

5. Cleeve Hill Common ring

This breathtaking walk leads you over open hilltops, across streams and through woodlands, immersing you in one of the country's most fascinating and precious habitats – limestone grassland. Over half of this wildflower and butterfly rich natural resource is within the Cotswolds and some of the finest examples are on Cleeve Common. The unsurpassed views along this route therefore, are the perfect backdrop for getting even closer to the outstanding natural beauty of the Cotswold Way.

Distance:

6 miles or 9.7km. Shorter route 4 miles or 6.4km.

Duration:

3½ - 4½ hrs (Shorter 2 - 3 hours)

Difficulty:

Moderate, no stiles but some steep sections. (Shorter: Easy, no stiles and mostly level)

Public transport:

No. 606 or W from Cheltenham/Winchcombe - ask for golf course junction. (Visit www.travelinesw.com).

Start/Finish:

Grid reference SO 989/272 (OS Explorer sheet 179) Postcode GL52 3PW

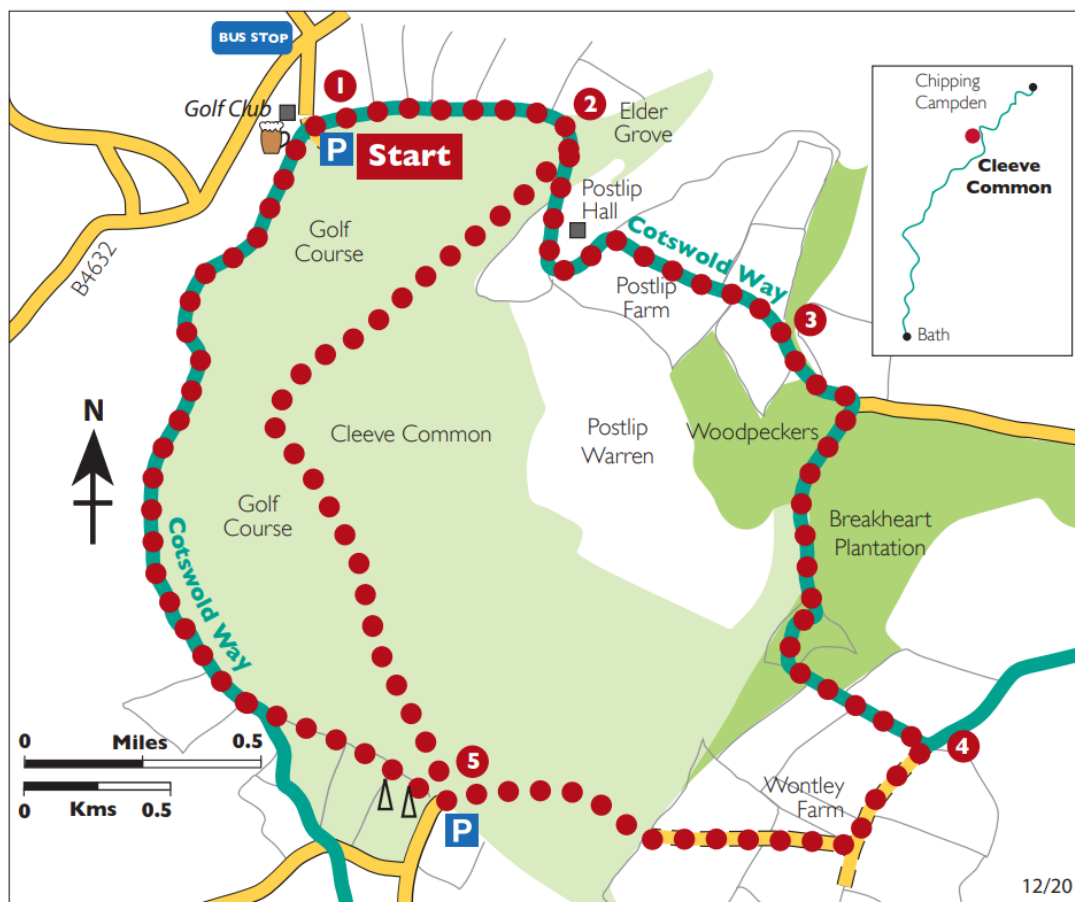
Refreshments:

Bar/café/restaurant at Golf Club. Toilets and extra parking for customers.

Parking

Drive up narrow lane signed to golf club and at the top cross a cattlegrid and turn left then right into old quarry car park.

1 Start at the quarry car park across the track from golf clubhouse. Leave the car park and turn right to follow the track with the golf course on the right and a stone wall (and a wonderful view of Winchcombe nestled in its valley) on your left. Through a metal field gate and along a hedged section, taking care to follow the



Cotswold Way markers, to a second metal field gate.

2 Through the gate and then the decision – for the short cut see the last paragraph. For the main walk follow the Cotswold Way which is the middle of the three tracks facing you, angling downhill. Through the gate at the bottom, alongside the high stone wall of the 17th century Postlip Hall, through several gates, past farm buildings and bear round to the left before reaching a driveway. Turn right, still on the Cotswold Way, and pass through Postlip Farm (there is a detour signposted for when the farmyard is busy!) down a field to a stream at the edge of a small wood.

3 At any time of the year, the shade of the woodlands and the calming sound of peacefully flowing water make this little bridge the ideal spot to stop and rest awhile before the climbs ahead. Cross over the bridge and follow the path up to the right. At the top, pass through the gate and across the

paddock, turning right when you meet the road. Carry on past the stable, and continue to follow the signs through the woods. After the steep climb snaking up the wooded hillside the path will take you along a field edge and under some pylons before arriving at a kissing gate and a track.

4 Now leave the Cotswold Way by turning right, and follow the track down to reach the deserted Wontley Farm buildings. Turn right and follow the path slowly uphill through the fields towards the radio masts in the distance. Pass through a gate back on to the common and continue straight ahead, slightly uphill towards the waymarker post. Continue to head for the masts.

5 At the masts, turn right to follow the fenceline until you meet the Cotswold Way. Continue right along the edge of the escarpment, past some of the finest views in England. Take care crossing over the golf course for flying gold balls

and head down towards the reward awaiting you at the clubhouse. A rest at the end of your walk is a chance to plan the next...

For a shorter route that avoids the steep climbs but doesn't miss out on the views, turn sharp right immediately after the second gate to leave the Cotswold Way and follow the track. The track splits into three after about 100 metres. Keep to the lowest track on the left and walk along the side of the hill. Eventually, the track merges with another track rising from the gully on the left. At this point, continue in the same direction, ignoring the steeper path to the left and the indistinct path rising steeply to the right. Continue a gentle ascent to reach a broad stone track.

Turn left and follow this track across the common towards the three radio masts. As the track peters out head directly to the masts and rejoin the route at point 5.

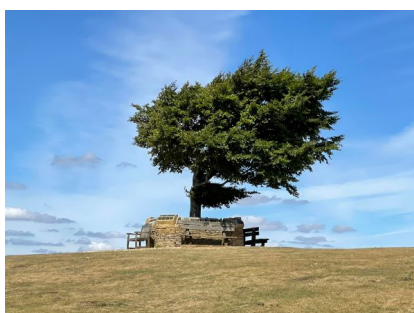
Points of Interest



Cleeve Common

This is the largest common in the Cotswolds National Landscape with an area of over 400 hectares. It is also the highest point on the Cotswolds at 330m. Cleeve Common is famous for wonderful views over Cheltenham, the Vale of Evesham, the Malverns and as far as the Black Mountains in Wales and the Shropshire hills.

For more information visit: cleevecommon.org.uk (opens in new window)

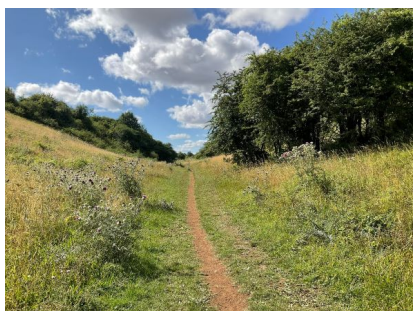


'The Single Beech'

also known as the lone, or lonely beech, is the highest tree in the Cotswolds also at 317m. There is a fine 360 degree view from here and you can really appreciate the open aspects of this hilltop landscape. The Memorial Wall surrounds the tree, with plaques in memory of those who have been particularly fond of Cleeve Common.

'The Twins'

are two wind-swept beech trees on the southern end of the Common, overlooking Cheltenham and Gloucester. Whatever the weather, this is a spectacular spot.



Prestbury Hill Butterfly Reserve

The southern half of the reserve, known as the Bill Smyllie Reserve, extends southwards as a narrow valley containing thickets of scrub. It is separated by a beech plantation from the northern half of the reserve, known as the Masts Field, which is within the Cleeve Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

For more information visit: butterfly-conservation.org (opens in new window)

The Cotswold Way National Trail is managed and maintained by Cotswolds National Landscape and the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens
www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk



**Cotswolds
National
Landscape**

Photo credits: View from Cleeve Common of Prestbury racecourse and Cheltenham by Barbara Brocklesby; Cleeve Hill Common Memorial Tree and Prestbury Hill Butterfly Reserve by Jo Siobhan Bromley