore.

Facing the memorial, take the right-hand path and at the first fork in the woods take the left-hand track steeply downhill following the North Downs Way signs through the woods to the River Mole. Cross via the stepping-stones or footbridge.

Keep straight on to the car park exit. Cross the A24 and pick up another North Downs Way sign slightly to your left. Follow the track under the railway bridge and through a wooden gate marked Denbies Wine Estate. Go uphill and curving to the left, you reach a tarmac lane and a crossroads after about 70 yards. Go left, downhill to the Denbies Visitor Centre.

This is a great lunch stop after an appetite sharpened by the slopes of Box Hill. The Indoor Garden Conservatory serves hot lunchtime food or try the Gallery Restaurant where typical dishes include baked sea bass, cinnamon-roasted poussin and pan-fried calves' liver—with panoramic views over the vineyard.

The 45-minute optional winery tour and tasting and is a good introduction to the wines on offer. Located in a valley with a similar chalk soil structure as the Champagne region of France, Denbies grows many grape varieties, including Reichensteiner, Müller-Thurgau and Ortega, and it produces Yew Tree—a 100 per cent Pinot Noir wine—and Redlands, a Dornfelder/Pinot Noir blend, and a very popular sparkling wine.

It is a short walk back to Dorking station along the route taken earlier in the day, though it may seem longer if you have a large bag of wine to carry.