

Stride past Sudeley Castle then up and around the valley for elevated views across to Cleeve Common and Charlton Abbots. Walk through tranquil countryside full of wildlife and flowers.

Distance: 8 km/5 miles with a climb and descent of 175m/575 ft.

Time: 2½ hours

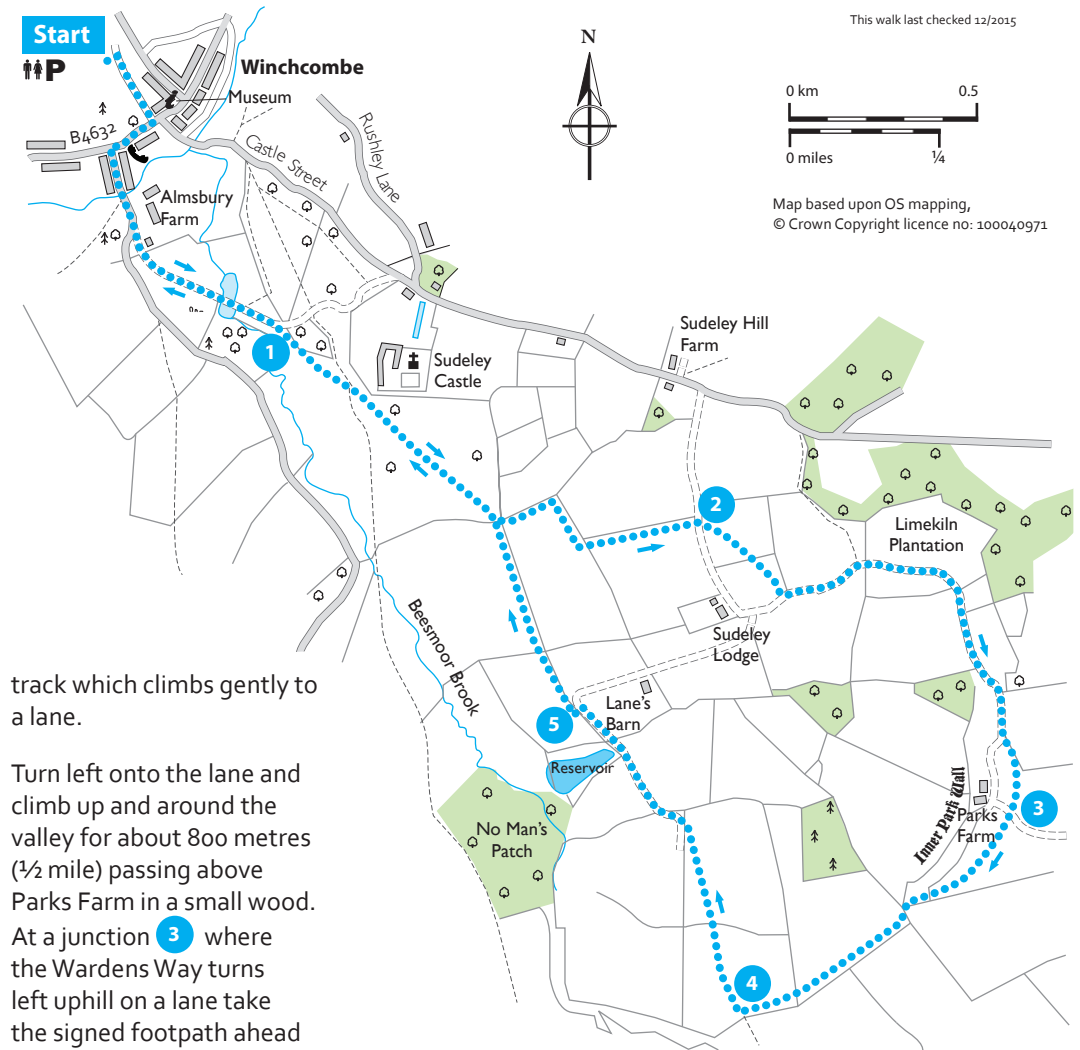
Start: Winchcombe (near Cheltenham) Back Lane car park (£1) behind the library. SP024284. Refreshments in the town.

Route:

From the car park follow Cowl Lane into Abbey Terrace. Turn right on the raised pavement and after 100m cross the road and take Vineyard Street down to cross the river and go straight on until the road veers right. Here go straight on close to a gatehouse along the castle drive which becomes a metalled lane. After crossing a stone bridge, climb briefly to two metal gateposts where the drive bends to the left. Here go through the gate on your right **1** signposted Wardens Way.

Follow the grassy path close to the play fort and go straight ahead through a wide gate alongside the fence. Continue to a metal kissing-gate and footbridge where you turn left, and go through a kissing-gate opposite. Follow the path ahead along the field edge.

At the corner turn right to reach another kissing-gate on your left. Go through and climb towards a pair of cottages. At the lane turn right and immediately left **2** along a signed wide



track which climbs gently to a lane.

Turn left onto the lane and climb up and around the valley for about 800 metres (½ mile) passing above Parks Farm in a small wood. At a junction **3** where the Wardens Way turns left uphill on a lane take the signed footpath ahead across a field, and not the wide track that goes slightly to the right towards fruit cages.

At a stone wall, your climbing is over. Here turn right and follow the wall steeply downhill on grass through a wide gate where the path bears left on a gentler descent to the valley. Keeping the fence on your left carry on to a signpost, with a kissing gate and bridge on your left **4**.

Here turn right across

the field and go through a conifer plantation with two kissing-gates. Carry on straight ahead towards some farm buildings. Go through a wide gate on the left and take the farm track and lane, passing a reservoir on your left. Where the farm track turns right go through a gate on your left **5** and continue in the same direction with the fence now on your right, when you'll soon see the



St Mary's Church in the grounds of Sudeley Castle

castle ahead. Carry straight on through two kissing gates and over a footbridge back to Sudeley Castle drive and retrace your footsteps back into Winchcombe.

See the next page for more details about the walk.

Miles Without Stiles

Winchcombe and the Sudeley Valley

Up, up and away in the Sudeley Valley

Winchcombe is famous for several different reasons. It was once the capital of Mercia, with a huge Benedictine abbey (now disappeared). Sudeley Castle was ravaged by Cromwell in the English Civil War, and its gardens are a popular tourist attraction.

Now something new: Winchcombe Welcomes Walkers, with paths galore for those who love to roam the hills and valleys of the Cotswolds. Today's glorious stile-free route above the Sudeley Valley includes a new public right of way, opened with the agreement of two local farmers in 2012.



In the castle gardens

Sudeley Castle was the home of Queen Katherine Parr, the only one of Henry VIII's six wives to outlive him, if briefly. Her tomb is in St Mary's Church among the ruins in the castle's extensive gardens. There are herb walks, a pheasantry, a children's tower and a picnic area. Open from April to October (payment)



Vineyard Street leads to the River Isbourne. Workers building a bridge there in 1881 found the stump of the town's old ducking stool, used for dousing scolds and crooked traders.



Birds of the valley

Short-eared owls are often seen hunting at dusk in winter. The reservoir you pass is teeming with ducks and swans. At the stone bridge over a lake look out for a kingfisher.