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Riddlesdown to Coulsdon South

Coulsdon Common, Happy Valley and Farthing Downs.

Start and Finish: Riddlesdown station.

Finish: Coulsdon South station

Length: 16.8km (10.4 miles). For a shorter walk and other variations, see *below* **Walk options**.

Time: 5 hours. For the whole excursion, including trains and meals, allow 7 hours.

Transport: Two trains an hour (more at peak times; one an hour on Sunday) run from London Victoria to Riddlesdown (journey time: 24 minutes). Riddlesdown is in Transport for London zone 6, so a one-day travelcard is an option. Take the train nearest to 10.10am. If going to Coulsdon South, a 10.45am train is suggested. If driving the circular walk from Coulsdon South is the best option. There is very limited parking at Coulsdon, so this is one walk where public transport is by far the better option.

OS Landranger Map: 187

OS Explorer Maps: 146 (and 161 for part of the Riddlesdown start). Coulsdon, map reference TQ325610, is in Surrey, 10km north of Redhill.

Toughness: 4 out of 10

Walk Notes: Considering that it starts in the suburbs of London (and within the boundaries of Transport for London zone

6), this walk passes through some remarkably unspoilt countryside. Farthing Downs, Kenley Common, Riddlesdown and Coulsdon Commons are all ancient grazing lands, lovingly preserved as part of the London Greenbelt, and offering a delightful series of woods and open spaces. In spring the area is famous for its wild flowers, including several bluebell woods, while in autumn it is a riot of gold. This is also a fine walk for a brisk winter's day, and in summer offers numerous idyllic spots for a picnic.

Walk options: Directions for the alternative start and the shortcut are given at the end of the main walk text.

a) Shortening the walk: By using the short cut to Chaldon Church at the point indicated in the text 1.7km after the Fox pub ([at point \[4\]](#)), you can cut 4.3km off either the main walk, or the option below.

b) Alternative circular walk from Coulsdon South: By starting at Coulsdon South, also within TfL Zone 6, you can make the walk slightly shorter to 14.2km (8.8 miles). Trains to Coulsdon South also go from Victoria and London Bridge, with a similar journey time.

An option for this walk finishing at Kingswood (also within TfL Zone 6) is available on the website of the Saturday

Walkers' Club www.walkingclub.org.uk in the 'Time Out Country Walks 2' section.

You can also end the walk at the Fox pub (point [3]) and catch the 466 bus from the end of Fox Lane to East Croydon station (phone 020 8673 6109 for bus times), or the 404 bus to Coulsdon South station (call 020 7222 1234 for bus times).

WALK DIRECTIONS

[1] Numbers refer to the map. [1]

From the exit of platform 2 of Riddlesdown station, *turn sharp right up a tarmac path immediately after the station exit*, your direction 120 degrees.

In 15 metres ignore a tarmac footpath down to the left. After 280 metres *the tarmac footpath leads out onto a road. Turn right up the road* (Mitchley Avenue). In 150 metres you pass Ingleboro Drive on your left. There is a view of Croydon and the City of London to the right here. After a further 100 metres, *turn left up Riddlesdown Road*, your direction 160 degrees. In 130 metres go through a wooden gate and straight ahead past a City of London sign onto **Riddlesdown**.

Continue along the tarmac lane. After 140 metres you pass a small car park on your left-hand side. After a further 70 metres, at end of the car park, pass by a metal car blocking barrier and continue along a fine gravel track, your direction 120 degrees.

In 220 metres ignore a tarmac track forking off to the left. After a further 320 metres go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate, to continue gently downhill.

After 650 metres go through another wooden gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate, now with a wooden fence on your left-hand side. The path now descends slightly more steeply.

After 120 metres cross a bridge over a railway line. After 300 metres you pass a City of London board on your left. Go past a metal car-blocking barrier to *come out onto a main road. Cross the road and turn left. In 35 metres turn right* (onto Old Barn Lane), your direction 250 degrees.

After 80 metres cross a concrete footbridge over the railway line to continue up New Barn Lane, passing Kenley Primary School on your right. After 120 metres go over a crossroads to *reach the top of New Barn Lane* after 90 metres.

Go up some steps marked by a wooden footpath signpost on your left. [!] *After 30 metres* (or two turns of the path), *turn right up some earth steps*, following a London Loop waymark, your direction 250 degrees. *In 60 metres*, at the top of the steps, *you emerge into the bottom corner of a field* with a wooden footpath post on your right. On your left is a City of London noticeboard for **Kenley Common**.

Follow the direction of the London Loop arrow on the post up the right edge of the field. After 130 metres at the corner of the field you enter a wood.

Follow a wooden footpath post to continue straight ahead along a car-wide earth track into the wood, your direction 260 degrees. In 160 metres ignore an unmarked footpath leading off to the left. In 70 metres, *where the path forks, fork left, as indicated by a public footpath post*. After 80 metres ignore unmarked footpaths to the left and right to continue straight ahead.

In a further 15 metres *you emerge from the wood* passing a wooden footpath post on your left. *Follow the footpath arrow diagonally across a field*, your direction 210 degrees. *In 190 metres*, on the far side of the field, pass a four-armed wooden footpath post on your right and an oak tree with a bench at its foot on your left, to *enter a wood*, your direction 210 degrees.

In 80 metres emerge from the wood and turn right onto a car-wide track, your direction 250 degrees. In 15 metres go through some wooden posts with a missing gate and continue along a car-wide earth track.

In 300 metres, at a T-junction with a road, turn right following a London Loop footpath signpost. In 100 metres turn left along a footpath following the London Loop signpost, initially with a garden fencing on the right and woods on left. In 100 metres at a path T-junction, turn right. After 50 metres you come out to a corner of a field. [!] Turn left and then sharp left again to re-enter the woods, your direction 170 degrees.

In 60 metres, at a path T-junction marked by a three-armed footpath signpost, continue straight ahead, now with a wooden fence on your right. After 50 metres cross a shingle driveway. In 25 metres you come out onto a lane with the **Wattenden Arms** pub, a possible lunch stop, directly in front of you. [2]

Turn right along the lane, passing a thatched house on your left after 30 metres. In another 50 metres, where the lane curves to the right, fork left onto a car-wide shingle track, signposted 'Access to The Haven'. In 5 metres turn left across a stile, following a footpath signpost to Waterhouse Lane.

Follow the footpath along the left side of the field, your direction 170 degrees initially. In 150 metres you pass by a redundant kissing gate off to your left, to curve to the right aiming for a small white observatory bubble. In 130 metres go over a stile to the left of the observatory. Continue straight ahead, merging with a tarmac driveway. In 80 metres go past a metal fieldgate to enter a wood.

After 40 metres at a path T-junction, turn left up a car wide track. In 100 metres at a T-junction with Hayes Lane, cross over to go through a gate and veer right towards the left-hand side of a bunker.

After 200 metres you reach the RAF Kenley tribute memorial on your right.

Immediately beyond the memorial, veer right along a tarmac path and after 80 metres go through a wooden gate to re-cross Hayes Lane, to then go through a wooden kissing gate (by a Coulsdon Common notice board) to go down a footpath through a wood, your direction south.

In 90 metres you emerge at the top corner of a field. Continue down across it into the valley, your direction 170 degrees. After 190 metres at the valley bottom cross over a path and in 25 metres turn half right up a wide grass track (between woods), your direction 230 degrees. In 120 metres at an open space turn half right, down a wide grass track, your direction 260 degrees.

[!] After 70 metres turn left through a (partially hidden) wooden gate ^[Note 1] to go along a grass path along the side of the hill, your direction 170 degrees. In 70 metres where the path forks, take the right hand downhill fork, your direction 200 degrees. In 120 metres go through a wooden gate to reach the main road after 25 metres.

[Note 1 - Occasionally livestock is kept in this field, in which case the gate(s) are often padlocked to prevent access to the nearby road. If this is the case, continue down the wide grass track for 70 metres, and turn left along a path that leads out to the road after 130 metres.]

Cross the road. Ignore a path forking up to the right to continue straight-ahead uphill on a footpath through Coulsdon Common, your direction 250 degrees. In 25 metres take the right hand fork, continuing uphill, your direction now 290 degrees. In 160 metres a path merges from the left. After another 35 metres you pass by a pond on your right.

In 150 metres you emerge from the woods and pass by a cottage and then a metal car-blocking barrier on your left. In 15 metres take an unmarked left fork,

your direction 240 degrees. *In 90 metres veer left to join the main path.*

In 70 metres pass to the right of a wooden fieldgate and cross over the main road. Continue straight ahead to reach the **Fox** pub, the recommended lunch stop, after 120 metres. **[3]**

Coming out of the main entrance to the Fox pub, *turn immediately right along a footpath* along the right edge of a field bordering the pub garden, your direction 140 degrees. In 90 metres *go through a wooden kissing-gate and continue straight on* through a lightly wooded area, ignoring a fork to the left. In 150 metres *go through another wooden gate and cross a tarmac road*. Continue straight ahead down a car-wide track passing to the left of a car blocking metal barrier in 80 metres. Continue on the track with the Caterham Barracks housing estate on the left.

In 350 metres, where a three-armed wooden bridleway signpost is concealed in the hedge on your left, (just below the first floor balcony of a house), *turn right along a bridleway*, lined by trees, your direction 280 degrees. Initially on the level, further on the bridleway descends gradually and then more steeply. In 750 metres, *at the bottom of the hill, turn left at a four-armed wooden signpost, following the arm to Leazes Avenue*, your direction 230 degrees.

Follow the path uphill through woods. In 450 metres *the path merges with a gravel lane*. Continue along the lane, your direction south. After 280 metres you reach a three-armed wooden signpost.

[4]

[At this point, you can take option **a**), **Shortening the walk**, to cut 4.3km off the walk. See directions at end of main walk text.]

Otherwise, **to continue on the main walk**, continue straight ahead following the sign to Leazes Avenue. In 30 metres the lane becomes tarmac and you pass a green on your left.

In 200 metres, *at a road T-junction turn left*. After 500 metres you reach a *T-junction with a main road*, opposite Rook Farm. **[5]**

Cross the road with care and turn left for 5 metres. Turn right to go past a redundant stile and pick up a footpath signposted 'Pilgrims Lane', your direction 160 degrees. (The signpost may be obscured by foliage in summer.) After 170 metres the fenced-in footpath turns to the right up the edge of a wood. After a further 70 metres turn left into the wood. In 40 metres the footpath passes a fenced-off field on your left to continue along the edge of the wood.

In 300 metres you reach a *crosspaths marked by a wooden five-armed signpost ('Fiveways')*. *Continue straight on* following the signpost to The North Downs Way, your direction due south, alongside the edge of the wood on your right. *In 650 metres* pass to the right of a redundant stile and in 10 metres *turn right up a car-wide track signposted 'North Downs Way'*.

In 130 metres ignore a signposted path to the left and continue up along the North Downs Way. In 90 metres *veer left*, passing a hollow on your right. In 100 metres there are fine views to your left of the North Downs.

In 450 metres, towards the end of the gravel lane, *take the left-hand fork to meet a road after 20 metres. Cross the road and continue straight ahead*, following the wooden North Downs Way signpost.

After 400 metres, *emerge by a wooden signpost and veer right (leaving the NDW)* to go along a car-wide track along the upper right-hand side of a field, your direction 280 degrees. *In 60 metres turn right* through a car-wide gap *into a field* to go along a car-wide track on the left side of the field, your direction 350 degrees. In 200 metres, *at the bottom corner of the field, follow the track left at a wooden footpath sign to meet a T-*

junction after 15 metres. *Turn right down a concrete car-wide track* for 500 metres to a road. **[6]**

Cross the road with care to go through a wooden kissing gate *and turn immediately left* along the left edge of a field. *After 280 metres*, at the left field corner, go past a redundant stile, marked with a Tandridge Border path sign to enter a wood. *In 50 metres veer right and in 20 metres turn right*, your direction 20 degrees initially.

[!] *In 150 metres*, where a further car-wide track joins from the left, *turn right to go through a wooden kissing gate* after 15 metres to emerge from the wood. (The stile is next to a very old coppiced beech tree.)

Veer left to follow the left edge of the wood for 40 metres to reach the corner post of the wood. *Continue straight on to go diagonally down across the field*, your direction 60 degrees, with some barns ahead in the distance.

In 180 metres go past a redundant stile at the bottom and continue gently uphill, aiming for a car wide gap in the hedgerow on the upper side of this field, (100 metres to the right of the barns).

In 300 metres pass to the left of a redundant stile into the next field and veer left and gradually downhill, diagonally across this field towards a metal fieldgate, your direction 30 degrees. *In 200 metres go over a stile* to the left of the metal fieldgate, *and turn right down a tarmac road*. **Chaldon Church** is on your left after 30 metres and is well worth a visit. **[7]**

After visiting the church come out of the entrance to the churchyard, and turn left. *In 10 metres take the left fork* downhill. *In 50 metres turn left at a T-junction*. *In 30 metres turn right to follow a signposted footpath diagonally across a field*, your direction 20 degrees. *After 550 metres, the footpath veers slightly right down across the next field*, your direction now 30 degrees.

In 200 metres pass a footpath signpost to go down through a small wood. *In 30 metres emerge from the wood* at the top corner of a field, with a fine view of **Happy Valley** in front of you. **[8]**

Turn left along the upper left edge of the field. *In 360 metres, at the upper left hand corner of the field, go straight ahead into the wood*, (ignoring a path up to the left), your initial direction 310 degrees. *In 50 metres, at a wooden footpath signpost, go down into the next field*, and turn left down along the upper left edge of this field, your direction 320 degrees.

In 200 metres, at the corner of this field pass by a footpath signpost on your left to enter a wood, your direction 310 degrees initially. *In 280 metres you pass by a two-armed wooden footpath signpost with a stepped path up to your left. Keep straight on, ignoring ways off*. *In 300 metres, pass by a car blocking metal barrier*, to emerge from the wood.

Turn left uphill for **Farthing Downs** on your right and with houses on your left. *In 80 metres cross a tarmac lane to reach the car park*. **[9]**

Turn right to go along the top of the ridge. *In 50 metres you exit the tarmac part of the car park and in 90 metres the grassy section*. *In 600 metres you pass by a toposcope mounted on a stone plinth 15 metres to your right*.

In a further 70 metres, at a four-armed wooden signpost under three large trees, continue straight ahead downhill. Keep to the main path, ignoring ways off, and in 700 metres at the bottom of the hill you rejoin the road to your right at a cattle grid.

Go through a wooden gate to the left of a cattle grid and carry straight on down the road, following the residential slip road for the first 100 metres, which then merges with the Farthing Downs road for another 100 metres to reach the main road.

Turn left here. In 25 metres the entrance to the Coulsdon Memorial Ground whose café is a possible tea stop, is to your right: go through the entrance, and then turn left for 60 metres to reach the café.

Otherwise, *turn left along Reddown Road*, opposite the Memorial Ground entrance. *In 100 metres, turn right* down some steps along a footpath between houses, towards Coulsdon South station. Cross the footbridge over the railway line to the opposite platform for trains back to London.

For **Coulsdon Town Station** plus other refreshment places in the town centre: Ignore Reddown Rd on your left (leading to Coulsdon South Station) and continue under the rail and road bridges to the large roundabout where you continue in the same direction along the A237 leading to Coulsdon Town Centre. Take the right fork at the set of lights to go along the Brighton Road passing by Coulsdon Library on your right, to reach a roundabout. For **The Pembroke** PH turn left to reach it on your right. Otherwise continue in your prior direction passing by a Caffè Nero on the left. Then just before a railway bridge over the road, turn up Leaden Hill to Coulsdon Town. You will need to go over the foot bridge for trains to London]

WALK OPTIONS

a) Shortening the walk:

Follow main walk directions until point [4]

Turn right here to follow the arm for 'Chaldon Church ¼ mile', along a footpath with the wood on your right and a field on your left, your direction 280 degrees. After 200 metres you reach the corner of the wood and continue ahead, now with a large field on your right.

In 200 metres you reach a lane and turn right. In 10 metres take the lane forking up to the left to reach the entrance to Chaldon Church after 60 metres. You now

resume the walk directions at point [7] in the main walk directions above.

b) Alternative start from Coulsdon South:

From platform 2 of **Coulsdon South** station, *go down some concrete steps and along a tarmac path.* After 50 metres *go up some steps to meet a minor road and turn left*, marked by a metal signpost indicating the London Loop.

In 100 metres at a T-junction turn right up a main road. After 25 metres *fork right up a road* with a sign 'Weak bridge 1 mile ahead'. In 30 metres you pass by a large Corporation of London sign on your left for **Farthing Downs**.

In 50 metres the road forks. Take the right fork along the pavement. After 90 metres, *where the road curves to the right, fork left to cross the road* and pass between two wooden bollards next to a London Loop, footpath post. *Cross over the parallel road towards a wooden gate to the left of a cattle grid.*

In 20 metres go through the gate to go up a grass path, bordered by a wood on your left and parallel to the road up to your right.

Continue up this path in the same direction, with a wood (and subsequently a mini pylon cable run) to your left, ignoring all turnings off. *After 1.5km* (and 80 metres beyond where the mini-pylon cable run forks down into the valley), go through a wooden gate. In a further 70 metres the path comes up to a crosspaths, with a cream painted house up ahead (with a car park off to its right), some 200 metres distant.

Turn left down a stony track into the wood, your direction 140 degrees. In 30 metres at a crosspaths, veer left to follow the path more steeply down towards the valley bottom, your direction now 80 degrees. After 110 metres you *emerge from the wood and turn right along a wide path bordered by woods, to go along*

the bottom of **Happy Valley**, your direction 160 degrees.

After 450 metres, where the path forks, ignore a bridleway up to the left, to *keep on the lower path* to the right, *along the valley bottom*, your direction 120 degrees.

After 80 metres where the woods on either side clear, ignore a path veering to the right towards a car wide gap in the distance, to continue on the left path as it gradually veers to the left.

In 300 metres *the path merges with another from the right, as you now start to go up the side of the valley* towards a wooden table and benches, next to a three-armed wooden footpath signpost, by the edge of a wood.

[B2] In 100 metres you pass by the table and a London Loop arrow and the footpath sign to Coulsdon Common, into a wooded area, your direction 140 degrees. In 15 metres take the (lower) right-hand fork. In a further 25 metres you emerge from the wooded area with fine views of the valley to the right.

Continue up this path. In 200 metres, *at a three-armed wooden footpath, continue straight on towards Coulsdon Common* up into a wooded area. In 80 metres, as you emerge from the wooded area and pass a London Loop footpath post, the path levels off and becomes a car-wide tarmac track. Further on you pass a fitness trail on your right.

After 300 metres pass round a wooden fieldgate with a car park on your right. Continue straight ahead, passing a van blocking metal height barrier after 50 metres. In a further 120 metres you reach **The Fox** pub on your right, the recommended lunch stop.

You now *resume the main walk directions at [point \[3\]](#)*.

Lunch & tea places

Wattenden Arms *Old Lodge Lane, Kenley, CR8 5EU (020 8763 9131)*. **Open** noon-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun. **Food served** noon-2.30pm, 6-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-2.30pm Sun. Just past Kenley Common, this pub serves a moderately inventive menu. It's smaller than the Fox but has a cosy charm. This is a suggested earlier lunch alternative.

Fox Coulsdon Common, Caterham, CR3 5QS, (01883 330401). **Open** 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun. **Food served** noon-10pm Mon-Sat; noon-9.30pm Sun. Located 6.3km into the walk, the Fox serves food all day and has a large seating capacity, both inside and in the garden. This is the suggested lunch option for the main walk.

Options for tea are somewhat limited: this is perhaps a good walk to bring a thermos flask, as Farthing Down and Happy Valley both have benches with fine views for a picnic tea. Otherwise, in Farthing Down car park there is often a refreshment trailer at weekends and on fine summer days. Alternatively try the **Poppy Café** in Coulsdon Memorial Ground, which is opposite Reddown Road and a 5-minute walk to Coulsdon South station.

Alternatively continue down into Coulsdon for **The Pembroke**, 12-16 Chipstead Valley Rd, Coulsdon CR5 2RA.